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of
Ideas

QUEST

Editors: Abu Sayeed Ayyub & Amlan Datta

W. H. HARRIS

India and Western Spirituality

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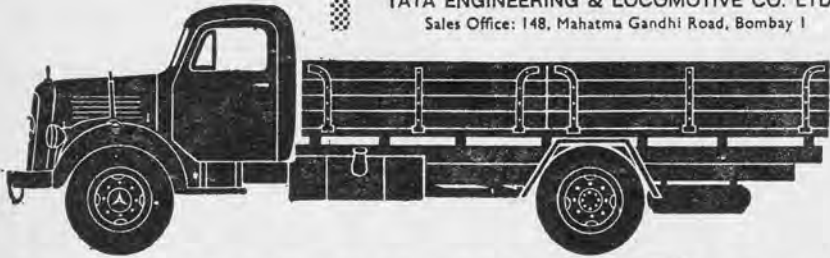


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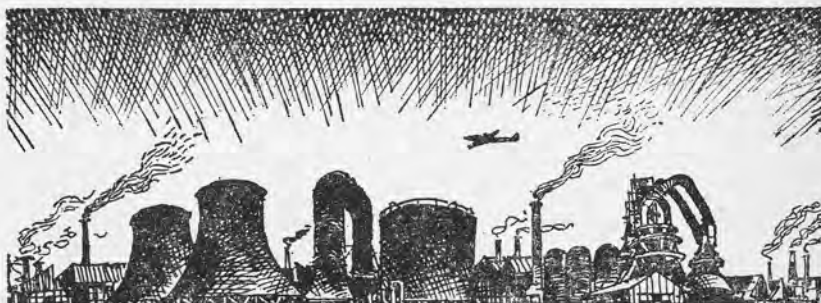
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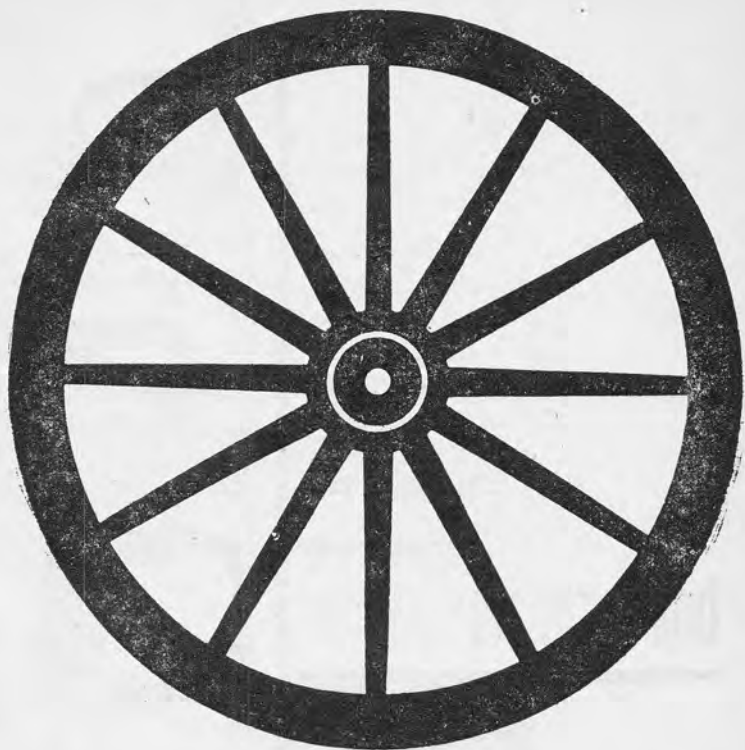
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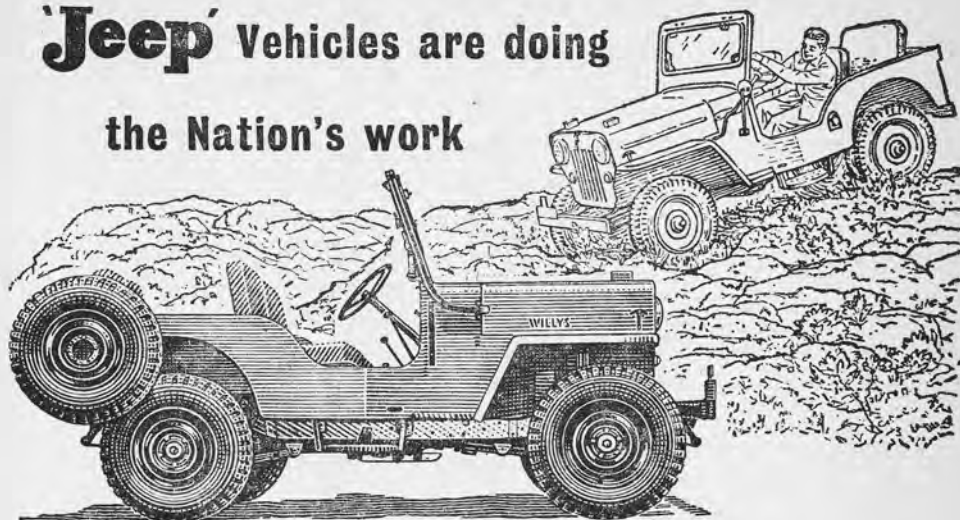
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QUEST is sponsored by the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom

Reviews Editor : NISSIM EZEKIEL

Asst. Reviews Editor : MRS. LAEEQ FUTEHALLY

Business Manager : MISS SHEELA SINGH

All contributions, which must be type-written, and correspondence regarding contributions should be addressed to THE EDITORS, QUEST, 5 Pearl Road, Calcutta 17. For subscriptions and other matters please write: THE BUSINESS MANAGER, QUEST, 148, Mahatma Gandhi Road, Bombay 1.



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India and Western Spirituality

WILLIAM HENRY HARRIS

A PERSON from the West cannot be in India too long before he hears frequent references to the spirituality of Eastern (meaning Indian) culture and to the materialism of Western culture. This is repeated so often as to have a kind of liturgical effect. It becomes obviously true since it is so uncritically assumed.

If a person from the West has himself been a sharp critic of the invidious materialism of his own consumption dominated culture, he may not at first feel inclined to question the liturgy. If further he has deeply deplored the political and economic policies of Western governments during the now dead colonial era, he is inclined to accept any suggestion that Eastern societies have achieved values to which the West has been blind. And one who wants to build institutions and philosophical perspectives adequate to an age of world-culture may find it plausible that East and West will each have a unique contribution to make to it.

On further reflection, however, difficulties do present themselves. India has not always been served by the image of her spirituality. It is of course undeniable that there are great spiritual traditions and great spiritual personalities in India. India and other countries should continue to learn from them. But it is as dangerous to think too sentimentally of a nation as it is to think too cynically of her. Arthur Koestler's *The Lotus and the Robot* is an egregious recent example of a tendency to blame Asian cultures for failure to supply a spiritual panacea which should not have been asked of them in the first place. Great spirits are rare anywhere. Not every Indian is Mahatma Gandhi. When sentimental tourists, often misled in their expectations by professional Indian religionists at work in the West, first confront this fact they are too likely to con-

clude that the whole concept of Indian spirituality is a fraud. Most of our foolish answers come from the fact that we ask foolish questions.

It is said that in the cultural exchange which will now take place India will contribute spirituality and the West will contribute those material values often cited as evidence of her cultural poverty. This is only speciously fair. It is of course obvious that for the foreseeable future India's contribution to world-culture must be in terms of her spiritual resources, which should always be seen as including such things as music, art, and the dance, as well as those mystical values to which reference is too often limited. But it in no way follows that the West has no spiritual contribution of its own to make, along with its material resources. Western technology and science are not simply expressions of an invidious materialism. They have their roots in genuinely spiritual values. Judaeo-Christian traditions made some contribution to these. Other contributions were no less spiritual simply because they were secular.

Much more could be said on these points, but here let us focus upon three spiritual values which underlie Western institutions. These are: (1) a conception of positive freedom (2) a need for personal and material achievement (3) political leadership answerable to the people. No doubt such values have been recognized in India, even in traditional culture uninfluenced by Western ideas. We would argue, however, that they have received greater stress in the West and that its material development is to some degree traceable to them.

I

Freedom has both a positive and a negative form. Negative freedom, freedom

from responsibility and external restraints, is more difficult to maintain in a highly complex modern society. Negative freedom is epitomized in the traditional Indian value of *moksha*. It is expressed in the *sannyasin* who renounces power and responsibility and all other aspects of selfhood save one.

In idealization of a kind of freedom which never existed for most people one may fail to see that, even among the painful dislocations of an imperfectly realized new age, more and more people are concretely enjoying another kind of freedom never before known. Positive freedom, freedom as enablement, freedom to develop selfhood in all its aspects, is more widespread than it used to be. Instead of indulging in nostalgia for the values of a rural, pre-industrial society which can never return, it would be better to address ourselves to the development of responsibility and the maximization of those positive freedoms only available to those with a degree of economic power.

One who holds to the value of positive freedom will differ from Gandhiji on the spiritual potentialities of the machine. In *Young India* he once wrote that '(machinery) is the chief symbol of modern civilization; it represents a great sin. . . . I cannot recall a single good point in connection with machinery.' No doubt part of the reason he said this was his concern for Indian unemployment and the fact that he could observe only India's exploited role in the early stages of industrial development. He could appreciate the moral impulse behind the development of the Singer sewing machine. He had never seen the way in which other machines can liberate whole classes of people from filth, servility, and anxious preoccupation with the most rudimentary aspects of material existence. Machines have done this. They have also, of course, been used for trivial or destructive ends. The fact that positive freedoms have not always been exercised for development of the higher reaches of selfhood does not prove that machines are

diabolical nor that positive freedom is unimportant and unspiritual. Renunciation also has its own pathology. New freedoms always impose upon us new duties. We must devote ourselves to the discharge of these new duties, not renounce the freedom.

One of the most significant evidences of the liberative effect of machines and economic development is the tremendous expansion of higher education in many parts of the world. Men have always been trained for jobs. But until quite recent times the arts and sciences were accessible only to a small class of free men. This is why they were called the liberal arts. This led many to assume that only a tiny minority is capable of genuine education.

Perhaps this was the way it had to be before the coming of machines. Even in Athens, the great cradle of democracy and the life of the mind and spirit, the leisure for political participation and connoisseurship of the arts was quite limited. A great class of slaves did most of the work. And of course Indians do not need to be told that the early modern development of Western culture was to some extent made possible by leisure and wealth gained from the labours of those in other parts of the world. But modern technology can open a new chapter in the history of liberty. It is now as unnecessary as it is wrong to exploit human labour as it has been exploited in the past. Machines can become our slaves. With industrialization the class of free men can become indefinitely large. The audacious democratic dream that every man can be free to participate intelligently in the political process, can understand and share the liberal arts and sciences, has now begun to sound plausible.

This means that university education is no longer for the few. It is needed by everyone with native capacity to live the new life of freedom. Young men and women whose parents were never free to get an education are now studying the arts and sciences of free men. All over the

world this has created enormous problems of maintaining quality, as well as of simple logistics. But complaints about these problems may obscure the splendid extension of positive freedom which they reflect. And we must not overlook the fact that some criticisms of democratic education come from those who regret that freedom should have extended so far.

II

The need for personal and material achievement is taken as so obvious a value in the West that it is assumed to be a universal value. Everyone must want to 'get ahead' and 'succeed'. Adlai Stevenson has spoken of the 'revolution of rising expectations' in the underdeveloped countries and it has been easy for the West to understand them in these terms.

The 'revolution of rising expectations' is no doubt a fact with which the West must reckon. But what is harder for someone shaped by Western culture to understand is how modest the aspirations of the ordinary Indian really are. This of course varies with individuals and regions in India. But the need for personal achievement and its material concomitants is surprisingly small. Mrs. Kusum Nair has documented the degree to which many Indian farmers are willing to accept without question their hopeless poverty and the manner in which the underemployed are willing to work, when work is available, only enough to supply bare immediate needs without regard for the future.¹ Modern Indian economists like Eric da Costa, editor of the *Eastern Economist*, have pointed out how modest has been the degree to which India's political leadership has aimed to raise her living standards through the Five Year Plans.

The willingness of an Indian peasant to accept the circumstances of his birth and his meagre material resources is easily understandable. A willingness of leaders

with experience of economically developed parts of the world to plan for less than the highest material standards for their people would be less easy to understand or defend. Sometimes sentimental 'defenders' of the poor easily forget how degrading and soul-shrivelling generations of extreme poverty can be. The needs of people are not wholly reflected by what they are willing to settle for. One does not show devotion to the poor by complacently attributing to their condition a nobility which it does not possess.

There seem to be philosophical assumptions and values at stake here. Perhaps we can see the pathology of old and genuine Indian ideals in the apathy of the peasant and the willingness of an official to content himself with the formalities of his job, rather than burn to achieve goals through it. In another context it would be appropriate to explore the validity and contemporary relevance of these ideals. Here we simply suggest that they do have a pathology.

The ancient ideal of renunciation of the fruits of action still lives in India. Following this ideal I am relieved of anxious care about the results of what I do. Such anxious care is often futile, since I have so little control over results. And an obsessive concern for ends may lead to violence, since the means for achieving these ends is less important. But the pathology of this renunciation is formalism. I am born to play a role in life which I cannot fundamentally change. I gain my satisfactions in life by playing that role without regard to the fact that it may have become obsolete or never had any social value at all. I am entitled to play my role by the circumstances of my birth and family connections, not by my achievements or acquired qualifications.

There is of course a pathology to Western ideals as well, which in other circumstances it would be appropriate to explore. The failures in Western culture lie both in the fact that it does not consistently practice its own ideals and the fact

¹ Kusum Nair, *Blossoms in the Dust*, London: Gerald Duckworth, 1961. pp. 30-31, 46-47, and *passim*. Also see Vikas Mishra, *Hinduism and Economic Growth*, Oxford University Press, 1962.

that those ideals have some inherent limitations. The pathology of the Western ideal of personal achievement is an invidious pragmatism, careless of the means it employs, which accumulates material possessions simply because it can do so. But it must not be forgotten that there is nothing inherently unspiritual (unless I have a peculiarly subjective definition of spirituality) about the struggle for self-realization and mastery over the forces of nature. Those who reject this ideal should at least share our common duty to understand ideals which we cannot accept. The need for material and personal achievement has been taken as a value in the West and it was surely one of the factors in the development of her material prosperity.

III

A third value having its origin and distinctive development in the West is the concept of political leadership answerable to the people. Western governments which give lip-service to this ideal do not perfectly embody it, of course. But there is deep moral intensity in the demand that they do. There are in Asia, however, many able political leaders dedicated to the interests of the people they serve, who seem not to accept the value of being answerable to the people.² They see that persuasion of the people is necessary, but not necessarily good or something which the people have a right to demand. The moral right to rule has traditionally been drawn from another source, still often a kind of 'spiritual' charisma. If a person has such charisma he really does not need to justify what he does; it is assumed that the highest truths are esoteric and not accessible to every man. One who has such charisma can ask for and receive the unquestioning devotion which a disciple gives to his guru.

² See discussion of relevant issues in articles by D. Mackenzie Brown, Margaret W. Fisher, and Morris Opler, in *Leadership and Political Institutions in India*, edited by Richard L. Park and Irene Tinker, Oxford University Press, 1960.

To a non-Indian who accepts such an analysis of traditional Asian political leadership, it seems that India has had the most extra-ordinary good fortune in the quality of her leadership. To a very great degree her leaders have been guided by the highest sense of responsibility. Because of the nature of the tradition they could have gotten by with all kinds of self-interest they have obviously never considered. One has only to compare Nehru with national heroes who came to power in other newly independent countries to see this point. Perhaps some of these Indian leaders have been guided by principles of *noblesse oblige* derived from their traditional values. Others like Nehru have been moved by newer values and deeply believe that the people have the right to decide what is best for themselves, and that in the long run they will do this better than anyone else.

In the West democracy has been developed as a moral philosophy and not simply as a political form. Reinhold Niebuhr, the distinguished contemporary American theologian, gave it succinct defense when he said, 'Man's capacity for justice makes democracy possible; but his inclination to injustice makes it necessary.' This defense of democracy on the basis of the dual nature of man is in clear contrast to several traditions in Indian thought. It suggests the pathological possibilities of the view that the highest truths are obtainable only by those with special spiritual qualifications. It suggests that those with the highest spiritual attainments are for that reason vulnerable to special kinds of sin and self-deception. From it one may also conclude that the least enlightened and most self-interested have a right to be consulted and may make a contribution to social justice. The latter is at least an expert in the ways that policies pinch him.

The pathology of democracy is demagoguery. People sometimes make mistakes about what their real interests are. But the strength of democracy is that it is intrinsi-

cally self-educative and self-corrective. Those countries in the West which have had self-government the longest are not yet quite ready for it. But the only way one learns to combine responsibility and freedom is to govern himself.

Moral imperfections come to full view where democracy is practiced. Sometimes democracy is blamed for creating them. There are those who long for the good days when there was an hereditarily ordered society and those who ruled ruled by higher authority, and the vulgar stayed in their place. But surely immorality may exist when no one is free to point it out. And it is only in a free society that every man can emerge as a mature moral agent. The categories of good and bad are irrelevant to men who are born into their place and stay in it without question. Moral character is developed in democracy, and spirituality will not necessarily be undermined when spiritual leaders come to have insights mediated by society and history rather than by tradition or esoteric disciplines.

Therefore the growth of democracy in Asia is seen as a good thing by one shaped by Western spiritual ideals. Political leadership answerable to the people is good, not simply because it produces material benefits, but because it is an expression of moral and spiritual values. This will be felt more strongly as people have increasing experience in the exercise of political responsibility. This encourages an optimistic answer to the hackneyed question of who will succeed to the present generation of Indian leadership. There will be a deep sense of personal loss when members of the present generation pass, and there will be specific problems which their successors will find it hard to meet as well. But there should be a net gain in the leadership of a new generation. The very fact that they can count on less charismatic authority, and the fact that the people now expect to choose their own leadership, will cause the people to hold them to much greater accountability. New leaders will

have to analyze, respect, and persuade to a degree not yet known.

IV

In the period of foreign domination India had to defend herself from those who clumsily sought to destroy spiritual traditions which they did not respect and did not try to understand. In self-defense many Indians replied that material values were all that the West could offer and all that India would accept. Patriotism produced the most lurid stereotypes of the moral and spiritual condition of a culture which India could experience in only some of its worst distortions. Many of these stereotypes still survive in an age when they are less true than ever and when they do not even serve the needs of national morale.

From her own experience of superficial criticism India should realize that a critic's sense of the spiritual resources which underlie a culture may tell most of all about the critic's own capacities and expectations. If Indians look to Western culture only for material help and technical skills it is likely that that is all they will receive. It does not necessarily mean that that is all the West can contribute to cultural exchange.

The economic and political development of newly independent countries cannot be brought about simply by infusions of capital and construction of institutions alone, as vital as these things are. Such development has taken place only in the presence of certain assumptions and values. If India wants such development, its schools and universities will have to change people's minds on some issues, as well as give them skills and information. It is encouraging that some of the values upon which such development depends, while emergent in the West, seem to be possibly universal and combinable with older Indian values. In any case they are genuinely spiritual values, and a modern economic and social order may make possible renewed growth of the spirit, not its destruction by rampant materialism.

An Assessment of Gandhism *

JAYANTANUJA BANDYOPADHYAYA

I

MAHATMA GANDHI declared himself essentially a man of religion; and indeed most of his fundamental ideas and actions he sought to relate to a transcendental reality. He is the despair of those who believe in the sovereignty of reason, and perhaps more readily comprehensible to the mystic mind. It is not, therefore, possible to make a rational assessment of Mahatma Gandhi as a personality, except in a doubtful manner with the help of some modern brand of psychology which seeks to explain religion itself rationally; it is only possible to discuss his ideas and actions.

Prof. Bose is one of the very few Gandhians who have sought to adopt this rational approach to Gandhism. Referring to Gandhiji's belief in the operation of a Higher Law, the author candidly states in the introductory chapter: 'But personally, let me confess, I have not yet come across any dependable evidence which justifies such a belief. For me, the existence of a Higher Purpose has neither been proved nor disproved. And as long as I remain at that level, I shall prefer to believe that the observed progress in human history (though it is not deep in quality) has been brought about by the operation of intelligent sympathy.' This rational approach to Gandhian thought is laudable and bold, for unfortunately in this country of blind hero-worship, the secret of Gandhiji's mass appeal, as the author himself says, 'lies in the character and personality of the man rather than in any direct appeal which lies in that philosophy.'

* Nirmal Kumar Bose: *Studies in Gandhism*, Calcutta, 1962.

Prof. Bose approaches Gandhism from a primarily utilitarian point of view and compares the non-violent direct method in the form of satyagraha with the Marxist revolutionary method and the constitutional method as a means of bringing about social change in such a manner as to resolve the conflicts characteristic of present-day human society. His conclusion is that satyagraha is the only possible means of achieving such an objective. But while his treatment of the Marxist method is able and convincing, his views on the constitutional method are not quite beyond dispute. Constitutional methods, argues the author, are forms of compulsion through political power, and the exercise of power cannot lead to the elimination of conflicts.

But the acceptance of satyagraha in preference to constitutional methods on such grounds is open to several objections. In the first place, in a democracy it is improper to characterize the legislative processes as political compulsion, for democracy has a built-in mechanism for the repeal of unwanted laws and the elimination of those who enact them. In an ideally democratic society those who exercise temporarily delegated governmental power are guided by the common consciousness of the common end and are utterly unable to coerce the society into accepting any unwanted change. If in this country or anywhere else the constitutional methods do often seem to assume the character of political compulsion, this can be accounted for by the imperfection of democracy.

Secondly, Prof. Bose seems to have overlooked the fact that satyagraha may involve a great deal of psychological coercion; and whether the psychological form of coercion is superior to any other may

well be a matter of opinion. His argument seems to be that satyagraha achieves three objectives unattainable by any other method. First, the personal suffering involved in satyagraha 'burns up the sources of personal error which may warp opinions'; second, the party against which satyagraha is launched is not coerced in any way; third, satyagraha permanently resolves the conflict involved.

As regards the first part of the argument, one cannot help noting that the language used and the extra-rational factors brought into the argument by the author constitute an unfortunate deviation from the rational approach to Gandhian thought which he has generally adopted. As regards the second and the third parts of the argument it is better to discuss them with reference to a concrete case, namely, Gandhiji's 'epic fast' of 1932. The issue involved was the separate representation of the untouchables demanded by their leader, Dr. Ambedkar, at the Round Table Conference. A Committee was appointed to study this problem, among others, by the British Government after the Conference. Gandhiji had opposed this proposal at the Round Table Conference, and even before the findings of the Committee were known, declared in a letter to the British Prime Minister that he would fast unto death if separate representation was granted to the untouchables. He made it abundantly clear that he was not opposed to the proposal on political grounds, but only on religious grounds, that his intention was to resist the separation of the untouchables from the caste Hindus for any purpose. In spite of this, on the recommendation of the Committee, the British Government accepted the principle of the separate representation of the untouchables, whereupon Gandhiji started his 'epic fast' on September 20, 1932.

Now in this particular instance the conflict had a three-fold manifestation. First, there was the conflict between Gandhiji and the British Government; second, there was the conflict between Gandhiji and Dr. Ambedkar; and third, at the back of every-

thing there was the conflict between the caste Hindus and the untouchables. The crucial conflict, however, was between Gandhiji and Dr. Ambedkar, for the untouchables would follow the latter's advice and the British Government would not press for separate representation if the untouchables themselves did not want it, as turned out to be the case later. Therefore, Dr. Ambedkar was approached by many prominent people, whereupon he met Gandhiji and the result was the famous Poona Pact.

In order to prove the success of the satyagraha launched by Gandhiji it has to be shown that Dr. Ambedkar underwent a genuine change of heart and the conflict was eliminated permanently as a result. Dr. Ambedkar issued a statement after Gandhiji declared his intention to fast unto death in which he totally rejected Gandhiji's case against the Communal Award and put forth his own arguments in support of the case for the separate representation of the untouchables.¹ 'I however trust,' said Dr. Ambedkar in conclusion, 'the Mahatma will not drive me to the necessity of making a choice between his life and the rights of my people.' Again, Ambedkar's attitude when Gandhi actually went on fast and 'all eyes naturally turned to me as the man of the moment or rather as the villain of the piece' can best be expressed in his own words: 'As to myself it was no exaggeration to say that no man was placed in a greater and graver dilemma than I was then. It was a baffling situation. I had to make a choice between two different alternatives. There was before me the duty, which I owed as a part of common humanity, to save Gandhi from sure death. There was before me the problem of saving for the untouchables the political rights which the Prime Minister had given them. I responded to the call of humanity and saved the life of Mr. Gandhi by agreeing to alter the Communal Award in a manner satisfactory to Mr. Gandhi. This agreement is known as the Poona Pact.'²

Thus, if Dr. Ambedkar's statement about

his own reaction to Gandhiji's fast is correct — and there is no reason to doubt it — then he remained convinced about the correctness of his stand even after he had signed the Poona Pact, and was merely coerced by Gandhiji into accepting it. It was a pact, as it were, signed under duress. Dr. Ambedkar never ceased to attack Gandhiji, and the conflict between the caste Hindus and the untouchables has never been resolved. Whatever improvement has taken place in the condition of the untouchables is generally the result of constitutional processes in independent India.

Prof. Bose has presented the facts of this case in a very different light and very briefly. Referring to the Communal Award he says: "And Gandhi who foresaw great danger ahead, immediately went on a fast while still in prison. The fast was against his own countrymen, whom he invited to do away with the injustice meted out to suppressed castes, so that the Government would have no handle by which to divide Hindu from Hindu. National leaders from all over India became deeply moved, and within record time, an agreement was arrived at between them so that eventually the Prime Minister of England had to withdraw his Award" (p. 183). Presented in such fashion and with such brevity, the facts indeed fit in with Prof. Bose's theory (or rather the Gandhian theory) of *satyagraha*; but when one goes into the actual details, the apparent harmony seems to break.

II

The major part of the book is devoted to a survey of the Indian freedom movement, Gandhiji's special role in it and his attempt at resolving the Hindu-Muslim conflict, the Indo-British conflict and the general conflict in international relations, especially during World War II.

Prof. Bose takes us through Mahatma Gandhi's life-long *satyagraha* against the Hindu-Muslim conflict, and gives a parti-

cularly moving account of his lone fight toward the end of his life against the communal riot and the partition of the country. He admits that the Mahatma's life-long efforts in this vital sphere ended in failure at least temporarily, and for this he blames, directly or indirectly, almost everybody except Gandhiji; he thinks there was nothing whatsoever inherent in the Gandhian philosophy and methods which had a bearing on the Mahatma's failure to achieve Hindu-Muslim unity. But while no one can doubt Gandhiji's great sincerity, courage, idealism and determination regarding the Hindu-Muslim question, it should not be considered too much of a heresy if one suggested that in this sphere his methods were subject to inherent limitations.

Gandhiji became intimately involved in the communal problem for the first time in 1919 during the Khilafat movement. Gandhiji himself has said of this movement: 'For me it was a chance of a lifetime. I felt that if I could but show my loyalty to my Mussalman countrymen in the hour of their trial, I would be able to secure ever-lasting friendship between the two communities.' (p. 148) He explained, of course, that he had decided to plunge into it only when he found that the cause of the Muslims was just. But if Gandhiji considered the problem of Hindu-Muslim conflict in India to be as simple as that, he certainly committed the error of oversimplification. If, on the other hand, as seems to have been the case, he sought to utilize this essentially fanatical religious movement for increasing the popularity of the Congress and its leaders not excluding himself, he was guilty of short-sighted political expediency. The fact remains that during the Khilafat movement what was achieved was not Hindu-Muslim unity but Pan-Islamic unity, that during the country-wide mobilisation of Hindu support for the Muslim cause, in the name of unity attention was constantly focussed on the points of difference between Hinduism and Islam, and that soon after Kamal Pasha's secular revolution in Turkey undermined

the foundations of the Khilafat movement, communal riots broke out all over India on an unprecedented scale.

The basic facts, with all respect to Mahatma Gandhi, should be squarely faced. In many respects, Gandhiji was a rather conservative Hindu. In his philosophy and methods, in his daily rituals and routine, in prayer and preachings, in his attempt to rouse the masses through Hindu religious songs like the Ramdhun, in his constant reference to Ram Raj as the ideal form of state and society that was expected to emerge after swaraj, in his life-long struggle for the cause of the untouchables which he regarded more as a cause of Hinduism than a secular and humanitarian cause, in his practically life-long support of the caste system and his opposition to cow-slaughter, and in many other respects, he was a thoroughly orthodox Hindu and proudly declared himself to be so. Indeed, no historian worth his salt can deny the fact that in many ways Mahatma Gandhi was one of the greatest architects of Hindu revivalism in modern India. Gandhiji as a person, his philosophy and methods were, therefore, particularly unsuited to the resolution of the Hindu-Muslim conflict. A party to a dispute cannot hope to assume successfully the role of the judge or the arbiter. In order to bring about a harmony between contending forces, one has to rise above and beyond those forces. This Gandhiji failed to do. The fact of the matter is that to regard the communal problem in India as an essentially religious problem, as Gandhiji apparently did, is a gross oversimplification. It requires only a casual understanding of the problem to know that deep-rooted historical, political, economic and social factors are involved. Any attempt to solve this problem, if there is to be even partial success, must be based on an essentially secular approach. But this was obviously beyond Mahatma Gandhi. The Muslims of India never accepted him as a supra-communal and non-partisan socio-political leader.

III

Similarly, it is doubtful how much was achieved directly by the successive mass satyagrahas launched by Gandhiji for resolving the conflict between the British Government and the Indian people. The Non-cooperation movement of 1921-22 did not achieve any marked success from the viewpoint of its immediate objective. The withdrawal of the movement by Mahatma Gandhi on account of the Chauri Chaura incident should be discussed a little more deeply than is done by Prof. Bose. In the first place, the movement had already petered out for all practical purposes before the Chauri Chaura incident took place. In the words of Jawaharlal Nehru: 'As a matter of fact even the suspension of civil resistance in February 1922 was certainly not due to Chauri Chaura alone, although most people imagined so. That was only the last straw. Gandhiji has often acted almost by instinct; by long and close association with the masses he appears to have developed, as great popular leaders often do, a new sense which tells him how the the mass feels, what it does and what it can do. He reacts to this instinctive feeling and fashions his action accordingly, and later, for the benefit of his surprised and resentful colleagues, tries to clothe his decision with reasons. This covering is often very inadequate, as it seemed after Chauri Chaura. At that time our movement, in spite of its apparent power and the widespread enthusiasm, was going to pieces.'³

Secondly, even if it is assumed, as Prof. Bose apparently does, that the Chauri Chaura incident was the deciding factor in the suspension of the Non-cooperation movement, Gandhiji's decision raised fundamental questions about the practicability and utility of this type of mass satyagraha which have never been satisfactorily answered. Jawaharlal Nehru posed the problem thus: 'Chauri Chaura may have been and was a deplorable occurrence and wholly opposed to the spirit of the non-violent movement; but

were a remote village and a mob of excited peasants in an out-of-the-way place going to put an end, for some time at least, to our national struggle for freedom? If this was the inevitable consequence of a sporadic act of violence, then surely there was something lacking in the philosophy and technique of a non-violent struggle. For it seemed to us to be impossible to guarantee against the occurrence of some such untoward incident.⁴

Thirdly, the experience of the Non-cooperation movement indicated that such a movement could be launched with any chance of success only against a sympathetic adversary resorting to liberal constitutional methods for dealing with it. When the Civil Disobedience movement was launched in 1930-32 the Government crushed it with comparatively ruthless measures, and the suspension of the movement was far from voluntary.⁵ This raises the fundamental question whether satyagraha can at all be launched against a ruthless adversary. Would it have been possible to launch a satyagraha with even the chance of a fractional success against Hitler or Stalin? There is no easy answer to this question.

It is not suggested that the satyagraha movement did not achieve anything significant in the history of India's freedom movement. Satyagraha for the first time broadened the base of the national struggle and led to an unprecedented awakening of the masses. During the Non-cooperation movement of 1920-22 this great resurgence of the Indian masses came as a surprise even to some of the top leaders of the movement itself. 'A demoralized, backward and broken-up people', observed Jawaharlal Nehru, 'suddenly straightened their backs and lifted their heads and took part in disciplined, joint action on a countrywide scale... We became victims to the curious illusion of all peoples and all nations that in some way they are a chosen race.'⁶ Thus as a weapon of struggle in the hands of an unarmed people satyagraha undoubtedly has, under favourable conditions, some utility.

But it is necessary to emphasize that satyagraha was not solely, and perhaps not even primarily responsible for the independence of India. The unceasing resistance of the terrorists, the violent uprising of the masses in 1942, the impact of the heroic efforts of the Indian National Army on the British army, the naval mutiny of 1946, American political pressure on the British Government, the tremendous growth of nationalism in the entire colonial world, the crumbling of the foundations of British colonialism during and after World War II, the coming to power of the Labour Party in England, and last but not least, the constitutional and relatively liberal character of the British political tradition — all these were responsible in greater or less measure for the independence of India. It must not be forgotten that at about the same time as India and soon afterwards a large number of Asian and African countries attained their independence without ever having resorted to satyagraha. Satyagraha undoubtedly played a very important part in India's struggle for freedom, especially in rousing the masses, but its significance can be properly realized only after the movement has been placed in a proper historical perspective.

IV

Immediately before and during World War II Mahatma Gandhi for the first time spelled out his ideas in detail regarding the resolution of international conflicts through satyagraha. Prof. Bose's treatment of this period of Gandhiji's struggle does not leave one entirely satisfied, for although he refers to the Mahatma's opposition to the British war effort on the ground of non-violence and his continued attempt to make the Congress declare a policy of total non-violence, both with regard to internal policy and external relations, he does not refer to the actual methods suggested by Gandhiji for resisting armed invasion by non-violence. Yet it was a concrete suggestion of this type which Gandhiji thought was his greatest contribution to warring

mankind and which, he declared, might even make him the Messiah of a new age. 'And who knows', he said, 'that I shall not be an instrument for bringing about peace not only between Britain and India, but also between the warring nations of the earth?' This last wish will not be taken for vanity by those who believe that my faith is not sham but a reality greater than the fact that I am penning these lines.⁷

It is, therefore, necessary, in order to have a proper understanding of the Gandhian method of resolving international conflicts, to refer briefly to the concrete suggestions of the Mahatma in this respect. Gandhiji attempted to prevent World War II by first appealing to Hitler. In a letter to Hitler, written on July 23, 1939, he appealed to the Fuehrer to renounce the methods of violence. 'Will you listen to the appeal of one who has deliberately shunned the method of war not without considerable success?' — he asked Hitler.⁸ In June 18, 1940, the day after France sued for peace, Gandhiji wrote on 'How to combat Hitlerism.' He appealed to the defeated and threatened European powers to resort to non-violence and to invite Hitler 'to destroy our non-violent army.'⁹ On July 3, 1940, Gandhiji issued an appeal 'To Every Briton' in which he stated: 'I want you to fight Nazism without arms, or, if I am to retain the military terminology, with non-violent arms. I would like you to lay down the arms you have, as being *useless for saving you or humanity*. You will invite Herr Hitler and Signor Mussolini to take what they want of the countries you call your possessions. Let them take possession of your beautiful island, with your many beautiful buildings. You will give all these, but neither your souls, nor your minds. If these gentlemen choose to occupy your homes, you will vacate them. If they do not give you free passage out, you will allow yourself, man, women and child, to be slaughtered, but you will refuse to owe allegiance to them.'¹⁰ At Gandhiji's personal request the appeal was conveyed to His Majesty's Government by the Viceroy. 'With every

appreciation of your motives', the Viceroy replied, 'they do not feel that the policy which you advocate is one which it is possible for them to consider, since, in common with the whole empire, they are firmly resolved to prosecute the war to a victorious conclusion.'¹¹ On this unfavourable reaction to his appeal, Gandhiji commented: '...Herr Hitler can only be confounded by the adoption by Britain of this novel method of fighting. At one single stroke, he will find that all his tremendous armament has been put out of action.'¹² As regards India's own non-violent defence against a possible invasion by Hitler, he said: 'I have no doubt in my mind that even a patched-up non-violent army would take the wind out of Hitler's sails. I need not have his aeroplanes, his tanks etc. He need not destroy our homes. Our non-violent army would welcome him, and it may be that he would not dare to come.'¹³ On this point Gandhiji further added: 'Even if Herr Hitler was so minded, he could not devastate 700,000 non-violent villages. He would himself become non-violent in the process.'¹⁴

Fortunately or unfortunately for Europe and India, the European powers did not find arms as useless for defending themselves as Gandhiji had forecast, and India also had, therefore, no occasion to raise a non-violent army for welcoming the German or Japanese forces. Immediately after India attained her independence Gandhiji himself found it necessary to approve of violent resistance against the invading Pakistani army. The disciples of the Mahatma occupying the Government of India used a rather impressive military force to liberate Goa without having to encounter any protests from Gandhians in India. There is not even a faint suggestion from Gandhians today that the invading Chinese armies should be resisted with non-violent satyagraha; Acharya Vinoba Bhave, generally believed to be the truest living disciple of Mahatma Gandhi, has openly supported the military efforts of the Government on the northern frontier.

V

For the failure of Gandhism in India during Gandhiji's life-time Prof. Bose lays the blame squarely on the other Congress leaders. 'But those who had borne him company had been attracted more by his courage and spiritual identification with the country's crowded humanity than by his ideology. Non-violence, on its own account, had held no appeal for them, except occasionally in its negative aspect as an absence of violence, and an instrument of decent, gentlemanly behaviour. They had voyaged with the Captain, but disembarked at wayside havens when the power to shape India's destiny seemed to have come within their grasp.' (p. 302). But it should be said to the credit of the Congressmen that they had, in fact, never claimed to have accepted non-violence as a creed, and Gandhiji had accepted the Congress as his instrument in full knowledge of this fact.¹⁵

The fact of the matter is that the relative failure of satyagraha in India and elsewhere has to be blamed, if at all, on the relative imperfection of contemporary human civilization. Another way of putting it would be to say that Mahatma Gandhi himself has to be blamed for it, because his idea of satyagraha failed to take note of the imperfections of contemporary human society. There is a circular reasoning involved in attempting to transform a rock into a garden by planting good seeds in it, or in trying to transform an imperfect society into a perfect one through the novel method of non-violent satyagraha. For transforming contemporary human society into an ideal one, Gandhiji prescribes that the group-mind must behave in an ideal way, while as a matter of fact the group-mind can behave ideally only in a society which is already ideal. The view that the group-mind can undergo a sea-change without any reference to the character of the society itself is a gross oversimplification that is bound to fall to the ground when subjected to empirical

tests. This is precisely what has happened to satyagraha.

An assessment of Gandhism, from the strictly logical point of view, would depend on what one considers to be its essential components. If satyagraha as a method of resolving all social conflicts, national as well as international, is considered to be the most essential aspect of Gandhism, then certainly Gandhism contains a utopian element and has limited applicability, with grave risk of adulteration, only in limited spheres of conflict; it can be a useful supplement to the constitutional method, but not a substitute for it. It cannot hope to be the passport to the millennium. If, on the other hand, decentralization of political and economic power, without any spiritual or religious implications, is considered to be the substance of Gandhism, many humanists all over the world would readily accept it on rational grounds. If, however, it is the politicisation of religion or vice versa, or the supposed spiritual content of Gandhism which is regarded as its core, the matter cannot be rationally discussed.

But this is so far as the inner consistency of Gandhiji's ideas or the efficacy of his methods, taken collectively or individually, is concerned. A retrospective analysis of most great contributions to human thought would reveal similar inadequacies, but such contributions are still treasured in the intellectual heritage of mankind. For the value of a body of thought can never be fully measured by its logical consistency or its practical applicability in contemporary society. So far as Gandhism is concerned, its value lies in at least four important considerations.

In the first place, although Gandhiji drew his inspiration from Tolstoy, Carlyle and Thoreau, and had before him the traditional Indian system of 'dharma' to build upon, satyagraha as a technique of organized non-violent resistance was undoubtedly an original contribution of the first order to the theory and method of resolution of conflicts in human society. There are logical difficulties in a general

theory of satyagraha, and it is not universally applicable in contemporary human society; but it is certainly a novel technique, the particular applicability of which under certain circumstances can, and probably will, be profitably experimented with all over the world along with other methods.

Secondly, although Gandhiji drew heavily on Western thinkers and was also deeply influenced by the New Testament, his theories of satyagraha and of swaraj for the Indian people through a highly decentralized political and economic system, basically derived from Indian tradition, represent one of the very few examples of originality in the almost barren field of contemporary Indian thought.

Thirdly, in this country of saints and avatars, moral reformers have preached lofty humanistic ideals for thousands of years, rarely taking the trouble of descending to reality and trying to reconstruct the framework of society, with the result that the enormous gulf between the nobler ele-

ments of India's philosophical and moral tradition and the structural framework of Indian society has never been bridged. Gandhiji was one of the rare individuals, not only in India, but in the whole of human history, who have sought concretely to remould the society around them with every ounce of their lives. In Gandhism there is a noble attempt at building the fabric of social organisation round the nucleus of moral values.

And finally, there are many universal moral qualities in Gandhism which give it enduring value: the eternal quest for the truth, the proud defiance of a hostile universe tempered by utter personal humility, the grim determination, courage and self-reliance of the lonely pilgrim mellowed by tolerance for the failure of those who fall on the wayside before the sacred destination is reached.

The great merit of Prof. Bose's work is that it has clearly brought out these universal moral elements in Mahatma Gandhi's life and thought.

¹ B. R. Ambedkar: *What Congress and Gandhi Have Done to the Untouchables*, Bombay, 1945, Appendix IV.

² *Ibid*, p. 88

³ J. Nehru: *An Autobiography*, London, 1936, p. 85.

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 82

⁵ See Pattabhi Sitaramayya: *History of the Congress*, Vol. I, 1935, Part VI, Ch. II; Nehru: *Autobiography*, Ch. XLIII and XLVIII; Michael Bucher: *Nehru: A Political Biography*, London, 1959, Ch. VIII.

⁶ J. Nehru: *op. cit.*, p. 76.

⁷ Tendulkar: *Mahatma*, Vol. IV, p. 431.

⁸ *Ibid*, Vol. V, p. 197.

⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 364-65. Italics introduced.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 366.

¹¹ *Ibid*, pp. 367-68.

¹² *Ibid*, p. 354.

¹³ *Ibid*

¹⁴ J. Nehru: *Discovery of India*, 1956, pp. 452-53.

Why do I Write

KA NAA SUBRAMANYAM

IN an atmosphere of crass apathy to literature as such and in a language in which literary criteria are almost unknown and in which writer's conferences take the form of *melas*, and in which all seminars on literary matters take the shape of sermons on how writers should write and what; where a poet is judged by his religious appeal and all art is at a discount, journalism of a mild kind being preferred both by practitioners and readers, I often surprise myself asking: 'Why continue to write at all?'

I started writing in the English language even while I was at College in 1929. But after five or six years of it, round about the year 1935, I came to know of the valiant efforts of a band of courageous young men who were writing in Tamil. I thought that I had missed my vocation in life, and convinced that one should write only in one's mother-tongue, I also began to write in Tamil. Quantitatively and qualitatively my output in Tamil, in these twenty-five years, has been impressive—perhaps I should qualify this out of modesty: mildly impressive.

What was group activity of a sort in the middle thirties deteriorated into incoherence in the forties, and later still the leaders of the mid-thirties group deserted their flags for the sake of dubious success. Part of the literary stand in the mid-thirties period in Tamil had been against plagiarism, but by the fifties, the leader of the mid-thirties group—he who had been very vigorous in denouncing plagiarism—had deserted for the other side; he was himself the author of an adaptation of Gogol's *The Inspector General* at third

hand and had passed it off as his own on an unwary public.

This of course is the superficial side. The failure of the literary movement of the mid-thirties cuts deeper. It made an immediate impact, but was not generative of any larger or lasting influences. Of nearly twentyfive writers who belonged to the mid-thirties movement, not three or two or even one can be said to have kept the original vision intact—none of them have been faithful to the standards they set themselves in the thirties.

Money, recognition, fame are considerations that might for a time outweigh other spiritual or artistic considerations. But the literary writer in Tamil can scarcely hope for any recognition or money, though he can achieve fame of a sort, mainly of a negative kind, as a writer who writes perhaps good but mostly unreadable stuff. A fairly widely acknowledged masterpiece, a Tamil novel published by a 'steady' publisher in 1946, for instance, had not sold out its first edition of 1500 copies by 1962, if we are to believe the royalty accounts that the publisher submits. Non-literary writers, especially those who set their hands to writing melodramatic and dilutely derivative serial stories singing the past or the present of the Tamils, make some money and achieve somewhat wider recognition, even if what they have achieved cannot be equated with fame in the lasting sense of the term. But this is poor consolation indeed to the literary writer for not making money or achieving recognition.

I remember reading in one of the fugitive pieces of the Tamil poet Subramania Bharathi his analysis of the state of affairs

in Tamil; he was writing of the short-lived genius, Rajam Iyer who wrote the second Tamil novel and died young at the age of 26 in 1896. 'He wrote exceedingly well in Tamil but failing to achieve recognition of any sort, he turned to writing in English. His English writings attracted the attention of Swami Vivekananda who made him editor of the Prabuddha Bharatha.'

Good writers in any language at any given time are only too few; the number is likely to be very small indeed. But even the few we have are likely to be swamped by the general run of successes in a language where the best-known is equated invariably with the best in quality—where good competent journalism is often mistaken for literature—where good writing is equated with moral lessons and lectures—where the tradition in all its dead weight is so dominant that no new experiment can be indulged in, nor any new expression win approval, and people thrive invariably on convenient and often recognisable platitudes. It is extraordinary indeed, the number of platitudes the Tamil manages his life with and laps up like a contented cat licking its lips!

The impulse to write anything new or noble dries up in the general lack of literary criteria by which work can be recognised and evaluated. I thought to myself that after a course of elementary lessons aimed at the readers—a sort of introduction to literary tenets—it would be possible to make the stream of good literature flow or help the tide of good writing to rise. I was not cut out for literary criticism: though I am a better reader of books than most, I have no orderliness in my reading nor am I interested in analysing why I like a particular book. But for nearly ten years now, I have been writing literary criticism in and on Tamil with really no bent of mind for it. One or two others who stood stoutly against me at first have now understood the need for literary criticism and they are practising it according to their own lights.

That is good, but we seem to be no

nearer to the spirit of awakening, rousing, courage and discovery which led to the group activity of the mid-thirties. There is a cynical, I-tell-you-it-is-hopeless attitude prevalent and for the past decade or so no new writer of any dimension has been thrown up from the general run of writers. One or two who did show some promise were early, easily absorbed into the movement for journalistic success.

It must be confessed that the state of Tamil letters in the current period is on the whole a very discouraging spectacle, and so the question keeps returning: why continue writing in the face of these discouraging trends? I write partly because it is natural for me to write in my mother-tongue and I continue writing literary criticism including an unprofitable amount of uncharitable book reviewing in the interests of making at least a section of the Tamil readers become aware of and accept certain standards of a literary nature in their demands on literature and current writing. I sometimes even deliberately try to overstate a case in the hope of creating some sort of violent reaction as for instance when I attacked that glory of the Tamil language, the moral maxims of Tiruvalluvar, as being no part of literature and of no import. But no; even that did not provoke more than a trifling response. Of the hundreds who make a decent living writing on Tiruvalluvar, not one rushed to defend his author against me. The Tamils have cultivated the art of ignoring a thing which irritates them till it ceases to exist; or is this perhaps a national Indian trait not peculiar to Tamils alone?

This indifference is again the reason why any attempt to instruct the Tamils in the literatures of other languages of the world fails. The Tamil, if he is of that particular bent of mind, can be violently hostile to Aryan Sanskrit, but to no other language can be react in any manner at all. Place in his hands a great and recognised masterpiece—like Knut Hamsun's *Growth of the Soil* or Selma Lagerlof's

Gosta Berling's Saga—he remains indifferent. He can take it in his stride and then go back to quoting his own moral masterpieces—epigrams from the *Kural*, the religiosity of Sekkizhar, or the lyrics of Kamban. He does not distinguish between the qualities of these either; he goes back to them because they are familiar to him and for no other reason.

I am perhaps exaggerating when I suggest this is a situation peculiar to Tamil. Perhaps similar situations prevail in other languages also, and not only in India.

But I find that I have still not fully answered the question I asked myself at the beginning of this essay—why write at all and why continue to write? To answer truthfully, this is what I should say.

I began writing in English because my father was a writer *manqué*; he had had ambitions to write but he was forced to live out his life as a postal servant far from the world of letters of the other sort. He planted the ambition of writing in me early and he trained me for life according to his own lights. In his generation it was a sin to think of any other language as the equal of English; there was no question of writing in Tamil. But when I did turn to writing in Tamil, it was to a certain extent in exaggerated revolt against my father and his ambitions for me. It led to a break with him; I was reconciled with him both as a writer and as a son only when I had achieved the dubious success of reaching Paris and returning; that was possible even as a Tamil writer and he pardoned me—but only in the mid-fifties.

I said it was in revolt against my father's ambitions for me that I took to writing in Tamil. That is not the whole truth either. I found the English language an inadequate medium for my creative efforts. I found Tamil satisfying and adequate: I could let myself go in Tamil, as I could not in English; I did not know enough of the nuances of that language as living speech whereas I can claim to know

my Tamil. I set myself to learn the Tamil language in my own way: I read the parts of Tamil literature which pleased me and reacted violently to many parts of it which were the general stock in trade of the Tamil pundit and professor. I set myself against the literary dilutions that were the run of the day; what I enjoyed in the past of Tamil literature, I enjoyed whole.

I had learnt a few of the European languages early in my life so that I could read some of the world's masterpieces in the original. This knowledge of languages helped me translate a few books into Tamil from the original (as many as a score of them) and I did these translations mainly from contemporary writers hoping that the examples afforded by these masterpieces would inspire at least a few Tamil writers to experiment boldly and enable at least a few Tamil readers to understand what was being done in the literatures of other languages. My ventures did neither; the Tamil reading public as well as the select few who were writers remained on the whole indifferent to these translations: they did not want them; they were satisfied with what they had in Tamil.

I began writing literary criticism. My own reading in this line is so strictly limited as to be almost negligible. I do not like literary criticism or the critic who often comes between me and my enjoyment of a book. I prefer to find the good and bad points about a book for myself—I would like to like or dislike a book wholly on my own—but I forced myself to write literary criticism in Tamil in the hope that I could force a general recognition of literary standards upon the readers of Tamil. I did a series of articles on the modern masterpieces of the Tamils pointing out the qualities without going into excessive detail; even these essays fell flat on our indifferent Tamil public.

I rediscovered the English language for myself in the early fifties and I write in

this period in English mainly for two reasons: (one) that it pays me some money—my requirements are modest and I live on my earnings as a writer—and (two) that I can say something about the situation that prevails in the Tamil world to the non-Tamils. I do no creative work in the English language, mainly because it does not come naturally to me. I try to translate some Tamil creative pieces into English—my own and others—but most

often this is a heart-rending job; the result is, frankly, not worthwhile.

The persistent basic fact remains that I write, as I read, mainly for my own satisfaction. This satisfaction can be equated with a spiritual thing (with the joy of vedantic and utterly useless self-knowledge) and/or with a material thing (the satisfaction of one's modest biological needs through judicious and competent journalism).

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The Bengal Victorians - Some Ideas and Attitudes

PRADIP SINHA

THE influence of English education in Bengal had begun to stabilize itself by the middle of the 19th century. A remarkable homogeneity in outlook had developed and a type of character had evolved. For about two generations in the 19th century, nearly coinciding with the Victorian era in England, the society of English-educated Bengalis was held together by certain dominant attitudes and ideas.

English education in Bengal in its early phase appeared for a time to have an unsettling effect on society. There occurred an unbounded revulsion of feeling against everything Indian. This was caused not so much by a careful examination of traditional values as by the overpowering force of English civilization. To this was added reaction against a social system whose faults had suddenly been exposed. But literature, as a nineteenth century social analyst puts it, cannot disorganise society. 'If, he argues, 'the one factitious thing called literature has any tendency to disorganize society, the many necessary conditions of existence are nearly so incompatible with disorder that that tendency cannot but be extremely short-lived'. He sums up the transition from old orthodoxy to new heterodoxy as a change in 'Idea and Taste'. Such a change by itself cannot bring about social discord.

One of the earliest products of English education in Bengal was Kashiprosad Ghosh, called the Indian Bard. He may be considered to have been the first Indian poet to write in the English language. He was not a typical Victorian for chronologically he belongs to a somewhat earlier period. His social ideas also were too rigidly orthodox for the Bengal Victorian.

His personality, however, is immensely significant for it strikingly confirms the Victorian paradox—a combination of unorthodox liberal education with orthodox social practice. European in tastes and manners and possessing the most advanced notions about individual liberties and freedom of thought, he was yet a zealous member of the Dharma Sabha which stood for orthodox social and religious values. He was also a stout opponent of Bethune's philanthropic efforts to introduce female education and even disapproved of the movement against polygamy.

The temper of an era is rarely expressed by the average man. The tendencies and contradictions of an age, to be properly understood by a later generation, have to be studied in personalities in which they are unusually clear. Such a personality was Sambhu Chunder Mukherjee, a leading journalist of the time. He revealed, if in a rather exaggerated manner, the basic contradiction in Victorian character. His inherited prejudices were quite at variance with those liberal impulses which grew from a life-long devotion to letters—so writes Skrine in his 'Indian Journalist'. He was always ready to welcome people who had outraged orthodox opinion by crossing the seas. He once advised a friend, who consulted him about the readiest method of gaining notoriety, to visit Europe and take his wife with him. But after receiving a visit from one of his 'English-returned' friends he always ordered the 'hookah' used during the call to be emptied and cleared.

The basic contradiction remained in the personality of Bhodev Mukhopadhyaya.

Bui in his ideas the spirit of the era found a rational and balanced expression and also a philosophical solution. One of the finest products of English education in Bengal, he was an essayist of unusual merit and wrote mainly about social and educational questions. In his own life as also in his writings he revealed a fine ethical perception. He stood for a morally purer society but unhesitatingly accepted the prevailing social conventions which he called 'deshachar' or 'the customs of a country'.

In his attachment to the Indian tradition, Bhoodev Mukhopadhyaya represented the growing trend towards national self-respect which partly followed from a revival of studies in Indian antiquity. Max Müller who took a considerable part in this revival, had argued that the Indian pupil should not be treated like an English pupil. He admitted there was much that was absurd in the Indian tradition. But, in his opinion, it would be the greatest of misfortunes to deprive the Indian student of his past. It is far better, he affirmed, that he should retain some respect for the great names of his history, some national self-respect, even some national prejudices.

The revival of Indian studies, however, occurred within the framework of English education. The pursuit of English language and literature was the vital fact about the Victorian era in Bengal. Sir Richard Temple in his educational minute of 1876 described how the Bengal Victorian, in spite of his other loyalties, never swerved from his fidelity to English education. He had too great a respect for tradition to ignore his own language and literature. A fair Bengali literature was springing up and Sanskrit was diligently studied. A fair culture in his own language characterised an educated Bengali. Still, Sir Richard observed, almost every Bengali who could afford the means did aspire to English education as one of the main objects of his life. The placid temper of the Bengal Victorian could rise to the

most feverish pitch over the issue of the English language. One of the most spectacular demonstrations of public opinion in the 19th century occurred over this language question.

In 1869-70 the policy of the Indian government took a sharp turn in favour of primary vernacular education. It was felt that enough had been done for higher English education, which could now be left to follow its own course independently of government assistance. This threatened the existence of some prominent educational institutions. The British Indian Association, then the most representative organ of public opinion, called a meeting in Calcutta to protest against this policy. The 'monster meeting' of July 2, 1870, presents a strange phenomenon. While the official line represented by Englishmen followed a pro-vernacular policy, the leading Bengal Victorians expressed their deep aversion to the excessive importance attached to the vernacular.

Raja Narendra Krishna, the noted Zamindar-publicist of the time, moved the first resolution which stressed the immense benefits,—social, moral and intellectual—from education through the English language. He affirmed that 'national calamity' would follow from withdrawal of assistance to English schools and colleges. The Raja spoke emotionally about the general expectation that Bengali would be cast in a classical mould and that a great national literature would be born. Already Vidya-sagar with the aid of pliant Sanskrit and a taste refined by English culture had shown how the 'uncouth Bengali' of the past could be made a civilized language. Other writers with their outlook similarly broadened, were working towards the same end. But as long as that hope was not realized, the Raja warned, any scheme of education which would recommend divorce from English education would end in a miserable fiasco.

Rajendralal Mitra, the noted Indologist, spoke of the perfect unanimity over the language issue. He said that their decision

was based on a careful survey of the condition and the most vital needs of Bengali society. It might appear strange that at a time when the brave and patriotic Poles were exerting their utmost to defend their national language, the Bengalis should cry for a foreign tongue when their rulers wished to promote vernacular education. 'But, Sir,' added Rajendralal, 'in Poland the vernacular is of the highest political importance; it holds the people together as distinct from other races of Europe. Our vernaculars, on the other hand (and we have many where the Poles have only one), are poor and undeveloped and serve only to divide and disunite us'. It was well in primitive societies to defend everything that was national. But such a patriotism in the present day would be a curse, said Rajendralal. Moreover the enrichment of the vernacular was possible only through the English language. It would amount to 'intellectual suicide' to abandon such a language.

The meeting was also addressed by Mahendralal Sarkar, founder of the Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science; Kishori Chand Mitra, author of the English biographies of Ram Mohon Roy and Dwarkanath Tagore; Joy Kissen Mukherjee, the philanthropic Zamindar of Uttarpara and founder of the famous Uttarpara Public Library. The substitution of the vernacular at a time when hardly any work existed where one could find a resume of the philosophical and scientific researches in Europe, was considered to be too hazardous a step.

The Victorian attitude towards the English language is thus not of mere historical interest. The position of English was discussed even then, though, so far as Indian opinion was concerned, there existed a striking unanimity. The Victorian society in Bengal had its roots in land and service. In the absence of any other instrument of social betterment—industry, for example—the English language was given

an importance which the present generation might find curious.

English education, however, did not make English the sole literary language of India. In the academic field English held absolute sway. The educated Bengalis generally corresponded in English. The work of the numerous political, social and literary associations were carried on in English. Still, as a literary language English held a subordinate position. In Bengal in 1891 there were registered 1,347 publications in Bengali and only 385 in English. The educated readers preferred to write in the vernacular because they could express themselves better in that than in a foreign tongue. The number of writers was disproportionately great but there was not a sufficient number of readers, especially of the cultured class, to support or appreciate them. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee scarcely made more than two thousand rupees a year from his literary labour. The writers were usually busy professional men or government servants. A leisured class of literary and scientific men could not therefore arise in 19th century India.

The efforts of the Bengal Victorians to create anything of permanent literary value in the English language never succeeded. Madhusudan and Bankim Chandra made only abortive attempts in that direction. They too were initially guided by the writer's instinctive urge to seek a wider circle of readers. But ultimately they had to fall back on their own language.

The urge for expression created by English education found an outlet in journalism. To conduct a journal was the supreme ambition of the Bengal Victorian. In such an atmosphere it was only natural that the most representative figure of the era was a journalist. Kristo Das Pal rose from a very humble origin to become the undisputed leader of public opinion in Bengal. 'A record of the life of Kristo Das Pal', writes *The Englishman* on July 25, 1881, 'is the record of the political history

of Bengal during the past twenty years'. Such a phenomenal rise was possible fundamentally because of his mastery of idiomatic English. A master of English in the Victorian age could transcend all the handicaps of caste and origin in a society not otherwise indifferent to them.

The society that Kristo Das Pal represented—the Victorian society of Bengal—was in the ultimate analysis dependent on land. That society might be said to have grown on the ruins of Bengali commerce. The growth of the legal profession or of the services had not yet sufficiently advanced to challenge the primacy of the landed interest. With very few exceptions, the Bengal Victorians were directly or indirectly connected with land. A successful lawyer, a judicial or an executive officer would nearly always tend to invest his surplus income in land. 'To compare great things with small', said Joy Kissen Mukherjee, 'the elevation to peerage is not looked upon with greater ambition by men of all professions and occupations in England than the acquisition of landed property in this country'. The defence of the permanent settlement and of the proprietary interest in land was therefore as vital an element in Victorian opinion as the advocacy of the English language.

Kristo Das Pal, as the editor of the *Hindoo Patriot* and a leading member of the British Indian Association, reveals a process of thinking that was entirely in keeping with the basic foundation of Victorian society. In his pre-occupation with land, the Bengal Victorian was indifferent to the question of industrialization. Kristo Das Pal, though he recognised the poverty of the Indian people and discovered a remedy in the development of industry, had scarcely revealed the true nature of the situation arising out of exclusive concentration on land. 'The whole nation', wrote a later nineteenth century critic, 'cannot be a nation of zamindars or clerks, lawyers and doctors. Industry is the mainstay of the civilized peoples and there is no industry in India.'

The defence of the landed interest brought the most vocal section of Victorian society into sharp conflict with Anglo-Indian Official opinion. *The Hindoo Patriot* edited by Kristo Das Pal was the spearhead of that opposition. Criticism of administration, of the racial attitude of Englishmen, even of such an exalted person as the lieutenant-governor was a usual feature of the editorials of the *Hindoo Patriot*. Belief in a free press was an article of faith with the Bengal Victorian. In one of his speeches Kristo Das Pal spoke of the freedom of the press with immense optimism. 'Gentlemen, addressing as I do a company of Englishmen with whom freedom of speech and writing is a birth-right, I need not expatiate on the advantages of a free press. In this country the government, by reason of its peculiar position, is despotic but it is a despotism tempered by public opinion. Our councils may be shams, our municipal committees may be shams, but our press is not a sham'. Discussion was not sedition—that was the attitude of the society Kristo Das Pal represented.

Like all the Victorians, Kristo Das Pal was a thoroughly loyal subject. In all his discussions and criticisms, the permanence and safety of British rule were held to be of fundamental importance. 'By a beneficial dispensation of Providence, England and India have been united in a happy bond, both for the good of the governing country and for that of its distant dependency. India is the glory of England and England is the strength of India. England cannot withdraw from India without darkening the halo which surrounds her and India cannot suffer the separation without a pause to that quickening impulse, which has revived her national life and resuscitated her national energy'. The educated Indian of the era was deeply thankful to British rule for the benefits it had conferred. But loyalty did not mean the recognition of the English as the dominant caste in India. In the opinion of the biographer of Kristo Das Pal, himself a

Victorian, it did not mean the submission of individual natives to individual Englishman. It meant allegiance to the authority of the English government and respect for the law.

The Bengal Victorian regarded English rule as vastly better than anything that had preceded it. He considered that no foreign rule could be equal to it. The sudden transfer of that authority to any indigenous power would for him be a great calamity. 'Educated sons of India have learnt to venerate the spirit of the British law which makes liberty commensurate with and inseparable from British soil'. England for them was a name unequalled in the greatness and glory of its historic association. 'But they cannot, for that reason, sing odes to the beatific character of English administration'.

The admiration of the Bengal Victorian for British rule represents an attitude of mind that was influenced by a superior civilization. It is, however,

characteristic of the Bengal Victorian that he never admitted the superiority of the English social system. He admired the energy of the western nations, their political, industrial, scientific and literary achievements. But he considered their social ethics to be anarchical. The social conservatism of the Bengal Victorian provided a solid ground on which he could stand before the impact of the West. The character of the Victorian era was largely determined by the economic setback with which it started. By the third or fourth decade of the 19th century, the commercial enterprise of the Bengal banyans had been buried in land. The growth of the services and the legal profession only confirmed the fundamentally non-commercial character of the Victorian era. The Bengal Victorian, however, was reconciled to this situation. That gave him a poise which the succeeding generations, progressively aware of economic limitations, could not possess.

An Introduction to Sanskrit Drama

P. LAL

THIS has been said in various ways by many translators and interpreters of drama, but it could do with repetition here: what catharsis is in a sense to the Aristotelian theory of drama, *rasa* is to the Sanskrit. Both are attempts to describe intricate psychological processes of involvement and release in relation to esthetic ritual, and both are, as a result, difficult to explain. It is clear, though, that both operate within distinct frameworks and attitudes. One might even suggest that catharsis, the purging, simultaneously, of pity and fear, would be considered desirable among the members of a city-state whose chief concern often was to discover means of repulsing the attacks of the ever-present Persian tiger at its gates, since pity (the impulse to sentimental approach) and fear (the impulse to irrational retreat) were not qualities the Greeks would be particularly pleased to see in their soldiery; any martial society — and all Athens was a standing army — would be disturbed by pity and fear in its midst. One might equally plausibly suggest that the theory of *rasa*, which is the focal point of stress in Bharata's extraordinarily complex 'hand-book' of dramatic theory and practice, the *Natyashāstra*, relates to a society which concerned itself with indolent and sensuous enjoyment, seeking the excessively refined and delicate, and getting so absorbed in nuances of intricate sentiment that it never really surfaced high enough from the sensuous smog in order to portray the realities of a *lived* life. After all, Bharata does expect the poetic dramatist to have a working knowledge of the 'sixtyfour arts', together with a satisfactory grasp of grammar, poetics and metrics; to this he adds, as an afterthought, 'purity of mind, speech

and body.' The last looks like a tall order, especially when one keeps in mind the fact that the drama was supposed to appeal basically to the 'town man', the *nāgarika*, a person of considerable sophistication and elegance, a fourth-century *playboy* type in India who, complete with *Kāma-Sūtra* and all, had his own kind of 'bunnies' to delight wearisomely in.

Yet both views seem to me to be half-truths. For the total picture one has necessarily to refer Sanskrit drama to the Indian, and Athenian tragedy to the Greek, world-view. 'World-view' has become an unfashionable phrase in modern critical jargon; one hesitates to use it, it is too blanket a term, it explains away things, or explains too easily things otherwise slippery and nebulous. But how else does one account for the truly *tragic* world of Greek drama? Oedipus chooses his own tragic fate. The Delphic oracle has warned him that he will slay his own father and marry his mother. Oedipus's fatal flaw is that he is hot-headed and reckless, or, putting it differently, he hasn't the moral guts to will himself into not using violence against a man older than himself — in this case his father Laius; neither has he the self-control to prevent him from getting carried away into a marriage with a woman older than himself — in this case his mother Jocasta. He 'unwittingly killed his father and married his mother,' says Webster regarding Oedipus. Very well; but he knew the prophecy — and he took no heed. Sophocles does not attempt to hide the point that Oedipus is responsible for his downfall. In the Greek tragic pattern, ignorance of the traffic laws is no excuse for speeding — and Oedipus knew what was coming only too well. Oedipus isn't to himself a whole

personality (any person with hamartia isn't), with the result that his heedlessness accentuates his moral off-balance and emphasises the horror of his tragedy when it comes. The 'brutes and blackguards who made the world' have played the game reasonably fair in allowing the oracle to warn Oedipus; it isn't their fault that Oedipus didn't correct 'the vicious mole of nature' in him and make the 'right' decision at the right time.

This idea of 'the stamp of one defect, oft breaking down the pales and forts of reason,' as a result of which, in conjunction with external evil, the hero, 'in the general censure, takes corruption', is basic to the Judaeo-Graeco-Christian world-view. 'You pays your money and you takes your choice — aint freedom grand.' And you have only one life in which to choose eternal salvation or damnation. Not so in India. Here one merely shuffles one's coins in different arrangements. It isn't like betting on one horse and lamenting if that horse doesn't win. In the *rasa* theory one puts small amounts on all the horses; one of them is bound to win anyway. You have the cake and eat it too (many have found reason to complain of the 'both/and' Hindu metaphysics as distinct from the Thomist 'either/or'). And if this life ends in failure, there's a rebirth around the corner.

I have no desire to clutter this essay with what might turn out to be messy metaphors, but what I have been trying to drive at is this: The *rasa* ideal is the creation of a disciplined and dispassionate delight in the theatre-goer, and the finest symbol for that kind of experience thrown up in Indian art is the Gandhāra Buddha smile, or the detachedly attached smile of the giant Trimurti Shiva in the Elephanta caves. One isn't supposed to be purged (Aldous Huxley described the Mona Lisa smile, a Western counterpart, as resulting possibly from a mild attack of constipation!); one is just lifted up by seeing the eight 'sentiments' in harmonious juxtaposition, by observing the universality underlying the individual characterisations, by becoming a changeless witness to the flux

of reality, 'of what is past, or passing, or to come.' But one is not lifted up in any Salvation Army sense. One becomes the bird watching the bird experiencing, in the beautiful analogy of the Svetasvetara Upanishad: 'Two golden birds perch as lovers on the *pipal* tree. One eats the delicious fruit; the other watches.'

This is not transcendental sleight-of-hand, part of the Orient's supposedly exotic repertoire of religious and artistic tricks. The traditional connection between religion and the drama needs to be recalled. Brahmā, the creative aspect of the Hindu trinity, produced, when asked by the gods, the drama as the fifth Veda — and it should be noted that the Sāma, Atharva, Yajus and Rīg, as Vedas, are considered 'revealed' scriptures. Drama is one manner of revelation of the supreme *ānanda* in life. Bharata, in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, makes it plain that the laws he lays down for the composition and performance of plays were obtained from the practical experience he gained when he directed the nymphs of heaven, the *apsaras*, in plays produced for the edification of the gods. And Kālidāsa goes further, saying in the *Mālavikāgnimitra* that 'drama is of many types, but basically it is an entertainment common to people of different tastes.' The *nāgarika*, thank goodness, is not the sole beneficiary of dramatic pleasure. Drama is not an amusement contrived for the enjoyment of *honnêtes gens*.

Consider Sanskrit drama, then, as a semi-religious esthetic ritual culminating in a serenely sensuous impersonal experience. Poetry (*kāvya*), dance (*nṛtta*) and mime (*nṛitya*) produce emotion (*bhāva*) of the romantic type; they treat aspects of the play (*līlā*) of life, and as a result involve people who appreciate them in personal, and sometimes even gushy, feelings. Only drama, because it is the fifth Veda, produced *rasa* (the essence of impersonal emotion; literally the word means 'juice'). Drama is not therefore an expression of personality, but an 'escape' from personality. Greek tragedy is 'the imitation of a solemn and perfect action, of adequate

importance, told in pleasing language, exhibiting the several elements of dramatic composition in its different parts, represented through the instrumentality of agents, not by narration, and purging the affections of human nature by the influence of pity and terror.' In the right sense, therefore, pity and terror are merely 'influences', means to purge the 'affections of human nature' and thereby to create a state of serenity. Drama, says Bharata, is the imitation or representation of conditions or situations in which people, by gesture, speech, dress and expression, produce *rasa*. Aristotle wants an imitation of an action; Bharata prefers imitation of a condition or situation. One puts catharsis as an ideal, the other *rasa*.

Explaining *rasa* is a task beset with pitfalls and problems. To begin with, it is necessary to know why Bharata forbids tragedy as an art form. It is a little more subtle than the way Tagore would explain it — that India's art revolves around the fact of a forest civilisation while Greece's (and the West's) around a city culture. 'Limited by the nature of the intellectual movement which produced it,' says Keith, presenting an entirely different viewpoint, 'the Sanskrit drama could never achieve the perfection of Greek tragedy or comedy.' It is best to refrain from value judgments where world-views are concerned. Bharata is concerned with the central question of *rasa*, with using such ingredients and employing such techniques as will not interfere with the quality of dispassionate delight that is desired to be produced. He certainly does not want national calamity to be depicted on the stage; there should be no scenes of battle, killing or death; and, curiously, no marriage rites, eating, sleeping, bathing, amorous play, and scratching with nails and teeth. The last batch he excludes presumably because he doesn't want 'private' actions and feelings displayed for public consumption; nor does he desire the presentation of curious detail (such as the depiction of marriage rites would naturally involve), since this would distract attention

from the universal to the excessively particular; he prefers to have, in each act, no more than four persons on the stage at any given time (one recalls the kind of confusion that song-and-dance routines and cocktail party scenes lead to in modern social plays!); and he advises against the representation of the horrific, the spectacular, and the degrading (the gouging of Gloucester's eyes in *King Lear* would have shocked him) because these tend to upset the delicate interplay of the eight sentiments that goes to the creation of the *rasa* experience. To keep this balance perfect, the hero must appear in every act. No razzle-dazzle à la Cecil B. de Mille, no fearful anticipation of the unexpected à la Hitchcock. He insists, in fact, that the plot be laid in India and that it be taken from the myths and legends of any of the three ages succeeding the Golden Age, thereby ensuring that his audience will already be familiar with the story. Within these limits, he permits the mixture (*mishra*) of tradition (*prakhyāta*) and invention (*utpādyā*). The audience is not to be treated to suspense and 'tension', but will gently await the expected.

Ideally, then, a Sanskrit play is a spectrum of the eight major sentiments (*bhāvas*) arranged in a manner calculated not to interfere with and, in fact, designed to lead to the production of the ninth and overriding *bhāva* (*sānta rasa*, dispassionate delight). Involved in this artistic complex are: desire, affection, erotic longing (*rati* or *srīgāra*); laughter, comic or farcical joy (*hasa* or *hasya*), but not laughter involving cynicism or scorn; anger (*krodha* or *raudra*) arising from the feeling of ill-treatment; sadness (*shoka* or *karuna*) as a result of separation from a loved person, but not involving *weltschmerz*; legitimate pride (*utsāha* or *vīra*) in one's own powers, leading to the display of energetic enterprise, bravery, charity or forgiveness; fear (*bhaya* or *bhayānaka*) of reproach or attack; aversion or loathing (*jugupsa* or *bibhatsa*); and wonder (*vismaya* or *adbhūta*) in the connotation of an encounter with anything that stimulates childlike

surprise ('O brave new world! that hath such people in it'). These eight bhavas are 'stable' sentiments. But there are thirty-three unstable or transitory sentiments which are employable within a play but have significance only in relation to the eight stable ones; transcending both, of course, is the ninth *bhāva*, the *rasa bhāva*, which is not included in the list of stable ones because they in turn have significance only in relation to it: it is *sānta*, and therefore indescribable and supernatural (*alaukika*). Keith explains, beautifully, that *rasa* 'is one, it is a single, ineffable, transcendental joy, but it can be subdivided, not according to its own nature, but according to the (eight) sentiments which evoke it.' *Sānta rasa* is, analogically, a string on which the eight natural pearls and the thirty-three cultures are esthetically arranged. It is *not* the necklace, but without it there would be no necklace.

This is all from the ideal point of view. All Sanskrit plays do not by any means communicate the total *rasa* experience, but if they fail they do so with the best of intentions. Some, however, succeed; *The Toy Cart* and *Shakuntalā*, read in the proper spirit, should produce *rasa*. With such intricate classifications of feeling imposing themselves on the creative imagination, it is small wonder that bottlenecks should arise. Consider the thirty-three transitory sentiments and their double sets of effects and manifestations, all clinically set down. The unstable *bhāva* of self-pity (*nirveda*) leads to discontent with the world (its *vibhāva*), and manifests itself in tears, sighs and Indian angst (its *anubhāvas*). Debility and impatience (*glāni*) lead to deep sorrow and excessive desire for pleasure, and manifest themselves in indolence or restlessness of the body and temperamental changes of skin colour. Perplexity (*moha*) leads to fear, rashness, painful memories, and shows itself in giddiness, collapse, or unconsciousness. And so on, covering the entire range—the Hindu mind loves to catalogue things without systematising them, arranging without organising—discouragement, weakness, ap-

prehension, weariness, contentment, stupor, joy, depression, cruelty, anxiety, fright, envy, indignation, arrogance, recollection, death, intoxication, dreaming, sleeping, awakening, shame, demonic possession, distraction, assurance, indolence, agitation, deliberation, dissimulation, sickness, insanity, despair, impatience and inconstancy. Absurd, then, to expect even an extremely alert Indian audience to recognise such nuances as they are depicted on the stage, even if it is able to grasp certain dramatic conventions that would irritate a Western audience, such as, for instance, the 'time gaps and leaps whereby the dramatist succeeds in giving his plot an element of credible mobility. This happens in the Courtroom Scene in *The Toy Cart*, when the Judge orders the Clerk to have Chārudatta and Vasantasena's mother brought in to give evidence and to be examined, and the orders are carried out almost immediately, though the audience knows that the court is many miles away from the houses of the witnesses.

Conventions in pure technique are comprehensible, given a sufficient level of intelligence and voluntary suspension of disbelief, but that is not true of complexities in emotional texture. Consider the ramifications possible if a dramatist thinks it worth his while to pursue the subtleties of the *śringāra* *rasa*. Privation in love, according to Bharata, passes through a range of feelings: longing, anxiety, recollection, enumeration of the loved one's merits, distress, raving, insanity, fever, stupor, and death. "Sundering" (the Sanskrit for which is *vipralambha*, a word as texturally dense as *godhuli*, the 'cowdust hour' when the hooves of returning cattle kick up the soft dust which, mingling in the sunset's colours, awakens melancholy desire for union with the beloved in the heart of the love-stricken village youth) can be due to absence or resentment, quarrel by two obstinate lovers, or indignation at finding out, by sight, hearing, or inference, that one's lover is transferring affection by paying excessive attention to another person. And absence itself may be due to reasons

of business, accident or curse (as in *Shakuntalā*), but not death, because that would place it in the category of the sorrow *rasa*. To take another example of mystifying particularisation: counter-action of anger in the loved one is achieved by conciliation, winning over her friends, gifts, humility, indifference, and even by distracting her attention (the manner of distraction, however, is not made clear, but an approach to one's mother-in-law could no doubt help and is, I imagine, implied, in-law conflict being the source of so much neurosis in India).

Naturally, as a result of the excessive pontification of principle, Sanskrit drama suffers from various deficiencies and defects. It recognises and expresses sorrow in almost all its shades, but displays no awareness of the tragic condition; the heroic and the erotic *rasa* dominate, but they do not always build up to the *rasa* of wonder or *sānta*; there is no struggle of conscience in the hero (who was to be a pucca hero all the time, in order to serve as a good example to the audience — Dushyanta's forgetting of *Shakuntalā* is the result of *Durvāsa*'s curse, not a defect in him); genuinely imaginative creation of plot is extremely rare — the epic stories and legends are repeatedly re-cast in various forms; and occasionally the language achieves an unpleasing cumbrous artificia-

lity, specially when the strict Sanskrit *śloka* comes into play (one reason for the perennial appeal of *The Toy Cart* is surely *Sudraka*'s consistent handling of the *Prākṛit* vernacular in preference to the Sanskrit).

Academicians think they own ideas, but poets only clarify them in order to make life more livable. Sanskrit drama should be understood, one critic suggests, as 'an interweaving of harmonies resulting in calm fulfilment.' Or, putting it differently, as Professor G. L. Anderson does, 'the Sanskrit play does not offer a linear graph of action, but a series of overlapping colour-washes depicting emotions evoked in the audience.' Not tension, but the *sānta rasa*; not the linear graph, but the circular motion of the wheel of existence. I hope I have succeeded in communicating what I feel is the essential truth about Sanskrit drama. It moves within a self-sufficient metaphysical framework, the Hindu world-view, and its richness (as well as its shortcomings) derive in large part from that fact. Not to be able to appreciate the bases of that world-view — and there is no reason why an English reader can't, with the works of Heinrich Zimmer and Ananda Coomaraswamy and editions of the *Gita* so plentifully available — is to miss much that is delicate, subtle and elevating in Sanskrit drama, to miss in fact its *rasa*.

The Problem of Alienation

MANASHI DAS GUPTA

SOCIAL life can be seen as a complicated system of communication. It involves decoding all incoming messages and reacting to these through the proper channels. Any dislocation at any point of communication is likely to affect the output (i.e. the individual's social behaviour) adversely. Since there is no uniform mode of decoding, the problem becomes all the more difficult at the receiver's end. The second complicating factor is that the same individual is both receiver and originator of messages, and since there is no external control, these two actions cannot be kept uniformly synchronised with machine-like efficiency and simplicity. The individual very often starts sending back messages without waiting to receive the whole of the incoming message, which confuses the situation so much that the entire channel is blocked for some time to come. As a result, the social contact point gets damaged. At this point, the individual may be said to be alienated or estranged, and the measure of the resultant crisis depends on the context and the nature of the contact-point at which the damage has been done.

I am trying to make two points clear which, though obvious, are very often missed by many social thinkers and researchers. First, the individual is as much a giver as receiver of messages. Secondly, there is an infinite variety of channels through which, if proper connections are made, messages may be sent out and received back, and due to the flexibility of the system of encoding and decoding, the individual can freely choose his own mode of communication.

It is true that the individual begins with extremely limited resources. But as he

grows up and matures, he outgrows his earlier limitations and realizes an endless potentiality of varied experiences within himself. There are reasons to believe that it is not the limitation of resources that prevents the individual from becoming effectively communicable in social life but just the reverse of it. Limitless resources poorly handled seem to pose problems for alienated individuals. Otherwise children and mentally retarded people, rather than intellectuals, should have been the victims of this painful feeling of alienation. But, although children are presumably born alien in this ruthless, adult world, and have to go through a period of socialisation which is often painful, no children have ever been reported to have experienced "alienation" in any sense of the term. On the other hand, alienation very often characterises the growing adolescent's response to his surroundings. These adolescents are, usually, brighter members of a given population. Human adults, whose mental abilities fall below average (border line cases included) are never found to suffer from alienation. They neither receive much nor reciprocate, and don't seem to have any trouble about it. It is primarily those who have a lot to communicate and yet fail to learn to operate the system of control to their advantage who develop this feeling.

This is a provoking statement to make in an age when alienation is accepted as a mark of respect distinguishing intellectuals from the common run of people. It is a kind of special pain, as it were, that great people are made to enjoy. It is almost sacrilegious to maintain that alienation is due to their mismanagement of human resources and call it failure. The popular interpretation lays the blame at the door

of the social set up and portrays the individual as the victim of a wrongful social system of expectations and censure. This view has been most consistently voiced by many social psychologists like Fromm and Horney among others. These theorists, unlike some other neo-Freudians, seem to stress the role of the teachers in the social situation so much, that they hardly stop to emphasise the responsibility of the individual learner. All of them, however, differ from Freud in so far as they explain the situation in terms of social interaction rather than in terms of biological motivation, and to that extent all of these theorists are much more optimistic about the possible solution of the problem of maladjusted behaviour than Freud could ever be. The social conflict involved in the early socialisation stage could hardly be pinpointed within the framework of the Freudian model.

The social aspect of early prototypical learning was much better emphasised in the Malinowskian analysis of the situation. Malinowski did a good service to us who get bothered about the problem of ambivalence of emotions when he clearly pointed out that this is largely due to the contradictory expectations and role-playing built into the social structure. It may seem disconcerting to many that the problem of ambivalence of emotions should be raised at this point. I have a feeling, however, that this is no digression from the course of our discussion because the feeling of ambivalence has a direct relevance to the problem of alienation (as viewed so far). The feeling of alienation combines an approach response with an avoidance response in a peculiar manner. An individual is unlikely to feel alienated from a social group for which he has no attraction whatsoever. On the other hand, an individual, all in love with the social group and willing to surrender to it completely, would not feel alienated if at the same time he did not find himself at a certain distance from the rest of the group—a distance which is more or less his own creation. If

it were not so, if there were rejection on the part of the group, the resulting feeling dominant in the individual in question would be one of dejection or aggression rather than alienation. There has to be a dual longing springing from impulses incongruous with one another in order to lead up to psychological alienation.

When neo-Freudians blame society, they hold society alone responsible for this incongruity. How far this approach should be pushed is questionable. If it is a question of learning from social cues then, of course, those who initiate a new learner into social life should take care to help the former to recognise proper cues. But the learner has to play his role too. It is futile to expect an entire social system to be geared to the needs of a new learner. For example, a child of five is ordinarily expected to learn that ice is painfully cold and fire is painfully hot, and respond to these things with proper psychological preparedness. If a stupid child fails to learn these simple lessons and keeps on getting hurt, nobody wishes fire or ice to be eliminated from this world. Similarly, an adult is supposed to have learned certain ways of life—its bitterness and all—by the time he goes out into the world. It is interesting that when *he* fails, popular support rushes to him and blame goes to the social system for not going especially soft with the individual. This attitude can be directly traced back to the Freudian theory of human behavioural development. It seems from the way Freud portrayed the developmental stages that the human being is a toy in the hands of blind impulses raging furiously against an equally blind system of inhibitions, i.e., the society. The individual is seen as a passive reactor to the social situation where he learned, in spite of himself, how to adjust. In this situation, of course, if one did not learn how to appease a hurt friend, or, how to set out to make adjustment in office, factory, or any other place of work, it was all due to infantile prototypical maladjusted reactions which were hard to erase without a series

of long, expensive sessions of psychoanalysis.¹

The one among Freud's disciples who rose against this theory of passivity was Adler. It is a pity that he never won the recognition he deserved. Adler's individual is actively perceptive and his responses follow his perception of the situation. In other words, the individual, according to this theory, communicates with the world and gets shaped in the process. It seems to me that this kind of approach could have been made to yield much better results in the area of understanding interpersonal behaviour if later efforts had been properly directed. But these were not so planned and the net result was a de-emphasis away from individual responsibility in matters of adjustment and an anxious over-emphasis on the need to make society more accommodating than ever.

Looking at the individual as a point in the elaborate network of social communication we are likely to be helped out of this ego-centric bias. Alienation is a form of disruption in communication related to affiliation messages. This trouble typically characterises adolescent response to the world. A maturing individual tends to affiliate with an increasingly greater number of people and at the same time puts his growing discriminatory ability and communicability to greater test. The more complicated, and maybe, *advanced*, the society becomes, the more difficult becomes the test, and the adolescents feel insecure and estranged — because an adolescent's urges cannot be met by a hug, a lullaby or a good icecream cone. He wants to affiliate through mastery as much as through love.

¹ Freud had a good deal more to say which was sound and exceedingly valuable, but this is no occasion to discuss Freudian theory in detail.

² "If no one comes in response to your call, then go ahead all by yourself" — is the literal translation of the first two lines of a well-known song by Tagore.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to prove one's worth satisfactorily at an early age in a society which calls for some training for such simple work as cleaning the floor, or opening up a can. This kind of situation prevents the individual from participating in social affairs at a stage when the need for such participation is most urgently felt. He feels that he has a lot to offer which others are not in a position to accept. This feeling creates troubles in communication, and misunderstanding mounts high. One of the major sources of trouble here is self-esteem. If the individual learned how to scrutinise and improve his communicability so as to reach the people around him, he might not be finally so gravely alienated as to involve a crisis. What prevents him from doing so is his overgrown self-esteem. If there are talents in him that is all the more reason why he should try to learn how to make the yields of these talents accessible to others. By controlling the feeling of alienation he would not only be doing a good turn to society but also to himself. Because every process tends to reach perfection and a perfectly alienated individual is a perfectly shut-in psychotic, it is much better to stop the process at the beginning than face that miserable eventuality.

Our duty is to learn several languages, to open up several channels of communication and keep them working. If we failed to do so as adolescents there is no good reason why we should continue to fail as adults. Like any other machine, human beings need cleaning and remodelling from time to time. Since we are not passive objects, in matters of re-education, methods of self-teaching are likely to yield best results. "Jadī tor dak shuney keu na ashey"² — then before deciding to walk all by oneself, it would be better to stop and try to improve one's method of calling.

Incest among the Hindus

A Critical Examination of the Hindu Marriage Act

SUDHIR CHANDRA

A SILENT revolution is supposed to be now on, changing all aspects of life in India not through violent means but through gentle persuasion and enlightened legislation. There is one piece of legislation, however, which reflects no reformist, let alone revolutionary, urge. It is the Hindu Marriage Act; its provisions regarding incest are paradoxical and anachronistic, illogical and reactionary.

How is it that the modern Indian legislator, who is usually so keen on reform, gave his assent to such an act? This question is well worth detailed study.

We may well begin our study from as far back as possible—the Rig Veda. The earliest proscription against incest (Rig Veda, 10.10.10) applies only to brother and sister, mother and father. We have no evidence that at that time cousin marriages were branded as incestuous.

Risley argues that man's innate urge for variety in sexual experience must have led him to seek marital alliance with those unfamiliar and unknown. This assertion, in the first place, rests on a doubtful interpretation of human nature. The widespread practice of almost compulsory endogamy within a group (formerly the varna and subsequently the sub-caste) is an unequivocal refutation of Risley's thesis. Then, even if accepted, this hypothesis affords no explanation for the evolution of a taboo from a mere proclivity in the opposite direction. A causal link has also been traced between incest and totem. Goldenweiser and others have disputed this interconnection mainly on the ground that exogamy has been much more widely distributed than totemism. But though

totem may not have been the universal and sole origin of the idea of incest, yet it (or a similar notion) may have been an important contributory factor in some societies. In India even though totemism did not assume explicit form, it affected social organization in the shape of *gotra* and *pravara* which virtually connote descent from a common ancestor—usually some sage. Once the idea of prohibiting marriage between offspring of the same father was established, the prohibition of marriage between the descendants of a common ancestor would develop as a logical extension of that idea.

The ancient Indian institution of the 'joint family', as Kane in his *History of the Dharmasastra* suggests, must also have led to formulation of prohibitions against incest. In the days when men not only cherished but also realised the desire of witnessing 'a hundred springs', the joint family normally comprised as many as three or more generations with the paternal patriarch as its absolute head. The fact that there is no instinctive aversion to sexual relationship between cousins (especially with second and third cousins) must have posed problems of sexual intimacy between young members of the same family. Convention and usage having sanctified a concept of the family more extensive than that which human instinct recognized, it was necessary to impose sanctions to maintain the venerable fiction. Thus cousins within the patriarchal family were subjected to restraints intended to confirm their sibling status. It is interesting to notice that in South India, where cousin marriages are not only permitted

but preferred, this latitude applies only to marriage with the daughter of a maternal uncle or paternal aunt. Marriage with a paternal uncle's daughter is taboo. Since neither the maternal uncle nor a married paternal aunt happens to be a member of one's own joint family, marriage with their offspring can be allowed without incurring the danger of cousins in a joint family being encouraged to fall in love among themselves.

Kane, however, seems to be wrong when he stated that marriage between near relatives was prohibited because our ancient law-givers were aware of the fact that such marriages would tend to produce defective offspring. This observation is the outcome of a failing common to sociologists and historians: the tendency to interpret and explain earlier occurrences in terms of modern knowledge. The use of existing knowledge to test the rationality or desirability of an earlier system from the modern standpoint is permissible. But the attribution to the ancients of ideas undoubtedly recent, simply because their actions are justified by such ideas, is obviously fallacious. Such attribution obscures the most intriguing fact about the origins of social organization: that while in its essence it has been found to be based on scientific truth, its formulators seem to have been completely ignorant of that truth. Although there is no doubt that men of medicine in ancient India were aware of the hereditary transmission of parental qualities and of certain diseases, no evidence that they knew the effects of endogamy exists. Yajñavalkya (1.54-55), for example, emphasizes the importance of a family 'famed for ten generations' and of freedom from disease, among the criteria for the selection of bride and groom. Manus observes that one who desires to raise his family to excellence and eminence should always enter into marriage alliances with the best and avoid alliance with the low. (IV-24) This, however, cannot be construed to mean that the defects of parents are transmitted to the offspring

only when the former happen to be near relatives. Again had these ancients possessed any knowledge of the bane of marriage between near relatives, they would have stated it and persuaded the people of the South not to practice cousin marriages. On the contrary, whenever there was a conflict of opinion as to the legality of such marriages, biological laws were never mentioned. Instead, it was the Vedas which were cited and the entire structure of argument and counter-argument was raised on conflicting interpretations of the Vedic hymns.

Finally—and this, one supposes, should be clinching—if the ancient sages knew that in-breeding was harmful why did they compel it within the caste by prohibiting exogamy beyond it?

The conflict of opinion on cousin marriages is not simply a conflict between the law-givers of the South and their counterparts in the North. Govindaraja, although a Northerner, permitted marriage with a maternal uncle's daughter. Confusion is worse confounded when we come to prohibitions within the same gotra or pravara. The *Hiranyakesi-grihya-sutra*, *Gohila-grihya-sutra* and *Apastamba-dharma-sutra* prohibit marriage within the same gotra but say nothing about similarity of pravara. The *Dharmasutra* of Gautam, *Vasistha-dharmasutra*, *Manava-grihya-sutra*, *Varaha-grihya-sutra* and *Sankha-dharmasutra* forbid marriage with a girl whose pravara or asreya is the same as that of the bridegroom, but are silent on similarity of gotra. There are some which prohibit neither and others which prohibit both. *Vedavyasa-smṛiti* surpasses all these and proceeds to prohibit marriage with a girl whose mother's gotra (before her marriage) was the same as the bridegroom's.

The same diversity of opinion can be seen in definitions of sapindaship. 'Pinda' is interpreted by Vijnaneswara (the author of the *Mitakshara*) to mean 'body or particles of body'. Sapinda relationship, therefore, arises between persons who have particles of the same 'body'. We may

take particles of 'body' to mean blood. But all men and women, argue our ancient sages, may be regarded as sapindas by virtue of descent from the Supreme Being. Hence the need of fixing a limit which Yajnavalkya decided should be seven generations on the father's side and five on that of the mother's. But Paithinasi reduces the prohibition to the third degree on the maternal and the fifth on the paternal side. The Satpatha does not prohibit marriage with a paternal uncle's or paternal aunt's daughter. We learn from the Mahabharata that Krishna married his maternal cousin Rukmini while Arjuna followed suit by marrying Subhadra. Though Kumarila's 'Tantravartika' attempts an 'explanation', this amounts to no more than a device to whitewash the texts which run counter to the cherished views of the Mimamsakas.

Besides sapindas, sapravaras and sagotras, marriage was also prohibited between what have been termed 'viruddhasambandhas' (incompatible relations). Viruddhasambandhas occur when the prospective bride and bridegroom stand to each other in a way that resembles that of father and daughter or of brother and sister, e.g. the daughter of one's paternal uncle's wife or the daughter of one's paternal uncle's wife's brother. The term includes virtual but not actual relationships and thus involves none of those psychological attitudes commonly associated with incest.

The prohibited degrees of marriage as laid down by the Hindu Marriage Act of 1955 include both the sapinda and the viruddhasambandha. Incest for our purposes may, therefore, be taken to mean both types of prohibited relations. Section 3 of this Act lays down that 'sapinda relationship with reference to any person extends as far as the third generation (inclusive) in the line of ascent through the mother, and the fifth (inclusive) in the line of ascent through the father, the line being traced upward in each case from the person concerned, who is to be counted as the first generation.' Thus this Act

follows Paithinasi though avowedly based on Mitakshara and Dayabhaga. A note of explanation ascribes this moderation of older restrictions to customary usage and Paithinasi remains unhonoured.

An explanatory clause states that the prohibited degrees of kinship include:

- i) relationship by half or uterine blood as well as by full blood;
- ii) illegitimate blood relationship as well as legitimate; and
- iii) relationship by adoption as well as by blood.

The Act, however, incorporating the earlier Hindu Marriage Disabilities Removal Act, 1946, of the Indian Legislature and the Mysore Sagotra Marriage Validation Act, 1948, does not regard sagotra or sapravara as barriers to marriage. Emulating their ancient counterparts, who prescribed the penance of 'chandrayana' for entering into prohibited marriages, our modern law-givers, too, have provided punishment for those who contravene their prescriptions. This may amount to simple imprisonment for one month or a fine not exceeding one thousand rupees, or both. Though the contravention of these conditions has been made penal, no marriage, duly solemnized, becomes void merely by reason of such infringement.

An obvious shortcoming of the Act is its dependence on custom. 'Clear proof of usage will outweigh the written text of the law', declared Yajnavalkya about two thousand years back. Where usage is no more than a disguise for superstition, any attempt to perpetuate it must have the result of fossilising the social organism. The Hindu Marriage Act has failed to distinguish between significant and dead usage. It has failed to take account of the fact that for the last thousand years the organic dynamism of Hindu society has remained in a state of suspended animation. The last conscious effort at social reconstruction was made by the Mitakshara and the Dayabhaga at a time when Hindu society was on the defensive. They provide, therefore, a reactionary and in-

flexible system. The question of incest posed, at that time, a special problem because the social system of the Mohamedans took a comparatively lenient view of it. One may presume that fears that the practice of the rulers would spread among the Hindus led Vijnaneswara, Jimutavahana and other medieval interpreters and commentators to assume a very rigid attitude. This explains why Vijnaneswara, who had the good fortune of having before him a variety of views on incest, decided to eliminate those which tended to be liberal. Since the medieval epoch, there has been no attempt at restatement or examination of the traditional attitude towards incest in the context of contemporary needs. In view of these facts the framers of the Hindu Marriage Act might have been better advised to adopt a less reverent and more discriminating attitude towards Mitakshara and Dayabhaga as well as towards custom and usage. It might have been more prudent to reduce the bewildering chaos of countless, and sometimes contradictory, customs to a semblance of order. It is a measure of their failure that the Hindu Marriage Act commends in the South what it prohibits in the North and lacks that uniformity which is the first requisite of a national law.

The principles of eugenics are frequently invoked in support of legislative restrictions upon what are termed incestuous marriages. It is claimed that the progeny of closely related parents fail to achieve the optimum hereditary characteristics. But we do not yet legislate for the sterilization of the diseased and the mentally or morally depraved. The defects transmitted to succeeding generations by such persons are capable of pervading the whole society while the immediate offspring of in-bred unions are the only possible sufferers from their peculiar disabilities. The repetition of incest in successive generations is a remote contingency and the effect of a single such union is by no means a fact established with any degree of certainty. We are thus led to

wonder why science is so piously invoked in this especial sphere while its less ambiguous pronouncements are ignored in closely allied contexts. Can it be true that ancient irrational prejudice has put on the false feathers of scientific truth?

The levirate, now prohibited, provides an interesting study in social transition. Both the Mahabharata and Ramayana testify the prevalence of the practice while the case of Chandragupta Vikramaditya is too well-known to require narration. Extent records offer no evidence of any effect of this custom tending to dissolution of the family or society. The framers of the Hindu Marriage Act, however, thought it proper to prohibit levirate simply because of subservience to custom. So long as marriage was sacrosanct nothing was gained or lost by the prohibition of levirate. Now when divorce has been provided for by the Hindu Marriage Act, the only effect of prohibiting levirate is to prevent a subsequent marriage between lovers when a marriage is dissolved on grounds of adultery with a brother-in-law.

The mere legal prohibition, where natural inclination does not support it, tends to foster, and places a premium upon, clandestine intrigue instead of healthy frankness and honesty. A law which arbitrarily prohibits men and women from entering into a relationship which, left to themselves, they might enter into without psychological inhibition and social or eugenic ill effect, is meaningless. Once divorce has been allowed, it matters little whether a divorced woman marries a former brother-in-law or a man from a different land. If the intention was to discourage such intimacies then we must consider whether that end is achieved by leaving the lovers no honourable alternative to deception and disloyalty.

Cousin marriages were first banned by Manu who asserted that by marrying sapinda relatives one sank low, meaning thereby, fell into hell or lost caste.

But it is a psychological fact that first cousins, especially when they are brought

up under different roofs but have frequent opportunities of meeting each other, develop, early in life, a certain love for each other. As years roll by this love tends to increase and reaches its height during the teens. The twenties mark a new point of departure in this relationship. Where either of the cousins in question is married or has found a new object of love, the earlier love between them either begins to diminish or assumes an equilibrium. But if neither of these conditions is fulfilled, this love which had hitherto remained more or less 'innocent' tends to accumulate an increasingly sexual content during the twenties. Almost unconsciously they continue to drift from purely family affection to sexual romance. Once this psychological metamorphosis is complete the two finally make up their minds to remain together. The fear of society, however, prevents them, in most cases, from openly declaring their intention to marry. But when both of them are boldly unorthodox in their thinking and courageous in action, they conclude that the prohibition imposed by Hindu law is arbitrary and contrary to human nature. This opinion is strengthened by the observation that in other communities (even Hindu) such relationships are approved. Their discontent tends to become more marked and desperate in proportion as the kinship between two lovers is more distant.

The Hindu Marriage Act, however, has managed to remain ignorant both of these frustrations and of revolutionary changes in contemporary Hindu society. It has yet to learn that what is natural and spontaneous should not be legally prohibited unless such a step is socially or biologically necessary. No ethics, however old, should be regarded as an end in itself and allowed to triumph over human needs. It is merely a means to an end, the end being the happiness of human beings who constitute society. Ethics and, more especially, civil law should interfere with the intimate personal impulses and emotions of an individual only when these conflict with

the interests of society as a whole and only to serve the wider social interest. As we have already seen, love between cousins is quite natural and the emergence of the conjugal family no longer requires the prohibition of marriage between them. No ethical, social or legal grounds, therefore, can be put forward to justify the perpetuation of a prohibition which has outlived its utility. It is argued that if traditional sexual morality were to be discarded, we would be faced with an irrepressible sexual anarchy. This is a fallacy which has been cherished and invoked by conservatives in every age and every clime. But what is obsolete must be replaced. Instead of depending on ancient superstitions and divine authority, modern ethics must be based on rational grounds.

The unsatisfactory and anomalous nature of the Hindu Marriage Act is further shown by the permission it grants to either of the parties to an incestuous marriage to dissolve it at will and to enter into a fresh marital alliance with a third party. He or she cannot be held guilty of bigamy for doing so. This ruling makes marriage between persons falling within the range of prohibited relationships an extremely uncertain affair. It permits an unscrupulous person to exploit such of his relatives as is innocent enough to be enticed by his amorous pretences and to proceed with impunity in search of a new partner once his ends are served and his appetite sated. Since the Act professes to recognize the validity of these marriages it seems illogical as well as inhuman to deny to the parties that protection which is given to others.

Ironically, the Hindu Marriage Act recognizes the possibility of a change in existing custom and promises to incorporate the amendments. One wonders how the legislators expect a change in custom when they propose to punish all who transgress current canons.

One effect of the Hindu Marriage Act is that it strengthens the hold of outdated customs on the individual even though

their influence is baneful in the modern social context. By granting legal sanctions to certain customs, such as the prohibition of marriage within a certain degree of kinship, it ensures that the individual obeys the rules laid down by his community. The argument that the individual now obeys the law of his nation and not the custom of his community is mere subterfuge. There is no national legal system with reference to incest. The individual, therefore, comes to feel that even the law of the land compels him to act according to the customs of his community. He feels he must subordinate his own judgment and conscience to the dictates of the community. His community also enjoins him not to marry outside his own sub-castes though this is a command incompatible with the urgent need of national integration. But we cannot expect a man to be subservient to a parochial authority in

some respects and to disregard it completely in others.

This must be our primary objection to the present unsuccessful attempt at legislative equivocation. Laws do not change society. They have little influence upon the mental attitudes and ethical tenets of the people. The law merely defines the norm of social conduct in a particular context of time and place and provides the machinery for enforcing approximate uniformity of practice in relation to that norm. We have seen that the concepts basic to the Hindu Marriage Act are inconsistent with current ideas in ethics and social psychology. They do not reflect the convictions of any section of the people. Instead of a crystallisation of current ethics, this law has given the State's sanction to medieval taboos. When, one asks, when will our country really come out of the middle ages?

Consensus or Conflict

ADI H. DOCTOR

CONFLICT is the essence of democratic functioning. Conflict in the political arena does not mean 'a struggle for survival' in the Darwinian sense; nor such an unsurmountable impasse in the conduct of political affairs that smooth functioning by government becomes an impossibility. Conflict, in the context of democracy, means genuine opposition based on ideological and other differences and the taking of decisions on the basis of majority. Differences of opinion are bound to prevail on all major issues pertaining to political, economic or social reconstruction. These differences relate either to the end in view or to the means adopted to realise that end. Political parties, all over the world, follow these 'natural' differences found in all but the most primitive societies. Parties, in this sense, are neither 'artificial'; nor are they 'a Western import' as the Sarvodayaites would argue. When we speak of 'conflict' in politics it is these genuine differences of view, as reflected in the various political parties, each trying to capture the citadel of government through the power of persuasion and the vote, that we have in mind.

The Traditionalists who support consensus accuse the Modernists who support conflict or elections as introducing into Indian life something alien and unknown to the ancients of this land. None other than the Minister for Rural Development, Shri S. K. Dey, eulogises the Ram-raj of ancient times thus: During Ram's Raj, just as Ram was the ruler-servant of Ayodhya, every village had a similar

counter-part in the Mukhiya or Sarpanch with his counsellors, the panch. The Panch used to be elected in an open meeting of the village by consensus. There was near unanimity. There was no electioneering as we see it today. Good men got invariably chosen. Through Panchayati Raj the government today is once again seeking to establish this glorious past.¹

The Traditionalist approach, the approach of consensus, raises several issues. In the first place, it may be asked, was the past really glorious or at least as glorious as the Traditionalists make it out to be? And secondly even if it was, is the method of consensus suitable to modern democracies which function over large territorial areas? Several eminent writers and thinkers, including the late Shri Aurobindo when eulogising the prevalence of democracy in this ancient land drew heavily from Dr. Jayaswal's pioneering researches in Indian polity. Later research conducted by Dr. Altekar, however showed that many of Jayaswal's conclusions were hastily drawn.² The village panchayats were constituted on a narrow basis of hereditary privilege and if they survived all these years it was only because needs were few and could be easily met at the village level functioning on the basis of a semi-divine and traditionally sanctioned division of labour; also partly because they were left to themselves and the lower castes refused to protest against their exclusion from government. Superficial observations by foreigners have also helped in creating the myth of a golden past. Collin Rosser speaking of a Kulu hamlet, Malana, says: it is completely self-contained and egalitarian. Its governing body has three hereditary officers but the majority, some

¹ Vide *Panchayati-Raj*, Asia Publishing House, Page 4-6.

² Vide *State & Government in Ancient India*.

eight members, are elected. When the village folk were questioned about their governors they insisted that all were equal.³ However a closer look at the village composition reveals it to be a near one-caste village.⁴ It has a hundred and sixteen Kanet families (yoeman) and only three Lohar (low caste) families. The Kanets scrupulously avoid physical contact with the Lohars who live apart from the village. Socially and politically they are outsiders. Politically they are completely dominated, socially they are completely ignored. Obviously then if consensus prevailed, it was because of the caste homogeneity of the Panchayat—ruling being considered the prerogative of a few high castes. The much made of 'harmony' supposed to have prevailed in our ancient villages, if it can be called harmony at all, was one based on undemocratic values, which went unquestioned for years together because of ignorance and mass belief in a God-ordained division of labour.

This brings us to the second question: is the method of consensus suitable to modern democracies? Modern democracies

are built on the principle of each counting as much as his neighbour, no more and no less. Legal equality, in both the political and social aspects, is its cardinal assumption. Effective equality can only be guaranteed by giving all individuals an equal right to vote and equal opportunities with regard to holding of public posts. These can only be had through a system of free and equal elections.

The system of elections is bound initially to create some tension. It has been found in quite a number of cases that the first few elections to panchayats were uncontested. This was due to the hesitancy on the part of the hitherto oppressed to come forward and assert their new status of equality. Gradually however as they became conscious and sought to assert their rights they met with some opposition from the higher castes. At first they stepped down in favour of higher caste candidates; the facade of unanimity was thus maintained for some time still. But then as they became still bolder they insisted on putting up their own candidates to represent their interests and grievances. Thus tension arose.⁵ Some seeing this conflict wailed: 'elections are destroying the traditional harmony of our village'; but surely this traditional harmony being either a myth or a reality founded on undemocratic values, was bound to collapse with the advent of equal freedom for all. Consequently its disruption should not be a cause for bemoaning. Susane Rudolph addressing the American Political Science Association in Sept., 1960 observed, "The nostalgia for traditional village consensus is neither morally consistent nor practical if at the same time change in the material and moral order of the village is thought desirable. Modern transport, communications, and market conditions are fast destroying the cultural innocence of village life; what was self-evident to the fathers is becoming one alternative among many to the sons. Prescription minimises conflict, freedom enhances it. The nostalgic commitment to

³ *Indian villages*, Edited by Srinivas (Asia Publishing House) page 79-80.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Ralph Rezlaff in his *A case study of Panchayats in a North Indian Village*, vividly describes the desperate attempts made by a handful to retain community consensus against the new challenge of party politics set up by the changed moral and material conditions of today. During British rule the Panchayats, Lambardars, Mukhiyas, were selected by the Collector. With independence the democratic method of elections was introduced. The age-long denial of the lower castes to administration now led to attempts on the part of the lower castes to throw off the traditional Rajput domination. They put up a Brahman candidate. Seeing this, the Rajputs hoping to avoid a complete show-down selected another Brahman as their candidate. But just a few days before election day, frantic efforts by mediators bore fruit and the Rajput-backed candidate was elected uncontested. When Retzlaff later interviewed the villagers a good many told him they were happy that the whole affair had been settled in accordance with the good old way. But six years later form followed substance and the fake consensus disintegrated—a Rajput won but a Chamar (untouchable) followed closely.

traditional village consensus is not compatible with the utopias of planned economic development and social justice. Yet both are held simultaneously by many Indians.⁶

Even otherwise let us see how the system of consensus is intended to work at the village, state and national levels. The Sarvodayaites who argue for consensus at all levels of government visualise a Polity comprised of innumerable villages, each self-sufficient in all its primary needs, and cooperating with others only where such cooperation is a dire necessity.⁷ For all necessary requirements, such as small irrigation facilities etc., which a village by itself is incapable of providing, the neighbouring villages will come together and cooperate in providing that need and for this purpose set up a Thana Panchayat. Similarly for problems confronting several Thanas there would be a District Panchayat above which would come the State and National Panchayats. The Village Panchayat would consist of members appointed by universal consensus. The members of the various Village Panchayats would then select the members of the Thana Panchayat of course by universal consensus. The District Panchayat would in turn be selected by the Thana Panchayat members and so on all the way to the top. Thus except at the village level where selection would be by all the residents of the village, at all other levels an indirect system is visualised. Now in such a polity, consensus, it is claimed, would be possible because since every village would be a small face to face community all its inhabitants would know each other and would therefore have no trouble in selecting the few best.

Now to assume that in a small unit like the village, since all the residents know each other it will be easy to pick out the

five best servants of society is to refuse to face reality and to seek shelter in an imaginary idealised picture of the village as the happy family. But the present village torn asunder by caste and class conflicts is more a playground of warring factions than a happy family. Untouchability is still markedly practised in village schools and temples, at wells and baths and this even the Sarvodayaites admit while illustrating the inability of law to remove this social evil. How then can one conceive of a Harijan being unanimously appointed to the village panchayat when the same harijan finds it next to impossible to become a teacher in a village school. Given the present village structure, selection of panchas by universal consensus is an impossible venture.

But even supposing the caste evil were to disappear from the Indian village scene, it would still be wistful utopian thinking to suppose that unanimity would ensue. The problem before the Sarvodaya village is the selection of 'good and wise men'.⁸ But the question is 'How to judge the good and wise man?' The matter is not so simple as some one saying Babulbhai is the best man for this job and every one present nodding, saying 'Yes!'. Different opinions are likely to be expressed on the issue who is the best servant of society. Thus the Sarvodaya scheme of non-party village rule is likely to reduce conflict to the level of personalities. And 'Conflict between personalities', as one critic comments, 'can easily introduce into politics a violence and a bitterness which more impersonal politics will avoid; they are in fact the open road to dictatorship and one of the advantages of strict party organization is precisely that it tends to depersonalise political controversy and to keep the struggle within the field of principle and collective interest'.⁹ Difficulties are bound to increase in the case of selection to the thana, district and higher panchayats. How without the party mechanism, are say the members of fifty district panchayats in the Uttar Pradesh to discover their best

⁶ *Current Events*, September, 1961.

⁷ Vide J. P.'s *A plea for the Reconstruction of Indian Polity*, page 4 and Vinoba's *Lok Niti*, *Bhoodan Yajana* etc.

⁸ *Sarvodaya Darshan* (Hindi), Dada Dharma-dhikari p. 231.

⁹ Soltau's *Introduction to Politics*, page 20.

servants for nomination to the provincial or state panchayat?

Then again the village being a face to face community the residents would at least know each other. But the panchas coming from different villages, some quite far flung from others, would hardly be in a position to know each other well enough to select the best and wisest among them.

Finally from the point of view of freedom, consensus is more likely to reduce individual freedom, than to increase it. As already indicated, the logic of consensus demands the abolition of political parties. This single fact alone would go a long way towards snuffing genuine opposition and gagging it at the state and national level by preventing the cropping up of any genuine differences. Worse still, consensus implying absence of parties will mean replacing the appeal to the electorate on party principles by personal appeals. An example near home is that of Pakistan where after the abolition of political parties considerable hush election activity was indulged in, so that a prominent Lahore Daily, *The Civil And Military Gazette*, complained that the 'wooing of voters is going on purely on personal level'. Again in the absence of political parties which would lift the people out of their 'narrow localism', the members indirectly elected on the basis of personal merit, only possessed (so the Lahore Daily complained) 'local view-points'. The President's argument that parties only divide and confuse the people, could not deceive the people, for it was clear to all that hundreds of candidates seeking elections to the legislatures solely on the basis of personal merit, without any definite programme, would confuse the people even more. Rightly did the Constitution Commission set up in 1960 by President Ayub Khan, declare in its report the need for the emergence of political parties on the

plea that if there were no parties it would not be possible to work a representative form of government.

Pakistan's example also shows that it is easier to corrupt a small group and obtain near unanimity than it is in the case of a larger group. Some 80,000 basic democrats are to elect the National Assembly and the President. This in fact makes the position worse than if direct universal franchise were adopted because it will be far easier to corrupt this smaller number of men and manipulate their votes than the bulk of adult voters. In such a system, the appeals are more likely to be based on self-interest, personal or tribal, and effective power will pass into the hands of those who can exert the greatest pressure social or official.

In our own country the little experience already gained at the village level shows that in order to obtain unanimity several candidates had to be persuaded to 'withdraw'. Now if it is borne in mind that persuasion at the village level almost always works as a pressure, the undemocratic character of the so-called principle of unanimity is clearly revealed.¹⁰ Very often the creation of an artificial consensus leads to a storing up of ill-feeling. And as Morris Carstairs observes in his psycho-analytic study of the twice-born castes in a Rajasthan village: when feelings of ill-will did find open expression, there occurred an utter collapse of self-control, all the more remarkable for its contrast with the give and take approach of consensus. The participants, 'abandoned themselves to anger with a completeness which previously had been familiar to me only in the temper of tantrums of young children. I was able to understand for the first time the epidemic of massacre and counter-massacre which had swept over this 'non-violent' country only a few years ago'.

So far we have dealt with consensus in the nomination of candidates. Let us now briefly deal with the question of deciding policy by consensus. Vinoba, Jayaprakash and the other Sarvodayaites are of the

¹⁰ For a more detailed treatment of this aspect see the author's *A Critique of J. P.'s Polity*, in the *Indian Journal of Political Science*, July - Sept., 1960.

view that even decision-taking should be governed by the principle of unanimity. Discussion should be continued until a satisfactory consensus is arrived at, the underlying assumption being that to every problem there can be only one right answer and therefore it should not be difficult to reach a decision, of the wisdom and necessity of which all have been convinced.

But no psychologist can vouchsafe such unanimity. No two men out of three would think exactly alike. One can conceive of unanimity being possible in a particular or even a few cases but to expect it to be forthcoming in every case is to stretch imagination too far. Besides we no longer hold with the Greeks that there is one or at the most two to three types of good life. Hence to insist on unanimity on the plea that there can be only one right solution to every problem is to open the flood gates to tyranny or to rush headlong into anarchy. For in case unanimity is not forthcoming, the Sarvodayaites do not hesitate to make such absurd proposals as postponement of the decision in spite

of the importance of the subject until unanimity is reached,¹¹ or else dissolving the panchayat and appointing another with a view to helping the members achieve unanimity or even tossing a coin to decide the issue.¹² The last proposition is patently absurd and will not satisfy any party in case the difference is really serious. The method of dissolution would also be unsatisfactory since in the case of a serious split the dissolution itself may be opposed or a reappointment by universal consensus might become impossible. While finally the method of postponement would have a limited application; in a vital matter requiring an immediate decision, say foreign aggression, it would hardly be a feasible solution. In addition the amount of time wasted in the process would deprive the community of the gain sought to be realised or perpetuate the evil sought to be removed.

The difficulties and absurdities indicated above clearly show that there is no other go than sticking to the present system based on parties, elections and decisions by majority vote. The conflict inherent in elections and in decisions by majority at least make politics and government workable, consensus might reduce both to nullity.

¹¹ Vide *Sarvodaya & Communism* by Ranadive A.C.P.I. Publication.

¹² Vinoba's *Lok-Niti* (Hindi) page 102.

Hawaii

HIRANMAY KARLEKAR

THE Sun does not scorch in Hawaii. Rather it melts down from the sky in cascades of loving warmth. One can almost feel it against the skin—tepid like the waters of the coral-fringed Pacific. It washes with changing colours a picture-book landscape of pyramidal hills, idle lagoons and musing trees, and falls on the secretly brooding Pacific. Hills, lagoons, corals, ocean... the pattern is the same in all the eight Hawaiian islands—Oahu, Hawaii, Maui, Kauai, Molokai, Lanai, Niihau and Kahoolawe—which float on the Pacific like petals scattered from the same lotus.

Two breath-taking views of the Hawaiian landscape are provided by the Pali point and the Tantalles, both in Oahu. We drove to the Pali one evening through a fir-lined road that coils itself round the Kaala ranges, hugging at places the vertical hillside like a thin adhesive tape. It directly overhangs the Pacific at times, and looking down we could see the bayonet-like corals holding the charging ocean at bay. Once atop, the Pali offered us an eagle's angle of vision over a cliff dropping directly down to green plains, tapestried with homesteads, pushing towards the ocean and finally drowning into it. There we stood, Annie, the American girl who had come with me, and I, entombed as it were in silence. The quiet was shattered by Annie: 'It was here that King Kamehameha united the whole of Hawaii under him—shoving his enemies down the cliff in a battle'. Her voice sounded strangely distant. I thought of the men who had tumbled down. What a place to die! The plains were slowly covered by a canopy of clouds—red in the

blood of the dying sun. Or was it the blood of the mangled warriors?

We went up to the Tantalles one night with the fluid moonlight pouring down the hill-side, cool as lemonade. We drove again through a winding ribbonlike road flanked by whispering trees and sleeping bearlike rocks. The headlights of the car pierced the darkness like a golden lance cutting the night in two—neatly like a melon. Finally we reached the Tantalles, jutting out of the stark hill-side like a pointed chin. Directly under its shadows slept Honolulu, wrapped in a luminous cocoon embroidered with neons. Beyond it the Pacific, awake in its own web of insomnolent darkness. We stood there without speaking, for words would have been anachronistic in that rendezvous of nature. We gazed unwinkingly and then tip-toed our way back to the car when our eyes tired of beauty.

Perhaps the most picturesque place in Hawaii is Hilo whose amorous trees dangle their seductive arms at the Pacific, tantalizing it with occasional touches. Circles of excitement spread out on the leafy waters from dipping branches, thrilling the sinewy corals. Watching them, Sphinx-like, are the volcanic hills sitting over the torrid passion of the islands. But at times the prisoner breaks through the confining crust of rocks, inflicting a searing red scar on the crystalline sky. And, even while we were there, Pele, the Hawaiian goddess of volcanoes, was jabbing at the clouds with a knife of molten lava, continuously rising and falling, and then flowing down the hillside in a fearful tidal wave.

It provided a wonderful topic of discus-

sion to a community where sensational things are rare and far between, and soon people began talking about 'their Volcano' with almost a touch of affection. I'm sure they would have been more affectionate still, had all the destroyed property been covered by insurance.

But other things were also happening at Hilo while the volcano was snarling and the tourists staring. Things less sensational. Quiet essential things that kept the community moving and which too were colourful in their own way. Rugged cowboys were herding cattle at the Parker Ranch, the second biggest cattle ranch in the world. It is a huge, sprawling affair whose headquarters has to be reached by a car bumping along a dirt track. On both sides of it lie undulating grasslands that finally merge into the rusted iron of the distant hills. Its surface is often dotted with moving specks—black, white and brown—cows that appear like coloured beads on a light green bed-cover. Occasionally a cowboy may appear on the scene, more often than not driving a jeep and always without a gun. But still a cowboy, sun-burnt and lean, authentic. The ranch-house itself is a squat adobe type of building with a corral for horses by its side. There, in the intoxicating sunlight, I was greeted by tanned faces, smiling in a way in which only men living in the great open spaces can smile. We spent the day in friendship with a lunch of sizzling steaks and beans squeezed in between exploring the ranch and riding 'broken' horses in the corral. Then, when the evening chiselled off the sun's rays into thin anaemic pencils of light, I left—happy as a child who has stolen a forbidden swim.

After all this people might expect me to say that they are all lotus-eaters in Hawaii. But no. I found out the very night I arrived in Honolulu that they were far from being so. It was a star-lit night of silvery darkness. I could feel the warm, soft, blanket touch of the weather as I got down at the Honolulu International Air-

port from the Pan-American clipper that had brought me from Tokyo. A moist breeze, smelling of sea weed, kissed my cheeks as I walked along the runway to the terminal buildings. I could not help feeling a little mellow and perhaps this led me to ask the customs officer who was suspiciously eyeing my baggage: 'Don't you feel like lotus-eating here?'

Two red, bleary eyes stuck into a thick bulldog face peered at me for a moment in total incomprehension. Then a gruff voice replied. 'Nope. We like pineapples here'.

Hawaiians in general however are not so prosaic. Arthur Reese, our janitor in Honolulu, came to work in a Chevrolet, wearing jeans and carrying a guitar on his shoulders. He was ever ready to oblige us with songs sung with obvious pleasure. Then there was the professor of History of Hawaii University who looked and behaved like a film star. He carried with him a bagful of anecdotes about places he had been to and things he had done. He had been to Calcutta during the Second World War as an Airforce pilot and had played cricket for the Calcutta Cricket Club at the Ballygunge ground. He had quarrelled with the Bombay police over prohibition regulations and with the Philippines customs over a tape-recorder.

We became good friends and one evening he confided to me after downing a sumptuous dinner with a glass of frothy Budwieser. 'You know, it is much better to remain a bachelor and make many women happy than to marry and make only one woman happy'.

'How many have you made happy?' I was tempted to ask.

'That's the trouble', he said resignedly, 'I like women so much that they don't like me at all'.

Anyway, women in Hawaii deserve to be made happy. Although they no longer wear grass skirts, their beauty is like the sparkling sunlight on the dreaming lagoons, natural like the fragrance of maille (the flower with which they make

the leis, welcoming garlands, to greet visitors). The redness of their cheeks glows like fire in the hearth. Their faces are vigorous, healthy and bubbling with an inner happiness. I still remember Vicki with her mischievous black eyes, Sharon the platinum blonde and Joan who was always scolding me for my forgetfulness. Then there were the ladies like Mrs. Kindig and Mrs. Oldsen who thought that all Asians were like babes in the wood in God's own country and therefore needed their personal protection.

'Keep away from those big dumb blondes when you go to the mainland—you no good imitation of a playboy!' A motherly Honolulu lady had thundered at me in real frontier style on the eve of my departure and had raised her umbrella threateningly on my replying, 'Thanks! I had almost forgotten about them'.

A striking thing about Hawaii is its racial diversity. I imagined that someone might have put here a couple from each human race when Noah was loading his Ark with birds and beasts just before the deluge. Here I came across men of Japanese, Chinese, Filippino, German, Italian, British, Irish, Fijian, Malayan, Russian, Hungarian, Roumanian, Spanish, Portuguese, Burmese and Hawaiian origin. (I am sure there were others besides). Of these the most numerous were the spry, short, Japanese and the stocky, phlegmatic Chinese; while the tall, brown and gay Hawaiian was conspicuously rare. This, I was told, was because many of them have lost their original racial features through intermarriage with other races. Somehow I did not find the explanation very convincing.

Almost all the different races, while maintaining their dominant physical characteristics, have merged into the main stream of the 'American Way of life'. All of them now regard themselves as Americans and not as belonging to the country they have come from. The Japanese is no longer Japanese and the Polish no longer Polish. This was most specta-

cularly demonstrated during the Second World War when Japanese troops from Hawaii fought with uncommon heroism in Italy and the Vosges Mountains against the Germans.

However the process of integration has been gradual, with each generation showing increasing marks of assimilation over the preceding one. For example both the paternal and maternal grand parents of Joan, the girl I mentioned earlier, came from Portugal towards the close of the 19th Century. Her grandparents, born in Hawaii, can both speak and understand Portuguese. Her parents can understand the language but speak very little of it. She and her generation can neither understand nor speak it. They now speak English at home and are full-fledged American citizens.

Most of the immigrants are well settled and many of them are leading figures in the State and outside—for example, Senator Fon, one of the two representatives from Hawaii to the U.S. Senate, and Spark M. Matsunaga, a brilliant young Democrat who narrowly missed the Lieutenant Governorship of Hawaii. Mr. Vincent Esposito a member of the State Senate and one time Speaker of the State Legislature is of Portuguese descent. And one of the richest and most well-known families of Hawaii, the Watumulls, are of Indian origin.

Racial discrimination is absent in Hawaii and so is the colour bar. 'How can I talk of segregation?' asked an American who had married a Filippino lady, 'when my four children have four different skins, varying from pink to fairly deep brown?'

Undoubtedly Hawaii owes much of its charm to its peculiar racial composition. It has produced an ideal blend of American pragmatism, European rationalism and Oriental exuberance. Life is gay like the surf crashing against the coral reefs and full like a deep throated Hawaiian song.

I often wondered how people in these sunlit islands could do such unimaginative things as earning money, balancing bud-

gets, adding up figures and managing accounts. Looking at the graceful sugarcanes of Molokai or the pineapples of Ohau, sparkling in their fields like endless rows of butterflies, one can hardly think of the meticulous organisation and the patient back-breaking work lying behind them. Hawaii is the largest producer of pineapple and a major producer of sugarcane in the world. Patterns are rapidly changing in these islands. They are no longer mere coral-girdled playgrounds of passing ships. They form the fiftieth state of the United State of America with all its legislative, judicial and administrative paraphernalia. They have a picturesque University, a museum and an Academy of Fine Arts at Ohau. They teem with cars and super-markets, Coca-Colas and bowling alleys. A modern concrete-faced, glass-eyed society, swarming with tourists, is sprouting up on their carpets of green. 'How long will these islands remain green?' I asked myself standing amongst the insolent neons of Waikiki in Ohau. All around me were tourists trying to snatch a glimpse of imitation happiness amongst artificial lily-pools, men craving for a moment of bang in their lives of continuous whimper.

Matsunaga and many other Japanese from Hawaii fought heroically in Europe during the Second World War, and, in the hollow of the Punchbowl in Ohau there

is a grave, austere cross for each of their gallant dead. I looked at the rows of crosses, mute postscripts of death, standing over truncated lives and their smothered tales. No! No more bombs should fall on Hawaii—or anywhere else. No more lives should be cut off in their prime. Pious wishes! Last resort of futility. But standing there in the still sunlight, dazed by a sudden and direct awareness of the realities of war and death, I was badly in need of some consolation.

I left Hawaii the night after my visit to the Punchbowl. Pleasantries, jokes, handshakes and promises to meet again formed the sugarcoating of a parting whose sadness I realised only when I started the long and lonely walk over the tarmac to the waiting plane. Memory clung to my shoulders like a haversack full of names, faces and visions, frozen under the weight of the finality that hangs over all good-byes. I thought of the magnificent people of the islands in the soft light of the interior of the plane—the Williamses of Hilo, Sumie McCabe and Rev. Rickers of Honolulu. And then, as the jet leaped up in the air, I peered through the port-hole to have a last, fond look at Ohau. Honolulu waved at me with fluorescent handkerchiefs for a moment and then disappeared. Below me lay only the Pacific, dark, confused and enchanting, like the touselled hair of sleeping Aphrodite.

CURRENT POLITICS

Government and Opposition in a National Emergency

S. P. AIYER

For some time past we had been thinking of revising our policy about keeping current politics out of Quest. The Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom which met in Bombay towards the end of September 1962 was also of the opinion that a section on Current Politics would make the magazine more lively and varied. The massive invasion of India by Communist China in October last changed the pattern of life and thought in this country, and now it is impossible for any educated Indian not to be vitally interested in the political events and currents inside the country and outside.

Eschewing party views in the discussion of current political affairs could hardly be expected or insisted upon. The following article by Prof. S. P. Aiyer is evidently written from the point of view of the Swatantra Party. Perhaps it would not be out of place to reiterate here that Quest is not even remotely affiliated to any political party. It is a forum of free discussion. In fact, freedom of discussion and expression is the only political (or shall we call it spiritual?) principle to which Quest is definitely committed. We would welcome competent discussion of current politics from the standpoint of any political party including the Communist Party—but excluding its pro-China faction so long as the Chinese government pursues a policy which menaces our freedom.

EDITORS

IN the British system of government, Parliament is regarded as a forum for reconciling the conflicting interests of the body politic and for welding together diverse points of view. Parliamentary government is an essay in the art of discussion and compromise but, to be effective, Parliament has to be as nearly representative as possible without any single group having a predominant hold over it. In English politics this is rendered possible through the historical accident of the two-party system which has given rise to a neat division between Government and Opposition. The Opposition is regarded as an alternative government and it is for this reason that the leader of the Opposition is paid a salary. When Parliament opens, the Prime Minister and the Leader of the

Opposition walk in together: this is a symbol of democracy in Great Britain. Government policy has to be shaped on the basis of discussion in which both Government and Opposition have a contribution to make. But while the Opposition may not always succeed in influencing Government, the latter may not constantly flout the Opposition either:

“Majority rule is a useful, almost a mechanical contrivance, the main purpose of which is to find a solution which is at the moment workable. Its function is not to define the perfect solution, but rather to keep ‘the game going’ to avoid those awkward impasses which in extreme cases lead to arbitrary action. The responsibility is to conduct a

the watchful eye of an alert and critical minority.¹

The Opposition then is as important in the theory of democratic government and politics, as the party in power. It represents a section of public opinion and voices discontent. It must however be emphasised that Government by Opposition works successfully in England because of long established traditions of liberty.

When parliamentary government was adopted in this country it was entirely due to the "faith" which a small group of western-educated persons had in the possibilities of working the system in spite of the plural character of the society. The first few years of Independence and experience of the working of parliamentary institutions did create some confidence in India's ability to run the mechanism satisfactorily. Nehru played an important role in moulding the nature of Parliament in the earlier years. He even seemed enthusiastic of the role of the Opposition. Speaking in Parliament on May 22, 1962 Nehru said:

"We welcome the coming to this House of the Members of the Opposition whoever they may be, and however much we may differ from them in many matters, we welcome them, because it is good in a House of this kind to have a vigorous opposition so that whether it is government or the majority party, they do not become complacent. If I may strike a personal note, regardless of the present differences, when I see many faces of old comrades who belong to the Opposition now, some memories of the past come to me. I do not wish to forget them, and I cannot imagine that ways may not be found for a measure of

cooperation with those with whom we have cooperated in the past."

There can be little doubt that during the first eight years or so Government and Opposition fared comparatively well in working the parliamentary system. Students of the Indian Parliament — both Indian and foreign — bear testimony to this development. Professor W. H. Morris-Jones in his *Parliament in India*, the most authoritative study to appear in the first decade of the Constitution provided a very hopeful and encouraging picture of Parliament at work. A large part of the credit for this achievement would doubtless go to Nehru.² At a public meeting in Madras on January 31, 1957, Nehru said:

"I believe completely in any Government having stout critics and having Opposition to face, because without criticism people become complacent. The whole Parliamentary system is based on this criticism."³

Even at this period commentators on Indian politics were not unaware of the Prime Minister's impatience with criticism. Since 1958 however, this attitude has become more marked. With the passage of years he has become increasingly impatient to bring about change in India as rapidly as possible. He would like to see India transformed in his own lifetime.⁴ Eagerness for rapid change brought with it a certain indifference to the views of his critics — an indifference often bordering on contempt. There has always been an undercurrent of authoritarianism in Nehru's character. There can be no better authority on this than Nehru himself. Way back in 1930 in a remarkable study in self-criticism Nehru wrote about himself under the pen-name of Chanakya:

"In normal times he would just be an efficient and successful executive, but in the revolutionary epoch Caesarism is always at the door and is it not possible that Jawaharlal might fancy himself as a Caesar? Therein lies the danger for Jawaharlal and India."⁵

Nehru's love of power is not that of a dictator but of one who wants it to serve the people and the country he loves. It is

¹ Smith and Lindeman: *The Democratic Way of Life*. Mentor, 1958, p. 220.

² Michael Brecher—*Nehru: A Political Biography*, O.U.P. 1959 p. 468.

³ *Ibid.* pp. 468-69.

⁴ Cf. Percival Spear: *India — a Modern History*, 1961. p. 428.

⁵ Cited by Amaury de Riencourt: *The Soul of India*, p. 347. In an interesting chapter Riencourt develops the authoritarian trends in Nehru's attitudes. This book deserves to be read more widely than it is in this country.

the paradox of Nehru that his very patriotism makes him today irritated by criticism and increasingly contemptuous of the Opposition. Nehru's own reasoning runs on the following lines:

"I have lived and grown as a child of the Indian Revolution. The dreams I dreamt of I must realise while I live. This I am determined to do. In my life time I have seen the twists and turns of politics; and I have some idea of the nature of human history; I have closely followed the development of world politics. The Opposition does not really understand me. Things are so clear to me that there must be something wrong with the critics. They are either vested interests (Swatantra) or Hindu reactionaries whom I have tried in vain to check (Jan Sangh). Or else they are mis-guided and out-moded theorists who do not understand the needs of India (Communists). There are of course the romantically inclined dreamers who do not know the nature of politics. These I can ignore. (The followers of J.P. and his type)"

Thus Nehru the democrat gets involved in a maze of self-deception and begins to develop ideas and attitudes singularly unhelpful for democracy.

This tendency seems to have developed in a particularly marked way ever since the Swatantra Party appeared on the Indian political scene. There are of course good reasons for Nehru's ardent dislike of the new party. Supported by a section of big business it threatened to siphon off at least a part of the funds Congress was getting from organised business.⁶ Big business in India was quick in sensing the potentialities of the new party but preferred to exercise some caution. Congress links with the capitalists were not seriously affected. But the attitude of Big Business is often a reliable barometer of political change. Its attitude became apparent when during the Third General Elections, the Tatas promised the Congress 2/3rds of its political

donations giving a third to the Swatantra Party. The new party brought out the contradictions of Congress policy well when Mr. Minoo Masani, one of the founders of the Party, argued vehemently against companies giving donations to political parties in the course of the debate in the Lok Sabha on the Companies Amendment Bill.⁷

The massive Chinese attack on NEFA seemed to prove to the nation the wisdom of the Opposition parties and Nehru's own folly in trusting a Defence Minister who had let the country down. Opposition within the Congress combined with opposition outside to compel the resignation of a minister in whom a majority of the people had no trust. The full story of Krishna Menon's exit from the Union Cabinet will doubtless emerge only with the passage of years.

The development of the Opposition and its role in the national emergency has to be viewed against the back-drop of these events.

The theory and practice of the Opposition gets slightly modified under the circumstances of a national emergency. An opposition cannot function during a war period with the same temper which it shows during normal times. Rights and privileges have necessarily to be curtailed and subordinated to the larger interests of national security but these restrictions cannot be "imposed"; they must in a democracy take the character of a self-denying ordinance. For the first time since Independence, India has found herself overtaken by a situation of extraordinary emergency. The country has had no experience of how to function in a time like this. Neither Government nor Opposition is sufficiently aware of the need to have a different conception of parliamentary government during the emergency. What little exploration has been made into the first principles of Government by Opposition has come from the Opposition parties and particularly from the leaders of the Swatantra Party. In the newspapers at this time one looks in vain for any clear exposition from the Prime Minister or from

⁶ Brown, Bernard: *Organised Business in Indian Politics*. Indian Journal of Political Science, April-June 1962.

⁷ In the Lok Sabha on 16-11-1960.

ministers of the importance of adapting the machinery of parliamentary government for the purposes of meeting the challenge of the situation. We may therefore take a look at the stand taken by the Swatantra Party and consider the merits of its approach.

The national emergency has naturally precipitated a situation which everyone can exploit in the name of patriotism. This is a natural consequence of a crisis and history provides many examples. Even parties which have no faith in parliamentary institutions can in such a period disrupt and divide the friends of liberty by their diabolical plans. Speaking in the Lok Sabha on November, 1962, on the China debate Professor N. G. Ranga made this point well:

"To the Communists, parliamentary democracy has no fascination. Therefore they find it easy now, when it is so very convenient to them on this occasion, to give us advice that we should not say anything which is likely to upset the peace of mind of the great men on the other side."

It is unfortunate—but perfectly understandable—that an unhealthy atmosphere has been created in this country in which any one who criticises the Government or the Prime Minister is a traitor to the country. The Communists are attempting to salvage their reputation by calling for unqualified support to the Government. A situation has been created in which any party that does not give unqualified support to the Defence effort runs the risk of national isolation. The Swatantra Party has taken the risk—all the more creditable because it has yet to consolidate itself effectively in the public mind. Speaking on the party's policy of "conditional" and qualified support Professor Ranga said:

"We are here to play our role as an Opposition, as a responsible Opposition, as a co-operative link in our total democracy, a democracy in which it should be possible

for the Government to gain from the criticisms that are made from time to time by the Opposition. It is true that some of my brave friends within the Congress have been trying to play quite an inspiring role in the recent past in order to tune up their own party and try to see that it lines up with the people. But that is not enough. I have had experience of that role, and I have known its limitations. Therefore it is very necessary indeed that there should be effective opposition in this country..."

But the role of the Opposition does not conflict with the support the Party would give to the country's Defence efforts. Professor Ranga continued:

"But that does not mean that we do not line up with all the rest of the country in strengthening and in maximising the defence effort, in promoting the national will of resistance against aggression. We are with the government, and we are with all the other political parties which are sincerely bent upon supporting this national effort."

Speaking on October 31, 1962, Mr. M. R. Masani the General Secretary of the Swatantra Party drew attention to the attitude of the Labour Party in England which was similar to that now taken by his own. The Labour Party, he pointed out, gave support to the armed forces and to all the defence measures but relentlessly opposed the continuation in office of Mr. Neville Chamberlain—"the guilty man who was responsible for Munich, for the appeasement of Hitler and thus for launching the World War on Britain and the World."⁸

In an article on Parliament in Wartime, Prof. Jennings writing of the "discriminating" support of the Labour and Liberal parties, observes that basic agreement on the essentials of defence rendered easy the passage of a large number of emergency measures which the outbreak of the war demanded.⁹ It is somewhat unfortunate that the Government in India should have failed to create a similar atmosphere of confidence. It is true that all the parties have pledged support to the defence effort. For this credit is due to them but the Govern-

⁸ *Swatantra Answer to Chinese Communist Challenge*, pp. 26-27.

⁹ W. Ivor Jennings: *Parliament in Wartime*, Political Quarterly, April-June 1940 p. 184.

ment on the other hand has done little to assure the Opposition parties in Parliament that their criticisms would be carefully considered. Some of the debates in the Lok Sabha betray a tendency on the part of the Government to conceal its indifference to criticism by resorting to light-hearted replies which hardly answer the Opposition's charges.

It is difficult not to feel that the Prime Minister missed a fine opportunity to create a new conception of the role of the Parliament in the national emergency. If the conception of the role of the Opposition needs to be modified, Parliament itself must function in a different light. Speaking of the debates in the British Parliament during the early part of the war, Mr. H. R. G. Greaves said: "While the main issue of confidence is no longer under discussion however, Parliament shows no signs of abdicating its associated function of vigilant supervision and the voicing of popular feeling."¹⁰

Through the debates in these early months a new conception of Parliament emerged. It became what Greaves calls a 'collaborating Council of State.' Debates cut across the normal divisions of party politics. It was pointed out that the best results could not be achieved by having Divisions and threatening Divisions which are not effective in a war period but only by 'putting forward reasoned arguments to the Prime Minister and if those arguments obtain support from all quarters of the House, the Government should take into consideration and act in accordance with the wishes of the House.'¹¹

One wishes that even at this late stage a better understanding would evolve between the Government and Opposition groups in this country. That the Govern-

ment has not created confidence in the Opposition parties is undeniable. There is the feeling in some quarters that the Government might take this opportunity for arming itself with extraordinary powers in the name of national emergency and use them for weakening if not for destroying the Opposition parties. During the debate on the Defence of India Bill (November 21, 1962) Prof. Ranga said:

"I am not able Sir, to say to myself that I have a Government which can be expected, not only momentarily but throughout the emergency, to show as much respect, as much consideration of the rights of the citizens as well as ordinary persons in the country as the people are now expected to bestow all this authority on the Government."¹²

Mr. C. Rajagopalachari had the same misgiving when he said that in the present struggle democracy should not be allowed to suffer: "While every effort should be mobilised to fight the invader and push him out of Indian soil, equal attention should be given to preserve democracy inside the country. Invariably, in any war the first casualty would be democracy. That should not be allowed."¹³

The fears expressed by members of the Opposition cannot be dismissed as baseless and unreal. That democracy has not yet taken root in the soil of India hardly needs to be proved and the fact that India does not have a constitutional tradition is generally accepted. To this must be added the argument that no one knows for certain how long the emergency will last. While Nehru's own essentially democratic instincts may not be doubted, the temper of the rank and file in the Congress does not inspire confidence. Responsible members of the public have expressed themselves in the columns of leading newspapers in the country.¹⁴ A reference may here be made to the recent circular issued by the office of the All India Congress Committee (Circular No. 23/OD-7/57/17491)

"A campaign against the Government is carried on by some interested parties particularly the Jan Sangh and the Swatantra

¹⁰ H. R. G. Greaves: *Parliament in Wartime*, Political Quarterly, April-June 1941. p. 202.

¹¹ Quoted in H. R. G. Greaves: *Ibid* p. 203

¹² Swatantra Newsletter, December 1962 p. 11

¹³ In an exclusive interview with *Hindustan Times*, November, 1962

¹⁴ One may cite as an instance typical of these opinions the letter by Mr. Nissim Ezekiel in *Times of India*, Readers' Views, December 18, 1962.

Party and sometimes even the Prime Minister is attacked. It is wrong to permit opposition parties to take advantage of the emergency for throwing mud against the Congress. Extensive tours must be undertaken by prominent leaders, especially by the office-bearers of the Congress Committee. Meetings big and small throughout all the districts should be held. Positive stand against the criticism about the Prime Minister should be taken. It must be emphasised that those who criticise him are traitors."

That Nehru himself was unaware of the circular which was brought to his attention by Prof. Ranga makes the threat to liberty all the more serious. We should not let a new species of McCarthyism creep into the body politic. The Circular gives expression to a personality cult and equates in a shocking way the Party with the Government. This is the very essence of totalitarianism. Mr. Nehru described the Circular as 'very improper' but went on to add that some members of the Swatantra Party and Jan Sangh, however, have made very irresponsible statements. One would have expected Nehru to condemn the Circular in unqualified terms. But as indicated above Nehru has developed an intense dislike for the Swatantra Party and possibly to a lesser extent, the Jan Sangh. The *Indian Express* brought out the danger to the country of such circulars in its editorial of December 3, 1962:

"The Congress might be the Party in power but it cannot arrogate to itself authority which belongs only to the Government. Much less can it equate itself with the country and hold its leader immune from public criticism... the iden-

tification of a leader with the nation can only lead to dictatorship."

In a national emergency the public needs to be more alert than during normal times when the temptations of power are less insidious. The Opposition has to adopt a different attitude during the emergency but it has to retain its essential function of criticism. In the context of Indian conditions this role is perhaps even more important. Mr. Masani rightly points out the relevance of criticism by Opposition parties in the present circumstances:

"To day, in India, we do not have a government which enjoys the confidence of the majority of the electorate. Only as recently as February this year the electorate voted, and only 45% of the electorate voted for Mr. Nehru and the Congress Party. 55% voted against them. It is because the Opposition is so divided that the Congress Party enjoys a fictitious majority in office in the House of the People today. That is why, with a minority government in office, the parties that together represent the majority of the people have a higher responsibility than even the British Labour Party had in 1939."

Considering the callousness of the Congress and Nehru's own impatience with criticism since 1958 which has been emphasised in this article, it is not surprising that during all the comparatively 'normal' period no attempt was made by either the Prime Minister or leading members of the Congress to clarify the role of the Opposition. It is of great significance that the subject should be discussed at the present juncture of the nation's history when the threats to individual freedom are all around.

Svadhin Sahitya Samaj

Society for the Freedom of Literature

This is the English translation of a Bengali draft prepared by Abu Sayeed Ayyub on behalf of the Svadhin Sahitya Samaj and published on 18-1-63 in DESH, ANANDA BAZAR PATRIKA, JUGANTAR and LOK-SEVAK under the signatures of Tarasankar Banerjee, Premendra Mitra, Abu Sayeed Ayyub, Buddhadeva Bose and Subodh Ghosh. The English version is by Abu Sayeed Ayyub.

ARTISTS, litterateurs and thinkers are not particularly distinguished for their social qualities. On the contrary, they have been described as individualists, decried as dwellers in ivory towers, psychologically classified as introverts. And there is a measure of truth in all this. Although his creative or discursive talents are largely concerned with man as an individual or as a member of society, the artist, the man of letters, the social scientist or the philosopher contrives to put himself at a distance — in art this is technically known as 'psychological distance' — from the human situation. He looks at man, so to speak, through the wrong end of a telescope. Despite his unusual sensitiveness to the whole gamut of human emotions, he must attain to high degree of detachment, or else his vision will be clouded. But today the affairs of our country have reached a crisis that has shaken every Indian to the roots of his being. Even the thinker and the artist, individualist as he is, finds within his normally tranquil and secluded mind the upsurge of such a collective emotion as patriotism. He has come to realise with a new intensity that over and above his function as artist or thinker, he has duties as a citizen of this dear land of his, and is naturally anxious to find out how best he can use such talents as he possesses in order to meet the common danger. Any day he may be called to the battle front or to other civilian tasks no less arduous or risky. Perhaps that day is not far off. He would surely answer the call of the motherland

with the same eagerness with which British men of letters and science answered their country's call after the tragedy at Dunkirk. At the moment, although still at his old tasks, he sees that these cannot now be confined within the precincts of old definitions; they are acquiring a new breadth and solidity and a new tautness of muscles by touching the hard soil of his motherland—the land where live four hundred million men and women united as never before by a common peril and a common determination.

What happened in the passes and valleys of the Himalayas a few months ago changed not only the course of Indian history but also the character of the Indian mind. The broad events are known to every one, but it is doubtful if their far-reaching implications are properly understood by many people. It should be our first task to help in the broadening and deepening of this understanding. Every one knows that our ill-equipped border forces along the Himalayas were unable to meet the long-planned massive attack by an unscrupulous enemy. We lost many gallant lives and had to yield some ground. The pain and dishonour of that still rankles in the bosom of every Indian. For many and complex reasons the Communist government of China halted their invasion as suddenly as they began it and have vacated most of the territory they overran. They have declared a cease-fire, but do not seem inclined to end the state of war which

they initiated in defiance of all moral and political principles.

Communism is a proselytising and militant creed. The Communist Manifesto leaves no room for doubt on this score. Believers hold it a sacred duty to spread their dogma over the entire surface of the earth, and regard all means however foul or bloody as justified by the end. Their success in this sacred mission is assured; that is the decree of providence, in other words, the decree of history — 'history is on our side'. Khrushchevites, no doubt, are making great play with notions of coexistence, defeating the capitalist countries in economic competition, and winning the world over to communism by peaceful means. But this is idle talk, adolescent wish-fulfilment, or revisionist sophistry. The path to communism runs right through the battle-field. The theory of class-war means unremitting war between capitalism and communism, not excluding the possibility of a thermo-nuclear war. But ceasefire, cessation of hostilities for short or long periods, sweet words of peace and goodwill are also necessary as strategic moves in this world war. Such, in brief, is the basic international politics of Maoist communism or Communist China. Not peaceful construction but military build-up is the first item on their national programme. Not Confucius or Lao Tse but Chengiz Khan emerges as their great national hero today. At enormous expense an imposing mausoleum has been erected on the tomb of this man, probably the greatest killer in all human history.

All this concentration on war preparation is of course for the holy war, the war to spread communism over the world, least ways over the continent of Asia. Its first battles were fought on the soil of Korea. There is no doubt that after due deliberation and long preparation an invasion was launched against India. If India could be overrun by Chinese communism, there would be little difficulty in bringing the rest of Asia to heel. On the other hand, if India were left to follow her democratic way of peaceful construction with impu-

nity, she could be a formidable rival, an alternative magnet to the peoples of Asia. There is every reason to believe that our hard won independence, our young democracy, our cherished plans of economic construction and of building up a socialistic pattern of society, are all gravely threatened today. They are threatened not only by forces outside but also by forces inside our frontiers. Unfortunately, there are not a few Indians who are apt to regard our invaders as our liberators. A big section of the 'Indian' Communist party (in West Bengal, from all accounts, this section constitutes a substantial majority) was not at all inclined to admit that the armed forces of Communist China had invaded our country. For these Communists, it is axiomatically true that no Communist State can ever commit aggression. Their representatives voted against the resolution proposed in their National Council meeting of November 1, 1962, condemning the Chinese aggression.

There is nothing surprising in all this. The Indian Communist party has not built itself up through years of hardship and struggle just to go on playing the role of an opposition party on the floor of the Lok Sabha or the State Assemblies year after year. Parliamentary politics runs against the grain of communist theory and practice. For any communist party, it is of paramount importance to get on to the seat of power through the quickest possible route by the surest possible means. Whatever remote chances the Indian Communist party had of capturing power through the constitutional machinery, were wrecked by the folly of their Kerala comrades and the treachery of their Chinese mentors — treachery not against themselves but against the Nehru government. They cannot but fall back now on their classical revolutionary methods. But revolution against the firmly established, comparatively popular and moderately progressive present regime in India has little chance of success — unless simultaneously a powerful invading army can undermine the prestige of the present upholders of power

and dislocate their power structure. That is why we believe the invading armies of Communist China cannot proceed far into Indian territory unless the insurrectionary wing of the Indian Communist party is able to create some chaos and confusion inside the territory. On the other hand, the Indian Communist party knows that it cannot mount the government *gaddi* unless their Chinese comrades give them a leg up. Thus almost inevitably the Indian and the Chinese Communist parties have to play complementary and cooperative roles with respect to each other; doctrinal community as well as practical compulsions bind them together.

Differences in matters of theory and policy between the Soviet and Chinese Communist parties have of late taken the shape of a somewhat vociferous family quarrel. As a consequence, the Indian Communist party has split up into pro-Kremlin and pro-Peking factions. The significance of this split should not be exaggerated. It is well to remember that the Russian Communist party — though eager to retain its leadership of international communism — is not at the moment frightfully keen on promoting and actively supporting insurrectionary movements in non-Communist countries, particularly in a non-aligned country like India. On the other hand, the Chinese Communist party scoffs at India's non-alignment policy, and is fully determined to give unqualified support theoretically and practically to all revolutionary trends in Indian communism. It has recently demonstrated that its determination to that effect can surmount all barriers including the high Himalayas. There is thus good ground to infer that not the pro-Kremlin but the pro-Peking faction of the CPI will become its more powerful faction (in West Bengal it is already so) — openly if possible, underground if necessary.

There is much public resentment against and disgust at the Indian Communists because a big section of them regards it as its duty to follow a line of action which could be described as 'fifth-columnist' without

unduly stretching the word. But the opposition of intellectuals and litterateurs to communism is deeper still. What we regard as the paramount ideals of our individual and social existence have been trampled into dust by the Communists. Not only that; they have installed in their place two ideals which are totally opposed to these and are determined to realize them, in accordance with their theory of class war, by suppressing all difference and destroying all opposition through naked force. We deeply believe that human personality is sacred and its full expression must never be thwarted save only if it comes in the way of the expression of other personalities; for the Communists, the individual is only a cog in the State machine. We are firmly committed to full democracy; they are equally determined to clamp down on everybody's shoulder a totalitarian dictatorship. According to Communist scriptures the proletarian revolution is to be followed by the dictatorship of the proletariat. But this theoretical picture is so out of touch with reality that the text had to be revised and we were told that it is the Communist party which must assume dictatorial power — of course as the vanguard of the working class. Even this is a gloss over fact: what did happen in all Communist countries was that final and total power passed into the hands of the highest junta of the party, eventually into the hands of one person, the great dictator. At the Quixotic whim of the dictator backed by the expertise of his obedient scientists, millions of helpless people are sent from cities to villages and from fields to factories, from fertile lands to deserts, tundras or snowbound plateaus—to toil, suffer and die. Those that survive cannot raise their voice of complaint against the tyrant's rod; on the contrary, every one has to declare how happy he is, how eager to place his body and soul, his life and death at the dictator's command. The dictator and his chosen experts exercise unquestioned and unmitigated control over everybody's life from the moment of birth to the moment of death, over

nursery, kindergarten, school and college, over labour and leisure, over speech, thought and emotion. The individual's fulfilment in a dictatorial society lies not in the development of his personality along the path freely chosen by himself, but in the surrender of his individuality to the totalitarian State — State of course being in general only a euphemism for the great dictator.

Creative artists and intellectuals have reasons to hate and fear this anti-individualistic order of society more than anybody else. For them, freedom of the individual is literally a matter of life and death. Self-realization is just not possible for them along beaten tracks, along the paths of custom, tradition or holy scriptures. They are always in quest of new paths; the nature of their work leads them ever to break through the bounds of old traditions and to lay the foundations of new ones. What to write, how to write, what are the criteria of beauty and truth — there is nothing permanently fixed about these things; they have to be perpetually questioned and answered, formulated and reformulated. But in this unending process of discovery and reformulation they can admit no authority except that of their artistic or scientific conscience, cultivated taste and informed reason. Precisely in these matters, however, the fiat of the dictators is most irrevocable, unquestionable and intolerant. For if in art, literature and thought, dictatorial regimes cannot make their grip firm, it will become loose in every other sphere. If the least trace of liberty is allowed in this sector of society, the seeds of that poison tree will be scattered far and wide and sprout in unexpected fields. This small part of society, which is its most expressive part and is always invigorating and perfecting its media of expression, has to be silenced, otherwise the minds of the common masses cannot be set into moulds prepared by the dictator and his scientific and publicity experts. Inevitably under a dictatorship

this is the most suspected, maligned and persecuted part of society.

On the other hand, it is with the help of creative writers and intellectual workers that dictators control the minds of common men. Therefore, those of them who do not hesitate to put their talents at the beck and call of the Polit-bureau and their Commissars are perhaps the most amply rewarded and pampered of all the citizens of a totalitarian State. This is one reason why in this country, as in most other countries, a section of the creative writers and intellectuals finds its way to or around the Communist party. No doubt, there are others who come to the party through inner conviction. The intensity of their conviction beats the intensity of religious conviction during the middle ages in blindness, self-assuredness and intolerance. But the true artists, litterateurs and seekers of knowledge — those who by nature and training must value freedom above all, for they cannot accept in their work any authority but that of their creative genius or constructive insight — are abused by the Communist parties of all lands in the foulest language before they come into power, and on their assumption of dictatorial power are either quickly liquidated, or have to die a slow death in frustration and ignominy even if in rare cases they can escape the tortures of slave labour camps.

We, the workers in the fields of art, literature and knowledge, have long been aware of this soul-killing nature of communism. But now when the biggest land army of the world, painstakingly equipped and unashamedly aggressive, stands not far behind the Communist party of India — which could hardly be regarded as strong enough to pose by itself any immediate threat to the liberal regime of this land — the whole problem presents a new dimension to our eyes. That is why, what we have so long been saying individually, diffidently, with polite qualifications and without any sense of urgency, has to be

said now in a united, firm, unqualified and unambiguous voice. We have to examine Communist theory and practice afresh, and point out in the clearest possible language its sophistry in theory, its opportunism in practice, its unprincipledness in morals, its unabashed recourse to admittedly perverse means in the name of an ideal which however noble it was in the mind of Marx, has been so mutilated by the megalomaniac hands of Stalin and Mao that it is itself no longer free from perversity. We must declare our painful realization that Communist dictatorship has succeeded and outdone all previous tyrannies known to history; it is now the most powerful and pitiless destroyer of the free human personality. It is urgently necessary to explain all this to the people of India, particularly of West Bengal and Assam, because, in our opinion, the Chinese invaders cannot be resisted on the military front alone; that resistance must be fully supported and nourished by the single-minded resistance of the entire people. We believe that a Communist-indoctrinated mind cannot stand up to the challenge of any massive invasion by Communist armies supported by a full blast propaganda barrage. And even Mr. Nehru thinks that the Chinese may launch another and bigger invasion any day. It therefore becomes an important part of our duty as thinkers and writers to fight the ideology which is bound to weaken the people's will to resist an attack by Communist China.

The Svadhin Sahitya Samaj has been created to carry out these tasks, and to make clear to ourselves and to our fellow citizens the full political and ethical significance of democracy and freedom. These two tasks constitute, in effect, the negative and positive aspects of the same task. For the individual, freedom to develop one's personality along one's chosen path—which necessarily means freedom of expression in the spheres of art and thought—and for society, strengthening the roots

and defences of democracy, are the two foundational ideals on which this organisation stands. Democracy does not mean only a form of government. More important than that, it means a way of life, a mood and temper of mind whose essence is tolerance of those who differ from us, respect for the personality of every individual, the effort to keep one's opinions and attitudes as far as possible free from all dogmatism, superstition and irrationality and to base them on principles intelligible even if not acceptable to all.

At the moment we consider the Indian Communist party, by and large, and the aggressive policies of Communist China as most inimical to the ideals we cherish. But we must beware of another danger which, though small today, may assume large proportions in the near future. Quite a few sprouts of fascism are to be seen here and there, and unfortunately it cannot be said that there is any dearth of suitable manure for them in the soil of India, in the remnants of feudalism or the resurgence of religious authoritarianism. If and when these dangerous tendencies become a real menace to freedom and democracy, we shall have to direct our course of action against them with equal vigour and conviction. In the broad stream of Indian history many different currents of culture, indigenous as well as foreign, have commingled without entirely losing their distinctive features. Neither the political nor the religious leaders of India ever thought it necessary to impose the same pattern of belief or life on every one. If the long cultural history of India has any message for us today, that message is tolerance. But can Indian culture find a place for intolerance too; must we tolerate the intolerant? That way leads to the suicide of tolerance. Today we are creating an organisation to defend our basic freedoms, menaced by the essentially and militantly intolerant ideology of commu-

nism. One day we may have to take similar action against the emergence of fascist intolerance.

Our ideals and tasks have been briefly explained. At the root of all this of course is an emotion—love of the motherland. We have said little about it, for we hesitate to use this expression which is too often profaned on public platforms, in the popular press and in popular songs. Patriotic feelings are inseparable from the conscious assimilation of one's traditional ways of thought and life. Our patriotism

is that no doubt, but, we hope, more than that. For those who only want to preserve their past tradition make it turgid by obstructing its flow. A tradition lives by moving freely from the old to the new. The motherland, the India we love, is not merely a fact of history. It is not merely a past glory that we cherish, a present responsibility that we are proud to bear, but a great possibility in the still rather hazy future on which our contemplative imagination can dwell and active inspiration feed.

POETRY

The mind is a Medusa-head
That looks with horror at these fearful things
That castigate the spawning, in hopeless terror,
Of freaks of strange and horrid fashioning:

Twisted humpbacked children with eyes of grief;
Broken bones and suppurating wounds
Of such necrotic eeriness
That even cripples and cretins
And deaf-mute monsters shudder.

The secret store of knowledge,
The taste of negativity,
Have their moments of conception
In the silent moments of the night;

Come the dawn,
They merge into the nursery of rotted souls
That is the brain,
Then, full-blown,
Into the screeching sepulchre
Of memory.

LESLIE DE NORONHA

I see shadows on the opaque walls
Of my beloved's hut.
But I have no beloved.
Hard, brittle laughter splinters
The crystal clear glass.
But my hut has no windows.
Take care, withered parchment heart,
For the jagged ends are sharp
And severed arteries gape
With longing.
Don't grieve; tears are not sauce
For a meal of lotus-leaves.
Sit, endlessly, in silent shade
And lick no open salted wounds . . .
Call in the rag man, the bone man, the pawn man!
There's a blood-stained suit of clothes going for sale.

LESLIE DE NORONHA

PAGES RUSTLE

Pages rustle, turn, all printed with shadows.
The light keeps migrating to another world.
Our days are but intervals in a prolonged night.
In the mornings, through the city as you speed,
The office buildings open like ribs,
And on a cardiac dome the cross is nailed to the Sun.
The blood is opaque, spreading all over.
But you close the lids over the eyes
And call it meditation.
Does God prefer to appear in the dark?
All such backgrounds are really further veils.
Let the husk fall from the word
And see the eye shoot out its meaning
Into the skull, all branches and roots into the same source,
Like fire,—
And listen to the developing chicken.
The smouldering eye, half closed on the crown,
The kerosine flame that cakes the roof with smoke-dust,
The lit particles, the momentous sub-atoms,
These are eyelets into the beyond.
Through the eyelets in the roof the sun thrusts
His eyes into the smoke, a child gazes up—
Caught in the stare, sun and child
Compose each other. The drummer swings down his beams
Silence rumbles;
Footsteps on the curve of eyeballs;
Minutely reading the tender dance of moments
Tickle the stage of grass-flower; dew drops
Hurl down, crash on the petals,
Printed with spectrums, all pages,
Endlessly turning.

DHARMO CIVARAMOO

THE DOOR

The shade deepens into this abyss,
 Without a quest,
 An automatic door opening.
 But a bee has to tap the closed bud;
 The moth seeks a door
 Into the flame, and falls cracked.
 Now who has entered
 This hard fire, tapping the wall
 From within?
 The flame discloses its petals
 And reveals the abyss.

DHARMO CIVARAMOO

A filament of fire
 Shot out of the air
 Propelled by a hand unseen
 It filled with despair
 And left as though it were a dream.
 Despair: for what man-made marvel
 Could surpass
 The furious beauty of that magic shaft.
 And wonder too,
 For the awesome power
 Of that aerial dart
 Was embodied beauty
 And celestial Art.

ANIL BHATTI

A R T S

I. Revolt Against Abstract Art

HANS SAHL

IT all began one magnificent April afternoon last year, and was played out under the aegis of peaceful co-existence according to the customs of the country. About twenty young people began marching round and round in front of the Museum of Modern Art in New York. They carried placards announcing that they were tired of seeing exhibitions of propellers, coffee-grinders, saws, typewriters, ashtrays, and such like things; that they didn't want a mausoleum of modern art, but a museum of the future; and that children's drawings belonged in the kindergarten. A line from Goya was even quoted: 'The sleep of reason brings forth monsters.' A little dog was marching with the demonstrators, and you could read on a notice attached to his collar: 'Art is in a bad way now.'

The demonstration, announced that very morning by the *Times*, had attracted numerous spectators, among whom could be seen a few famous 'figuratives' who tapped the young people paternally on the shoulder, and wrote their names along with many others on the lists presented to them, as a protest against the policy of the museum. Two policemen watched the scene with a puzzled look. They probably thought it was museum employees on strike for an increase of salary, or something like that. Anyway, they contented themselves with urging the demonstrators not to disturb the peace. They evidently did not feel competent to join in the ani-

mated discussions, for or against abstract art, which were being carried on in the street and in which an emissary from the museum was participating.

These demonstrators were not teen-age rebels, but very nice young people, painters, students of fine arts, who violently denied being beatniks. As they pointed out themselves, they were not protesting against modern art in itself, as it is represented by the permanent collection of the museum; nor were they protesting against the numerous exhibitions of European masters like Monet, Matisse, Picasso, Braque, Miro, etc., which have done so much to popularise modern art in America; they were protesting against the tutelage of the authorities in a matter of taste, against a doctrinal stand which benefited certain groups and certain tendencies enjoying special favour at the museum.

The personality of the director of the museum, Alfred Barr, was not for nothing in this affair. This clergyman's son could not by any stretch of the imagination be considered a reactionary; for fear of not recognising a genius, he is rather inclined to treat anybody as a genius who declares himself to be one. I can see no other explanation for the fact that a man as remarkable as Barr, an excellent connoisseur of art, shrewd and cultivated, should admit within his halls such exhibitions as 'Sixteen Young Americans'... In such presentations, organized by the museum

with a certain regularity, the 'search for novelty' is the least irritating part of the business. This search is perfectly understandable, although as it happens the novelty has taken the form of an artificial resurgence of the dadaist tendencies of the twenties. What is irritating about these manifestations is that works of tin or rusty metal, monumental structures made out of packing cases, chair legs and bed legs nailed or stuck together, are put on show with all the careful lighting and elaborate display appropriate to the Mona Lisa or Michelangelo's Moses. You may exhibit a trouser button if you like, but if you employ for such an occasion an aesthetic terminology previously reserved for the noblest human creations, this is a betrayal not only of art but also of all those who genuinely seek the new. As I have written on an earlier occasion: 'Dada is reborn, but behind each door which it bursts open as if it were sealed to the wall, a cocktail party is being prepared to receive it.'

The demonstration which took place in New York was the action of a minority who wanted to make themselves heard. Let us straightway remind ourselves that modern art has never been reviled in America. During those sinister years when books were forbidden in Germany and pictures taken down from the walls, art crossed the ocean: it was precisely Alfred Barr who gave asylum to numerous artists and put their works in safety.

In Cassel or Munich a demonstration of this kind would take place under quite different auspices. It would run the risk of being exploited by those people who declare roundly that Van Gogh and Cézanne are nothing but degenerates. People like that are hardly the kind it is possible to address oneself to.

What is needed now, above all in America, is for people of good faith to draw up a balance sheet of the results obtained in the course of these last ten years of experimenting. Perhaps the moment has come to rethink art and fix new values.

America is a country where you don't

have to wait long for a reply. This demonstration immediately found an echo. The new art critic of the *New York Times*, John Cannaday, took up the discussion by raising questions not at all appreciated by certain people. Up to then Emily Genauer, of the *Herald Tribune* had been the only one to oppose, in 'splendid isolation', the conformism of the non-conformists, and to reserve the right to have a personal opinion. With John Cannaday a critic of the first rank rose up to abolish at a single stroke ten years of passive acquiescence in anything new, incomprehensible, and most of the time inadequately known. He called in question the value and quality of a certain mode of artistic expression. To anyone who knows prevailing fashions and the markets which they open, it is not surprising that Cannaday roused the bad temper of certain angry old men, for the veterans of a revolution often close their minds stubbornly to all new ideas. A lot of money has been invested in abstract art, and the prices offered for a Pollack, a de Kooning, a Franz Kline, to mention only a few of the best, have become fabulous.

This is a point which must not be forgotten. The Dadaist revolt of the twenties was a real revolutionary movement—in its own day it can scarcely be said to have enjoyed the right to be exhibited in the museums; abstract art today, on the other hand, is supported in America by a large number of patrons and powerful protectors. It is easy to imagine therefore what attacks a dissenter like Cannaday exposed himself to, and what circles found it desirable to suppress him. The universities and art associations demanded his immediate dismissal from the *New York Times*. In spite of that his influence grew stronger. He gives you the impression of being back once more in the realm of the real and not the sham. For this critic knows what he's talking about. If he rejects certain forms of modern art, it is not because he does not understand them. He knows exactly why he rejects them, and he can set forth his reasons. Moreover,

many works find favour in his eyes; we will come back to that later.

The most sensational article published by Cannaday in the *Times* dealt with the exhibition 'New Means, New Forms' at the Martha Jackson gallery. This exhibition opened on the very day Mr. Krushcheff took off his shoe at the United Nations. The mounted police had to intervene to separate demonstrators and counter-demonstrators... You knew that not far from there men were striving to find a way of saving their country, their continent, and perhaps our planet. And you arrived at the gallery to see a group of artists who had been content to stick pieces of string on paper, fix bugs on a mirror, stuff old torn stockings and attach them end to end like dirty sausages... You felt ashamed to be there, ashamed to take part in this farce.

In his commentary, Cannaday began by disproving all the arguments likely to persuade the public that this was a matter of 'revolutionary art' or 'the expression of our time', then he declared that anybody who had seen this exhibition ought to take no further interest in contemporary art. Instead they should spend their time brushing up their knowledge of world politics, and put their money into funds for the alleviation of human suffering rather than encourage the stupidity of men. It is easy to understand why this humanist who has strayed into the world of art criticism is not very welcome at the cocktail parties of the avant-garde.

I was curious to know this man, condemned and glorified at the same time, more hated and admired than any of his colleagues. When he telephoned to ask me to visit him, 'for a discussion and not for a party,' as he put it, I accepted eagerly. He was not at all like the idea one has of a 'reactionary', or the image fabricated these days by small-time fashionable journalists who speak excitedly of art in a European style. I found myself before a man like ourselves, pleasant, subtle and gracious, with nothing of a killjoy about

him. 'Didn't you find my article this morning a little too harsh?' he asked me. The article in question was a fresh polemic against the museum in connection with an exhibition of film posters, of which he had criticised the choice and lay-out. According to him, this exhibition did not correspond so much to its subject as to a theory on the nature of the poster as entirely elaborated by the museum. I replied hesitantly that this article had in fact appeared to me a little sharp, upon which Cannaday assumed a pensive expression. 'John is fond of people and it always hurts him to be obliged to attack someone,' said Mrs. Cannaday with a worried look. 'Judges should not be sentimental,' I objected. 'What I can't stand,' said John Cannaday, 'is that as a critic one must always take up a well-defined position. Take the case of Dora Ashton, for example, who was doing reviews for our paper up to a short while ago. She was so difficult to understand, that the sub-editors came and complained to me: 'If we don't understand ourselves what she writes,' they said, 'what will our readers think?' I could not come to an understanding with Dora Ashton, and she had to leave. But tell me this: what am I to think of an art critic who does no more than point out that painter X is using more white this year than last year, or that sculptor Y is using wire spools instead of corrugated iron? What interest can that be to anybody? I'm not 'against' modern art. I like Miro, Nicolas de Staël, Dubuffet, and even many of the works of Pollock and Kline. No, I'm not a reactionary. Neither are you. I've read a good many of your pieces, and I know we agree on many points. But how is the situation going to develop? A return to the object? I really don't know. What is your opinion?'

—I don't know any more than you do, I said. All that one can be certain of, is that a revolt is in the offing against modern art and its managers. There's no question of rejecting this art en bloc, for it has too profoundly modified the face of our time. It can no longer be dismissed from our

minds, and we will feed a long time yet on the discussions it has provoked. But I believe this modern art has exhausted its possibilities. There are many indications of this. I've had discussions with young people who have declared that they can no longer do anything new in this field: on the contrary, they speak with enthusiasm of an artist like Egon Schiele who has just been rediscovered, forty years after his death, at the Saint-Etienne gallery in New York. And they also refer me to the magnificent Morandi, whose calm life is a kind of guide-line which starts from the classicism of Chardin, and passes through Cézanne and the abstracts of today, finally to attain a certain form of art, close to the object, in which the object is rediscovered and glorified. Have you read Gelder Rodman's book which has just appeared? What I have always admired about Rodman, is that for years now he has affirmed his point of view without the slightest concession. His book is one long lament for the degradation of humanity. But the artists he praises do more harm than good to his cause.

— Figurative or not, art is either good or bad, said Cannaday. The trouble is, that with abstract painting it is very difficult to talk about quality, which is after all the basis of all criticism. Perhaps one should no longer try to write art criticism, but detective stories instead.

— I must tell you that my husband has already written seven detective stories, under a pen-name of course, said Mrs. Cannaday.

— Before we part, can I write you a dedication in my latest? said Cannaday. I took the book, thanking him, and read: 'I know that I am regarded as a very troublesome person. I know also that I am much talked of and with great respect, as a good person. These two opinions seem to me incompatible with a third condition, which is the following: I am a murderer.'

That's what Hawthorne Willis wrote at the age of fifty, as he looked back on his past and envisaged the dark future awaiting him.

So much for my dedication. And we must expect many more surprises from the art critic John Cannaday.

II. Is Abstract Art Dead?

JEAN GRENIER

ABSTRACT art is dying! Abstract art is dead! This rumour we have been hearing for two years or more has grown in substance. We began to believe it from the time those picture dealers who set the tone because of their importance or the flair they have shown on many critical occasions, began, to tide over the transition, to stop having shows or to put on retrospectives, or to exhibit exotic works, or to exhume past revolutionary periods now back in favour. In this way you offend nobody, you gain time, and you can judge the chances of the new current without banking prematurely on its success.

In fact there's no doubt that the new current has every chance of success with the public. First, because it's very *old*, and nothing pleases so much as repetition. How else could you explain the eternal success of *Faust* and *Carmen*? In the plastic arts the old *Salons* still hold their own, and May has not yet managed to make us forget autumn. And so the announcement that we would be able to see again what we have already seen caused great relief: family portraits, battle scenes, idyllic landscapes still preserve their great attraction. In the same way you like to hear repeated what you have already once agreed with.

And after all, the faculty of invention quickly runs dry—which is not at all the case with imitation.

In the field of the arts, humanity moves in a circle: its only way of finding something new is to repeat what is old but forgotten. This is very evident in the arts of fashion. The return to 1900 is one of its most distressing signs. The future lies with those who had thrifty grandmothers

and spacious store-rooms. And this too in a century when scientific invention has taken such stirring flights. We don't sufficiently realize what a contrast this is.

And yet painting, with the impressionists, then the cubists, and then the non-figuratives, had really taken great strides into a new realm. For the last forty years above all it has been penetrating a realm which seemed forbidden to man (and music too, since Schönberg). Is it going to stop short? Are we threatened with a return to that kind of painting of which we can see an example at present in the exhibition entitled 'The Spanish Painters of Reality' at the Galerie Charpentier? Apart from a few canvases which don't belong in such company, this exhibition is absolutely incredible, and should be seen. It might serve the same purpose as was served by those helots that the Spartans used to get drunk in order to inspire their children with a disgust for drink. Yes, it's an excellent antidote—or preventive. And a subject for meditation too.

But there is such a vitality in contemporary art that it cannot become completely faithless to its origins—recalled at the Galerie Maeght by an exhibition of the 'Blue Rider' group, a triumph for Kandinsky, Franz Marc and their friends like Delaunay. This vitality can be found again in the sensible and carefully proportioned selection from the 'School of Paris' at the Galerie Charpentier, which assembles, apart from the extremists, artists who strive to represent the real with talent (they are the ones closest to the gallery's heart) and others whose inspiration is freer but not unruly. It should not be forgotten that for years now, under the title

of the 'School of Paris', the Galerie Charpentier has been showing a variety of tendencies, including by rotation many little-known painters — an achievement which is highly meritorious, considering this is the street where Saint Honoré presides over everything smart and official.

Personally I believe (out of modesty I only speak for myself) that painting which does not take its themes directly from the outside world still has many happy years before it. If a new figurative art appears, it will only succeed if it is grafted on to the living art of today. Nature is a source of emotions which no one can afford to ignore; as Georges Boudaille says, it may nourish but not suppress a technique that has proved its worth. If form is to appear once more, it must take into account the vision which has revealed to man the world of microscopic nature and other realities previously disregarded, mineral realities for instance. After all, what is reality?

Pignon, whose art gains in vigour every year, is one of the great painters who prompt us to ask this question. He served his apprenticeship as a manual worker, then as a painter, in the school of hard reality. And he has always sought to remain faithful to this school which, after painfully bruising him, opened his eyes to what he would never otherwise have seen—as he says in his *Remarks on Painting and Reality*. Whether it was the cock fights that he painted in his native province, or the corn threshing he watched in the Roman countryside, in either case he needed renewed contacts with reality—rather: man to man struggles with reality—in order to see what was worth seeing. 'At first I couldn't see anything, I mean I could only see forms.' So reality doesn't consist of forms? Yet that's what the painters of 'reality' have always maintained. They always thought you could recognise reality by the forms it took. How could you tell that a chair is a chair in a

picture if it did not have one of the forms that a chair assumes in 'reality'? We would only see dabs of colour.

If we continue to listen to Pignon we will understand better why he refuses to define reality by form: it is because form as such seems to him empty; it needs a 'content'. (Don't mention the word 'matter', which no longer means anything.) And this content will be movement—the movement of the painter towards his canvas, or rather: the struggle of the painter with his work as it comes into being, the result of which is to suppress the distance between him and it; and above all the movement of the forms as they succeed each other with the rapidity of lightning—cocks' beaks, waves of the sea, harvesters' flails—and all that in a 'vertigo' of which Pignon speaks so admirably.

And what comes out of all this? An image? No, the image would be static. A synthesis? No, a synthesis is cold and laboured. What then? Well, a painting or a drawing by Pignon: something which starts from reality no doubt, but which no longer has anything to do with what an ordinary man, you or I, understand by reality, and one can imagine how difficult it would be to make Tom, Dick and Harry, straight from the street, 'recognise' what they *should* see at first glance, and which they would find abstract (whereas it's simply an extract).

So a meeting is possible—a meeting, not a synthesis. This word synthesis only hides a mutual cancellation—it should be banished. Instead: by way of the penetration of reality in depth (its vertiginous aspect) and by way of expressing a mental calculation in its evocative aspect, one reaches that point where a creation independent of the creator takes form. For two generations there has been only one way, the other was blocked. Whose fault was that? It is important that Pignon should not be one of the few to reopen it.

Translated from the French by David McCutcheon

SHORT STORY

Prakriti

U. R. ANANTHA MURTHY

AS Sankappayya wearily dragged himself along the edge of a paddy field he looked up at the sky. It was still not dark. The long summer evenings somehow made him feel lonely but he did not wish to think about it. Ahmed Byari, a merchant from the town met him and salaamed him. The usual enquiries about health over, Byari asked him:

'I heard you were living alone cultivating your paddy fields?'

Sankappayya nodded. Of late he had avoided meeting and talking to people. In their eagerness to be sympathetic they always talked of things which he tried to forget.

'Did you have to sell all your property to settle that greedy Krishna Bhatta's debts?'

'Something like that.'

Sankappayya did not want to be uncivil. Byari pulled at his beedi and said:

'It seems your son has opened a Coffee Club in Shimoga with his uncle and the Shanubhogue's son Kittu. How are they faring?'

'I don't know.'

'The oranges have grown well this time. Promises a good yield. Did you see it?'

Sankappayya said yes. After all he had proved that he was right. Oranges were not a monopoly of the Coorgies, but

'I have taken it for lease from Krishna Bhatta. I struck a bargain with that greedy man and got it for nine hundred. Do you think I will lose?'

'Perhaps not.'

Sankappayya made a gesture as if to move, But Byari held him:

'It is a pity you are living alone, and in your old age too, aren't you bored?'

And then he turned his back against the wind and carefully relit his half burnt Beedi.

'No. Not particularly.'

Sankappayya did not wish for more talk and added impatiently - 'It is getting dark for me' - and walked away.

* * * *

It was nearly six months ago.

Nani stood on one leg, the other bent against a pillar in the Verandah. He always stood thus before his father in an awkward posture of fear and respect, but that day he spoke rapidly without stopping for an answer. Though the well thought out words were defiant, his voice was dry, and as the ridiculously bent body against the pillar trembled all over, he shifted his weight from one leg to another.

Sankappayya eyed his son from where he sat on a mat, wearing a loin cloth, and bare above his waist, except for a towel on his bare shoulders. He continued cutting the betel nuts and did not answer his son who had finished talking, but merely mocked. This was new. Was it not indeed an achievement for a son to defy his own father? How like a buffoon, a town-bred idiot he looked: the swept back hair, gaudy muffler round the neck and perhaps a bundle of beedies and match box in the bulging side pocket of his shirt. Sankap-

payya gathered the cut betel nuts on his palm and put them into his mouth. As he chewed the nuts he wanted to say 'How brave of you' to the face which looked down avoiding the father's eyes.

Seethamma stealthily came from the Kitchen, peeped at her son and husband facing each other and went back to resume the scraping of the coconut. Laxmi who was putting out the *sendige* to dry in the sun walked in and stood surprised. The father looked angry, and her brother standing on one leg leaning against the pillar was wiping his sweating face with a kerchief. She could not understand, and so bustled into the kitchen, and asked her mother what the matter was. The mother who had stopped scraping the coconut to listen, raised a finger against her nose, and said 'Shh' bidding her daughter be silent.

Little Shantha came running, hopped playfully on one leg holding the frills of her skirts. It was fun for her to see her father rebuke her brother. Father held the betel leaves in his hand absently and talked angrily. She nestled close to him, rubbed her little chin on his bare shoulders looking mischievously at the brother, and said in a whisper:

'Shall I bring you *choonam* for the leaves, Father?'

Sankappayya merely touched her cheeks lovingly but did not answer. She was tickled to see the awkward posture of her brother who did not dare to stand on both the legs before father. She noticed that he had a notebook and a pen in his pocket to show off. But he had failed three times in his lower secondary exam. Once a week he would go to the town to see a film, holding a flash light in his hand like a big man. But he never took her with him. She wanted to laugh now, but dared not, for she was afraid that he would thrash her when father was not looking.

Shantha untied the knot of her father's hair and played with it. The conversation in the kitchen between mother and son was loud enough to be audible to them in

the verandah. Shantha was reminded of a story that father told her before sending her to sleep. She said aloud to tease her brother:

'Father, didn't Uttara brag before the ladies of the harem and run away from the battle field?'

She expected that father would share her joke but he did not seem to attend. She was slightly afraid seeing his intent face listening to the kitchen talk between the mother and the son.

'Mother, listen to what I tell you now. Let father go to hell for the twenty thousand rupees debt. It isn't my business. I am not born to rot in this hole. Your brother is opening a hotel in Shimoga and he has asked me to join him. Look I am going away as I am — in these clothes. That will be the end of our relationship.'

Shantha was twisting the grey moustache of her father. But he brushed aside her hand and stood up now. Shantha felt snubbed and bit her fingers.

'Why are you angry with me Nani? Do my words have any value in this house? The whole village said: Don't spend on that useless orange garden. But he didn't listen. Thousands of rupees went down the drain. He is stubborn and sees nothing beyond his nose. It is six years now, why even more, but the garden has not yielded a single orange.'

'Father thinks that he is wiser than everybody. The land is barren and only a stupid man will struggle with it. Even the Shanubhogue said....'

'Am I any happier Nani? It is nearly forty years now, my suffering began when I was barely ten, and I married this man to come and live in this hole. Nothing has changed in this horrible village of forests and hills as long as I have known it. In the dead of night tigers enter the cowshed and kill the cows and in broad day light the leopards snatch the dogs and calves.

Day after day I have toiled here and now I am old and tired. As if that's not enough, Kogga was telling me that a herd of wild elephants is roaming about the forests destroying sugarcane and gardens. And then there is malaria. Half the areca crop every year rots and falls down from pests. Why should we hang on to this place when even a paise is not forthcoming?

'Isn't that so mother? That is why I told father: Look at the Shanubhogue, he has allowed his son Kittu to open a restaurant in Shimoga. Kittu is really lucky to have such a father.'

'Say that again Nani. I don't know for what sin of my previous birth I had to marry this man. Why were you born from my unlucky womb my son? As you know even the lovely gold necklace weighing about a seer and the ear-rings and the gold waist-belt my father gave me at the time of marriage, have been mortgaged to pay for his mad schemes. If I had them I would have gladly given them to you. You could have sold them and opened a restaurant.'

'It isn't all so easy mother. This is ancestral property. I have a right to it. Let father remember that.'

The atmosphere was tense. Shantha bit her nails and watched her father slowly pacing the Verandah, looking at nothing.

'As if all that was not enough my daughter Laxmi lost her husband and came back without the *kumkum*. Only six months after her marriage. I begged your father not to marry her to that boy. Wasn't there my brother? But your father hates my family. You are a grown-up son and I am his wife, but our words are nothing in this house. When he heard that his son-in-law had died he didn't even weep. He directly went out of the house, perhaps to his orange garden. I tell you Nani, seven births will not wash away his sins. Why should one struggle with the barren earth if it is not for the happiness of one's own family?'

'But why do you cry mother?'

Shantha, untying the star shaped *ranja* flowers from the knots of her hair looked up and saw the frown gathering upon her father's face. He was standing and listening now, and suddenly rushed at Thimma, who sat lazily scratching his half naked body in a corner at the end of the Verandah and shouted at him:

'What are you doing there? You lazy fellow. Go back to your work.'

And then he calmed down and stood as if reminiscing.

'And doesn't poor Laxmi want to be happy like other women? When I think of it the womb which bore her burns within me. He might think that a young daughter gets all that she wants by gazing at a father's face. You tell him again Nani. I am with you. I can't stay here as mere dust to his feet. I want to live somewhere out of this hole the few days left in my life.'

'I will see to it mother. Don't worry. I swear now before you. Let the sky crash over my head; I will not give up my resolve to open a restaurant in Shimoga with your brother and Kittu. I am no more a minor, I am grown up. He can't snub me any more. I am not afraid; do you understand?'

Nani suddenly stopped. Sankappayya had rushed in, his whole body trembling in rage. Shantha laughed; Nani was slowly withdrawing through the back door step by step. Seethamma who sat on the wooden plank of the coconut scraper looked up, lowered her eyes, and began to scrape the coconut violently. But the shell was empty and the sound grated on Sankappayya's ears. The irritation was terrible to bear and he wanted to smash the head of the woman. He clenched his fists and deliberately restrained himself.

'Nani, Stop there.'

Nani stopped. By force of habit a leg which he raised sought the protection of

the kitchen wall against which he leaned.

'I will not give you your share to open the restaurant. What will you do?'

Sankappayya took the wooden churning rod and thumped it on the ground, as he said it in a loud trembling voice. Nani vaguely looked at him, but did not answer. He wanted to say that he would go to the court but could not bring out the words. A blind hatred and a sense of utter helplessness rose within him and his eyes had tears in them.

Sankappayya turned towards his wife. He lowered his voice, but still shivering in rage said:

'Did Laxmi tell you that she is unhappy? Or is it your concoction?'

She did not answer but continued to scrape the empty coconut nervously, not knowing what she was doing. Sankappayya looked at her for a while. How disgusting, he thought, was her bent figure—ugly, fat and shapeless. He had never loved her these forty years, though he had remained faithful. She had given birth to his children; and that was all. He always felt disgusted when he had to touch her. But children were necessary, for the tradition said that a man without children would go to hell. But now the dirty woman was plotting against him with his own son. 'Thut' he said loudly in disgust and came back to the Verandah. He wiped the perspiration from his armpit with the towel and in a tender voice asked Shantha where Laxmi was.

Sankappayya said aloud as he crossed the family shrine—'Impossible'. As the head of the family he was bound to carry on the tradition of his ancestors. The annual festivals of Gowri, Ganesh, and Anantha Chathurdashi were all performed by him. He would not listen now to a mere chit of a boy and a greedy wife and open a hotel and sell food—unworthy of an orthodox Brahmin. Let anything happen, that was his resolve. For generations they had struggled with the hills and wrested land from the creeping forest. He would

be unworthy of his great ancestors to earn easy money by selling food in Shimoga.

He took the sickle and hooked it to his waist. As he came out of the house he saw Shantha gathering *ranja* flowers. She looked at him appealingly. Sankappayya understood that she wanted to accompany him and that made him happy. But he said 'no' and told himself that he should learn to live alone with attachment to nobody. That was a challenge and he was prepared to face all odds. His son, a nincompoop, smoked beedies and wandered about the town. But though old, he had strength enough to cut three cart loads of firewood. No—his son was unworthy; he wouldn't bring any credit to his name. Another time if he didn't talk with restraint he would throw him out of the house.

Sankappayya walked briskly swinging his arms and climbing the hill at the back of his house. He saw Laxmi picking *matti* leaves and stopped. He wanted to say something to her, but was not sure what to say. Did he want to ask her whether it was his fault that she became a widow? Or did he want to assure her that though her husband had died she need not worry as she had a father who looked to all her needs? He searched for words and looked at her bare forehead. He had allowed her to keep her hair after the death of her husband but her young face looked forlorn without the *kumkum*.

He was glad that she asked him where he was going alone in the hot sun. Yesterday she and Shantha had massaged his body with castor oil, compelled him to sit in the huge cement bath emptied a whole vessel full of *matti* pulp on his head and the oil bath had been very refreshing. And then they had made a bed for him and put two thick rugs over him. Laxmi said: 'You must perspire well, father'. She sat by his side and then what did he want to tell her? What was it that he could never tell his wife, his son or anyone in this world? 'Laxmi', he began awkwardly, uncertain of his words. 'If the areca prices go up this time and I get ten thousand rupees and if the oranges grow at least this year, I shall

clear a part of the debts and put good Mangalore tiles where the grass-thatched roof is and...'

But Laxmi was hearing him absent-mindedly and interrupted him.

'Father, why don't you say these things to mother and brother also?'

His heart had sunk within him. No. That was not what he had wanted to say. He could never bring out the right thing at all. Every time he tried to have a real talk it happened like that. Sankappayya stood wondering again how to begin:

"Soak the *matti* leaves well in boiling water and take an oil bath yourself. Your eyes look ruddy. Give an oil bath to Shantha also. I shall come back for the meal.'

But Laxmi said, 'No.' She was not supposed to take an oil bath which was meant only for the fortunate. This irritated Sankappayya:

'What has happened to you that you shouldn't take an oil bath? You must do as I tell you.'

He spoke roughly and, without waiting for an answer, climbed the hill briskly.

* * * *

Eight years ago the Deputy Commissioner Sahib had given him a gold medal praising him as the most enterprising agriculturist of the Malnad. Why shouldn't he give it to Laxmi and tell her to keep it with her. Perhaps that would express what he... but would it? Nice if little Shantha were with him now. Running playfully to keep pace with him, she would dash this way and that to pluck the wild berries and flowers and put all sorts of questions to him. Let alone Laxmi, even that little child could understand. It was not done for the sake of earning money. How could the weaklings understand the pleasure of this battle, this battle of man's will against Nature — the pleasure which only those who control their wayward senses and keep them in order know. Not so easy as running a coffee club, selling food and making unholy money. The impotent ones! The weak-kneed rascals! He would put all

the profit from the areca on the orange garden and see that even this soil yielded oranges.

Surely it was not the monopoly of the Coorgies only. Perhaps a struggle for three or four years more. And then he would clear the debts, instal a pump near the tank like Krishna Bhatta and bring under cultivation the fallow land to the left of his house. He stood near the tank, where the water from the hill collected in a large pool, and imagined what Laxmi would say to that. Suddenly the bare forehead of the young face recurred. How beautiful she used to look, the tall girl with the *kumkum* shining on her face. Was she really so unhappy, when he was still strong and looked to all her needs? She was more than a son to him. But her eyes had tears as she was threading the ranja flowers which Shantha had gathered. Poor girl she couldn't wear them any more. Couldn't put on the gold necklace and the ear-rings set with red stones which looked so beautiful on her slim figure.

Sankappayya stopped and waited for a long snake to move and make way for him. Perhaps a harmless one.

The desire was natural. Yes. But wasn't she his daughter? Why shouldn't she exercise control as he did? The human will was after all supreme.

He had still a few yards to climb and the hill was steep now. He breathed hard and told himself again, forming the words as he thought: As long as man had his will the struggle against nature was not fruitless. He would see that the soil yielded oranges and Laxmi was happy with him. The little fellow dared to say that he was mad. The skinny rascal.

Now he had climbed the hill and entered the thick jungle called *Chowdi Bana*. He unwound the towel which he had tied round his head to guard against the sun. He gathered the large tuft of hair, which had turned almost white, and twisted it to make a conical shape above his head. He made up his mind that henceforth he would eat only the food that Laxmi cooked. And not even touch with his fingers

what his wife cooked. Let his wife and son go to hell. If only the areca prices went up. He was still a strong man though old. But would Nani really go to the Court? His uncle was a wicked man and surely he would incite the guillible Nani. For he was angry that Laxmi was not given to him in marriage. And then what would happen to the family prestige unsoiled by litigation so far? So his own son would drag him to the Court and the whole village would mock—Sankappayya brushed off the leeches that crawled to his feet from the marshy earth. He was suddenly very unhappy that his own son and wife should have turned against him and a deep sigh escaped his lips.

But all that he would not mind if Laxmi was on his side. 'And Laxmi is on my side,' he said aloud to himself.

* * *

He came to the edge of a deep hollow in the midst of the forest. As a boy when he had come there with his father he used to stand wonderingly and peer at the bottom. His father had told him how it came about: Tired earth just sagged under the weight of the hills. It would have been nice if Shantha were with him. She reminded him of his own boyhood days. She always asked him whether even earth got tired. Her wondering eyes would peer down to see the trees look so small. Such beautiful dark eyes, so pure and innocent. It was so comforting to see her wonder like that.

Sankappayya looked down. The eyes wandering on the gaping hollowness below suddenly rested, widened, and as everything grew misty, slowly closed. What he saw filled his whole being and he trembled. He opened his eyes again and this time he saw straight, clearly and without fear. No—he had not made a mistake. What he saw there crouching on a mound of earth above the greenery of trees and bushes, was surely a tiger burning like live coal. The tiger also saw him, he was sure of that, with its eyes straight and burning, fixing the gaze, supreme there, like a Lord, unafraid. He stood transfixed, unable to

take his eyes off. He felt neither the desire to cry nor to run. He stood fascinated like one possessed, and he did not understand. Did the tiger roar, or what was it coursing through his entire body? For he violently shivered. Did he feel some intimation, some wordless feeling when his eyes confronted the tiger's, a feeling that he could not express even before Laxmi? He felt a desire to talk aloud in the silence of the forest and the deep hollow, and said aloud: 'One must live like a tiger'. As he repeated the words, only the feeling that the words expressed became clear to him, and he wondered in silence why he talked aloud. In a daze he walked.

* * *

Sankappayya woke up fully as he perished. There was his paddy field, that the jack tree, and the sharp thing that hurt his foot was a thorn. And before him stood the Shanubhogue, a broad smile on his wide mouth and a pencil stub stuck on his right ear. But Sankappayya did not tell him that he had seen a tiger.

'Going towards the garden Sankappayya?'

Sankappayya merely nodded. Plucking out the thorn from his foot he observed absently that the Shanubogue took out his snuff box—as always, a prelude to a long talk.

'I wanted to talk to you Sankappayya. I hope you don't mind. Scold me if you like and I shall take it as a blessing, for you are an elderly man. I just wish to tell you that we must not come in the way of the younger people. Why I tell you this is, after all? What is there in our hands? Take for example, Laxmi. Did you ever dream that she would come back home a widow, barely six months after her marriage?'

Sankappayya frowned—. He hated the sight of the Shanubhogue now more than ever—his long dirty nose, the way he looked when he talked, slightly lifting his face, and looking through his spectacles brought low over his nose, and those large ear studs.

'So we can't change the decree of fate. That is why I say, though my knowledge is limited, it is futile to struggle and desire that everything must happen as we will it.

I say — swim with the current. Take for example your orange garden. Why I tell you this is, my son Kittu, your son and your wife's brother have planned to run a hotel in Shimoga. You know there is no profit in agriculture. Better make money by running a hotel than dash against these hills in futile struggle. Why I tell you this is ...'

'Shanubhogue, don't waste your time. Go and attend to your work. Why do you interfere?'

The Shanubhogue tried to force a smile on his face as if he did not mind being sunbbed by an elderly short-tempered man. But Sankappayya's eyes frightened him. They had a strange brightness and looked at nothing. Sankappayya was still thinking of the tiger and walked away as if the Shanubhogue did not exist.

He walked straightening his old bare back against the sun and felt a strange reviving within him. He thought of the Goddess Durgi, who rode on a tiger. A great desire suddenly possessed him, a desire to worship Durgi, the Mahakali, the great Mother, as he walked with eyes half closed as if in a sleep, scarcely noticing the giant trees and bushes around him. Early in the dawn, he thought, and the eastern horizon still red, he must draw a large, very large *mandala* in red *rangoli* and place in the centre of the *mandala* a bright bronze bowl with holy water and a coconut, and above and around it offer red hibiscus and heaps and heaps of it plucked by himself from the forest and then transfer from his heart in deep concentrated devotion the divine presence that resides there and make the holy bowl the embodiment of that divine mother. The deity of his desire. Very early in the morning he would bathe, dress in a red silk dhoti, wear holy ash on the forehead and in the centre sandal paste and *kumkum*, with *rudrakshi* beads around the neck. He would sit, eyes closed in deep concentration, and chant loudly the holy incantations from the Vedas. The forests would tremble then, and the earth, and the evil hearts of the wicked and the cowards in holy dread. And he would chant until the Durgi

became a real presence, flesh and blood, astride on a tiger. She would then stretch her arms, take him, embrace him and devour in her love his flesh, blood, bone....

In this worship, he thought, little Shantha must be with him dressed in pure silk skirts, lighting the silver lamps and making sandal paste. What if she was a widow, Laxmi must also be with him dressed in her bridal silk satee.

And in this concentrated worship on Laxmi's forehead will appear again *kumkum*, red as blood. The whole orange garden will be full of fruits, red with life in them. The *mantra* will conquer forests, hills, valleys and they will fall at his feet. The cowards and the wicked will vomit blood and die. The mother astride on a tiger will smile, and stand before him in all her grandeur, resplendent — and on her red lips a smile and....

If in the middle of the worship, he thought, his wife or son interfered, he would tear his wife's *tali* and send her out of the house along with his son.

But then he had entered his areca garden and felt giddy.

* * *

The areca grove looked like the face of a widow, forlorn — without the hair, without the *kumkum*. The areca trees which had been so tall with the greenery swaying in the wind were uprooted. The young and tender plants, only three and four years old, planted by himself were in shambles. The tender creepers and the banana trees lay helter-skelter. Sankappayya cried aloud: 'Ho! Kariya, are you dead?' There was no answer. Stumbling on the trees and creepers, he ran towards the hut where the watchman lived. Suddenly he realised the cause of destruction. Kogga had said that a herd of wild elephants was roaming about the forests destroying gardens. 'The elephants have destroyed me and all my plans' — he said aloud.

In the verandah of the little hut above the garden Kariya slept on a mat and snored. All around him lay in pieces, egg shells, the remains of a jack fruit, and

bread crumbs. The sickle was in another corner of the Verandah thrown in indifference before he fell asleep. Near his head was an emptied earthen jar smelling of toddy.

Two lines of slaver ran freely through the corners of his mouth smelling of toddy, and he snored happily, unconcerned.

The smell of the remains of the jack fruit was inviting and a buffalo lumbered in slowly, in clumsy majesty. When it brushed its wet muddy body against him Sankappayya woke up fully. He gripped the sickle at his waist but his eyes suddenly grew misty and he sat down. He rested for a while, but the toddy smell which permeated the atmosphere nauseated him. He got up and walked away.

* * * *

It was noon and the sun burned hot right over his head in supreme unconcern. A great indifference, and even fulfilment was in the whole atmosphere: in the hills which were shattered like amputated limbs, in thick copses, and in the distances between the giant mango, jumlum and jack trees, in sharp shadows, and in the burning blue sky. There was repose, and nothing moved except for a solitary crow, somewhere, thirsty, and an occasional woodpecker searching for water, its hard beak persistently digging into the hard trunks of the trees. And the only other sound was the monotonous buzzing of a lonely bee. In muddy ditches, in filth, lay buffaloes, unseeing, unmoving in blissful satisfaction.

Was Nature after all indifferent to Man? A vague thought disturbed him. It was not a time for struggle and sorrow. It was time for sleep, sleep which is like death, and fulfilment came only by becoming an unconscious *thing*—one with the filth and the mud of the earth like the buffaloes—Under this vast blaze of the sun in the midst of trees. Only if you gave up the struggle.... And if you lost all desire to act.... In total unconcern.... In the loss of human will, separate and hard. But he was at war with himself: the blood against the bones, the nerves against the heart and so

he couldn't share this fulfilment—and he stood as something apart; he was after all inconsequential. And a sudden loneliness overcame him and for a moment he felt—I am nobody, I don't know my way, this is my end,....

But in a moment he had recovered and was very angry. He told himself, let the elephants destroy and the whole world mock at him, he wouldn't give in. Damn them all, his wife, his son—he would strangle them.

But it recurred again, the fact that wild elephants had destroyed his garden. And it was a fact, a mere accident. When he went back home, if Laxmi asked him why he looked like that, so sad and tired, he would tell her that he was undone by elephants. He stood in the silence of the forest and said aloud: 'Laxmi, I am undone by elephants.'

On the way he saw a cashew nut tree and remembering that Laxmi liked its fruits plucked them. He picked up a stick and threw it at the branches of a jumlum tree but the stick did not reach the fruits, where they lay in thick dark clusters. He realised that his hands were shaking and had no strength. But he wanted those fruits for Shantha and so picked the ones which had fallen on the ground, over ripe. Squatting on his legs and collecting the fruits, he imagined his wife, Nani, Shanubhogue and his son Kittu standing around him and mocking at him: 'Have you grown wise at least after the elephants destroyed your garden? Didn't we tell you? Can you repay the debts? Will oranges ever grow?'. Sankappayya stood up—He would break their teeth. He breathed in deeply the hot air, smelling of the thick vegetation, and walked. He began to rationalise now. Elephants were a mere accident; it could have happened to anybody; he was still a strong man; and Laxmi was on his side; the weakness in the legs was due to walking briskly. 'It is only this hot sun,' he said aloud as he felt giddy, and covered his head with the towel. Would Krishna Bhatta give him a lawyer notice for the loan? But he did not care. Krishna Bhatta was after all a mere.... His throat was dry and he

swallowed. He began to talk aloud again as he walked, now addressing his wife: 'Get out of my house. I won't drink even the water that you touch. Get out with your son. I will give him his share. Laxmi and Shantha will cook for me from now on.' He swore aloud, cursing the hot sun and suddenly realised that he had lost his way.

How could he have taken the wrong path when he walked on it every day?—he wondered. He was at the foot of an unknown hill and it was unclimbable. Had he taken a wrong direction, and when, and how?—he tried to recollect.

He wanted to say aloud that he had taken a wrong direction, and he brought it out hoarsely from his dry throat, and swallowed, standing at the foot of the unknown hill. To his left was a dense growth of bamboos, and behind it where grass grew as tall as a man, was cool shade. He shaded his eyes from the glare of the sun with both the hands and moved towards the bamboos. Did he see something there in the cool shade?—he moved closer.

He covered his eyes with the towel and turned away.

* * * *

On the grass in the cool shade, Laxmi lay in the arms of Kittu.

* * * *

Had he lost his way?

The question was sharp and pointed, like a flame growing tall on the wick and it spread in the darkneses of his being. And in the crooked corners, hitherto unnoticed, it shed its light. The monkeys chattered.

He had again walked back to the edge of the deep hollow and looking vaguely at the terrible hollowness below, he said fiercely—No I did not lose my way. But it was so empty where the tired earth had just sagged under the weight of the hills. Should he go home? Or to Krishna Bhatta's house and settle everything? He heard foot

steps at his back and saw the Shanubhogue approaching.

'Did you hear, Sankappayya?'

'.....'

'It seems a tiger was lying on the mound of earth, there below, as if it didn't care. But Kogga spotted it and shot it from behind. Why I tell you this is

Sankappayya did not want to hear anything more and went directly to Krishna Bhatta's house.

* * * *

It was dark when Sankappayya reached his little hut after taking leave of Ahmed Byari. It was a task lighting the ash-filled, cold oven and cooking rice. He was feeling tired and so decided to go without food. It was a very dark night, and warm, and even stars were covered by the clouds.

He tried to sleep but could not, and so came out and walked to and fro in the compound till midnight, his arms crossed against his chest. Then he sat under a jack tree. He remembered how, six months ago, when all his family were leaving with their luggage in the cart, Shantha had come back running to him with tears in her eyes. She wanted to stay with him. That was a difficult moment, but he had hardened his heart. He scolded her severely then, for he had decided to live alone, and die alone, like a tiger. Sankappayya sighed deeply. If the little girl were with him now, she would have sat leaning against him, twisting his grey moustache. He could have then stroked her smooth black hair while she breathed on the nape of his neck, slowly sinking into sleep, in the darkness.

Sankappayya felt sheer weariness overcoming him and wiping his wet eyes with the towel said aloud: 'Mother, I am tired'. He leaned on the trunk of the jack tree. Someone's old cow came loafing by, and bringing its wet nose near his face breathed eagerly. He scratched its neck and it licked him.

(Translated from the Kanarese by the author)

DISCUSSION

The Caste System Vested Interest of the High Castes

A SUBBIAH

IT is fast becoming a fashionable pastime among intellectuals drawn from the high castes in this country to indulge in pious condemnation of the caste system but almost in the same breath to react violently, on some specious ground or other, against measures resorted to by the state to mitigate the secular hardships arising out of this evil canker in our body politic. In his article in the January 1963 issue of *Quest*, Mr. Subash Chandra Mehta set himself the interesting task of examining 'whether the caste system is on the wane and it is just a matter of time before we may bury it or whether it continues to be a dominant force'. By way of anticlimax, he concludes the article with a laboured plea for the abolition of the reservation for the 'Backward Classes' on the ground that it is 'against the principles of social justice' (!) and is 'bound to result in lowering of standards'. Mr. Mehta protests against what he calls 'the vested interest in backwardness' but, curiously enough his arguments indicate that he is not at all averse to recreating conditions which would give a longer and stronger lease of life to the *infinitely more harmful vested interest the high castes have in the caste system*. It is through the position of vantage which the caste system gave them that the high castes were able to entrench themselves in the public services, a position from which, even as it is, it promises to be a long drawn out process to dislodge them.

Thanks to the highly favourable family, social, and educational environment which he inherits, the Brahmin youth easily acquires a high linguistic and mnemonic virtuosity which stands him in good stead when facing the tests of our none too satisfactory examination system—which has become almost exclusively a test of memory and facility of expression in a foreign language; members of the other castes who, for no fault of their own, lack this congenial background have therefore lagged behind. It is unscientific—and in any case untenable in a democratic set up—to hold on that account that members of other castes are of a lower intellectual calibre and to condemn them more or less permanently to an inferior role even in secular spheres, analogous to what the caste system itself has assigned to them in its socio-religious hierarchy.

Reservation in educational institutions, in public services etc. has now long been recognised as one of the methods by which the handicaps inherited by the backward classes can be gradually reduced. Granted intelligently devised methods of recruitment and sympathetic handling by superiors (the majority of whom at present belong to the higher castes), this reservation need not necessarily lead to lowering of standards. Even if there is a slight lowering of standards, it is a small price to pay if we are really keen on uplifting the backward classes and giving our democracy a more secure foundation. Let us not

also conveniently forget that the gross deterioration in standards and efficiency, which has overtaken almost every field of public administration since independence, is in the main attributable to the incompetence and corruption among both politicians and members of the public services, which especially at the higher levels are still dominated by the high castes.

It is true that in this process of uplifting the backward classes, the Brahmin community which hitherto enjoyed a lion's share of the public service appointments would find its share declining—but this is inevitable. The fact remains however that even to-day i.e. nearly half a century after the then British Government in India officially adopted the policy of uplifting the backward communities, the Brahmin continues to enjoy a much larger share than any other caste. According to Mr. Mehta himself, the Brahmin community is allotted in the Mysore States 20% of the Government posts, which in relation to its numerical strength is still disproportionately high. Any measure which would result in that community obtaining a still larger share (as Mr. Mehta would appear to wish) would neither accord with the principles of social justice nor mitigate the evils of the caste system. In the circumstances to assert that 'instead of the Harijan becoming a Brahmin, the Brahmin is becoming a Harijan' is a travesty of facts; this is unfortunately symptomatic of the reaction of the high castes generally to any measure of social justice, which has the incidental effect of weakening the highly privileged position they hitherto enjoyed. They need to be warned that any attempt to reverse the efforts which are being made to raise the backward classes will act as a boomerang, as the developments in the Madras State following the supersession by the Courts of the Government's order on communal representation clearly indicate.

There is no warrant either for the sharp distinction which Mr. Mehta attempts to draw between the 'Scheduled Castes' and

the 'Backward Classes' with a view to placing the latter outside the purview of special measures designed to bring about social justice. If democracy is to succeed in this country, all backward communities, that is, communities which are backward by the accident of birth, must be uplifted, a necessary corollary being that the more backward a community is, the greater the assistance which should be extended to it. To suggest that the entire policy should be abandoned because anomalies have risen is a call for throwing away the baby with the bathwater. There is a growing suspicion that the high castes are more antagonistic towards the uplift of what are officially designated as 'Backward Classes' than towards that of 'Scheduled Castes', partly for the reason that the Hindus' treatment of scheduled castes has received unsavoury publicity in the world forum, but principally for the reason that, with their relatively less hopeless background, the 'Backward Classes' are a more imminent danger to the supremacy of the high castes.

In the process of eradicating inequalities arising out of the caste system, individuals belonging to the high castes may suffer to some extent for no fault of their own, but Mr. Mehta himself furnishes the answer when he says 'since the upper castes often refuse to recognise the achievements of individuals of low castes who may, for example, acquire education, these individuals conclude that mobility on any significant scale must be a *group phenomenon*' (*italics mine*). This caste nepotism, which is peculiarly an Indian phenomenon, thrives under normal methods of recruitment and services conditions and has to be neutralised as far as possible by special measures designed to do justice to and protect members of the backward classes. If incidentally these measures cause injustice to some individuals amongst the high castes, one may regret that it should be so, but it is too much to expect that on this ground the basic policy of helping

the backward groups should be simply abandoned.

The crux of the problem is that so long as those who constitute the high castes continue to be caste-minded and so long as they continue to occupy a position of vantage and influence not merely in the social or religious fields as in the distant past but also in the administrative, professional, economic and political spheres, the backward classes will need to be protected and nursed by the state. In the meantime the caste consciousness which members of the backward communities are themselves increasingly evincing particularly in the political arena and which is essentially a defensive reflex against the virtual monopolies enjoyed by the high castes, is not an unmixed evil, as it is likely to bring the high castes to their senses sooner than would otherwise be the case, once they realise that a defensive movement will not always remain so and with a little provocation may change into an offensive one. It is difficult to differ from Mr. Mehta in his pessimistic appraisal that 'regardless of the many factors which are supposed to be disrupting the system, it has withstood all onslaughts and is still a strong and tenacious force. To believe that the demon of caste is about to die is to grossly underestimate the social forces that bind a caste group together and perpetuate casteism'. A desperate disease such as this calls for drastic and maybe painful remedies which the State alone has to-day the resources to provide. Still dominated as it is by the high castes however, there is little prospect of the State being persuaded to adopt such measures and willy nilly we have to be satisfied with the modest ameliorative measures which the State finds it expedient to adopt by way of compensation in education, in public services etc. to improve the lot of the

backward classes. To raise protests against these modest attempts of the State to grapple with this intractable problem seems a pathetic futility. Let the high castes rest content with the more or less permanent benefits which they have already secured through the caste system and which no one can take away from them. But any desire to *continue* to benefit both from the undemocratic caste system and at the same time to aspire for more than their share of the benefits of a democratic society would lead only to frustration on their side and conceivably untoward reactions on the other side which would bring no good to any one.

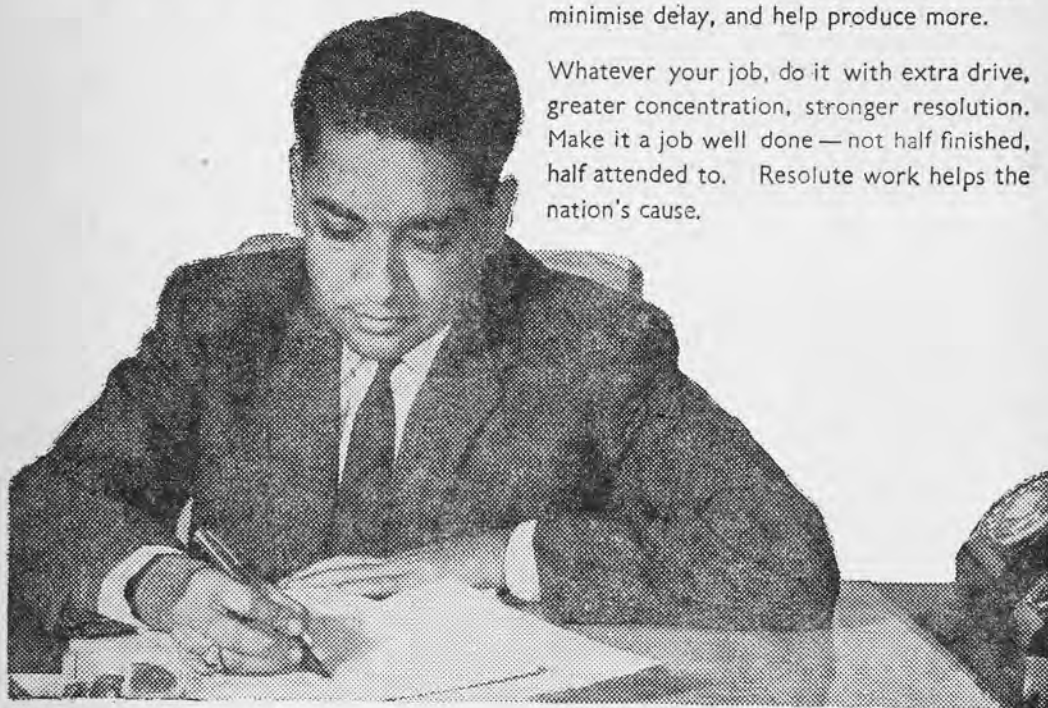
If on the other hand the leaders of the high castes show greater realism and imagination and apply their minds to the long term—as opposed to the immediate—interests of their own people, they should have no difficulty in recognising that the very caste system, which helped them in the past to acquire and enjoy special privileges in society, is gradually evolving under the economic and political stresses of to-day into a Frankenstein which at some future date may prove a menace not merely to their group interests but more so to the successful working of democracy in this country. A recognition of this danger would lead to a realisation that caste has really no place in true religion at any rate in modern society. Once this realisation dawns, the way will be clear for them to cast off their own casteism and give the much needed lead—which they are pre-eminently fitted to give—to launch a dynamic movement with the twin purpose of divorcing caste from religion and eradicating the caste system root and branch from our social organisation. Will these leaders muster the vision and the courage needed to do this?

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BOOKS

THE ADVENTURE OF CRITICISM by K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar (Asia Publishing House, 691 pp. Rs. 25.00)

SO here we go adventuring—but not into the jungles of controversy. Professor Iyengar's is a conciliatory mission, he wants to be nice to everybody, from Charles Morgan to Dr. Leavis, from Baudelaire to Pearl Buck—they all get a friendly mention. These adventures are the fireside adventures of Saintsbury or Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch (*Barnaby Rudge* on a winter evening)—'the adventures of the soul among masterpieces' as Anatole France so evocatively phrased it. Those who enjoy the clash of opinions (they say there are nine separate schools who stalk the streets of Cambridge ignoring or snarling at each other) will be disappointed here. Professor Iyengar roves sedately rather than dangerously in the 'delectable domains' of literature, and even when he penetrates the wilderness of modern despair, he manages to find an armchair waiting and invites the reader to pull one up too.

This is largely because of the familiarly generalised language he uses, into which we can settle quite comfortably: 'Life was his theme, and life was often violent, squalid, mean, spiteful, confusing, maddening; but there was beauty too—and love—and peace—though only fitfully' (on O'Neill). Even in the world of Kafka, Professor Iyengar finds a silver lining: 'although it is misty and foggy and full of nasty turns, it isn't quite as murky as Hell. Light trickles through now and then...'; *In the Penal Settlement*, we are told,

'ends on a more hopeful—and indeed on an almost triumphant — note.' In fact Professor Iyengar feels a quite fatherly sympathy for poor Kafka, who tried so hard to find God, and just couldn't quite make it.

The trouble is that Professor Iyengar is capable of a fatherly sympathy for so many people. He sees the good in everybody, and gently excuses their failings. Whether it is Saintsbury or the New Critics, satire or 'lyra mystica', Gandhi or George Orwell, Galsworthy or Tennessee Williams, he is scrupulously fair. This is his method—bring out the virtues, be kind. But criticism cannot avoid controversy, for literature involves the values we live by. And our response to literature is as serious and as controversial as our response to life: did Shakespeare and Tolstoy write that some Cultural Council might arrange a cocktail party? To make literature uncontroversial is to take the life out of it—in short, to make it dull.

To a certain extent the universities, by an irony of their function, not only stimulate appreciation of literature, but also tend to render it harmless—partly by making it a subject of research bound by the ideals of impartiality and elucidation, partly by reducing it to an intellectual game (high table conversation). The halls of learning detach culture from life, and it is precisely against this development that Dr. Leavis and his school have so strongly reacted. The archetypal don is the epitome of these two tendencies, combining wisdom and wit, abreast of knowledge but *au dessus de la mêlée*: the sage of our time. Certainly there is plenty of wisdom

in these collected essays and addresses, which summarize a lifetime of academic distinction:

Cabbages or Roses? Science or the Humanities? Mammon or God? Such categorical divisions—such peremptory demands that one must choose either the former or the latter—tend to oversimplify, and hence falsify, the real problem of human life.

Nevertheless, the business of the critic is not wisdom but discrimination. Professor Iyengar appears to concede this at the very beginning of his title essay when he quotes T. S. Eliot as saying that criticism is not only elucidation but also 'correction of taste'. However, the whole purport of his essay is to place checks on criticism, to steer it well into the middle between the extremes of enthusiasm and fault-finding. And this not only in the name of fair-mindedness, but also good manners! Yes, good manners are an essential part of the function of criticism, which is a 'noble enterprise', to be engaged in with 'tact' by 'gentlemen'. And Professor Iyengar comes down heavily on those he describes as 'drain-inspectors' ('afflicted with a sinister dyspepsia') who are always pointing out how bad new writing is. Charles Morgan is brought in to remind us that the young poet is like a man exhibiting 'his fresh burning wound'—and if the critic must touch it 'he must do so with love.' But good manners and adventuring don't go together, and the adventurer with good manners is hardly likely to get beyond the dak bungalow. After all, literature itself has rarely been the product of good manners—even in the eighteenth century, when it was considered a branch of good manners. And if we encourage every young poet to exhibit his fresh burning wound, our universities will be more like sick-bays.

Professor Iyengar is handicapped not only by his good manners, but also by his 'seraphic' view of literature. Although he gives a brief but fair survey of 'Aesthetics Indian and Western', finding I. A. Richards

'rewarding', it is clear that in his own view, as has been evident in his previous books and especially in his reiterated preference for the poetry and poetic theory of Sri Aurobindo, the connection between literature and life's concrete actuality is tenuous indeed. For him criticism no more than literature leads back to life, but forward into 'the heart of Reality'—'transcending both criticism and literature'. And this dependence on an intuitive vision, an inner experience, rather than on moral or psychological references, or on style which can be argued about, makes discrimination less urgent and less tangible. 'Only when a poem, instead of imprisoning or suffocating the reader within the granite walls of precise "meaning", proves rather to be a magic casement opening on the foam of endless oceans of ambrosial significance can it deserve the name of poetry.'

Secure in his intuitive apprehension of ambrosial significance, Professor Iyengar does not seem to be aware of the vagueness and ambiguity of his generalised criteria. 'All criticism, to be worth the name, should be reared upon the twin foundations of knowledge and integrity.' The critic must have 'a penetrating intellect and a fine imagination', 'a heart which beats in tune with the music of human aspiration and suffering...'. He will be 'not only learned but also wise.' Well, yes... But how do you recognise or define these qualities which anybody may claim for their favourites: do they apply equally to Sri Aurobindo and I. A. Richards? They can only be defined by examples—and by contrasting those whom you believe to have them with those who falsely claim to have them, in other words by controversy.

But Professor Iyengar, in his theoretical discussions, never gets down to examples and comparisons—not even when he is finding fault with the fault-finders (who exactly?). So too with criticism of literature: you must get down to texts, take sides, analyse, compare—not with destructive malice, but with passion and concern.

Rhetoric without illustration is useless: '...the lightning flashes of poetry that make darkness itself so thrilling an experience'—a vivid and meaningful phrase, but is it fair to leave your reader finding these flashes possibly in places quite different from where you find them yourself? And what exactly does the following mean, if it is not merely begging the whole question?—'Literature *can* present sex or vice or perversion, and yet remain literature, so long as these are imaginatively seized and fully consumed in the whole design.' Without concrete reference and comparison, all generalities about what literature does or should do are mere phrase-making. Who denies that literature brings joy, revelation, etc.?

Perhaps we are up against another of those East-West cleavages which are so difficult to pinpoint: the Indian reliance on theoretical argument (the word=the fact), the Anglo-Saxon insistence on concrete reference. Professor Iyengar and Sri Aurobindo look upon literature as entry into the Bliss of Brahman, for Matthew Arnold and F. R. Leavis it is a 'criticism of life'—in the former case beyond, in the latter subject to analysis. In Indian aesthetics, 'Aesthetic experience is sharply to be contrasted with *samsara*, the bondage of everyday life,' so when we are told 'aesthetic experience is no escape from life,' we should not confuse this 'life' with the kind of life envisaged by Matthew Arnold and Dr. Leavis. How many essays have I received from my Indian students telling me that poetry is an escape from 'this sordid life' into realms of 'eternal delight'! But the issue goes beyond the question of theme, for a Westerner may admire both Fielding and St. John of the Cross, Keats and *The Beggar's Opera*, while Professor Iyengar's sympathies, as we have seen, are extremely diverse. The ultimate issue is expression. The modern Western critic demands that expression be concrete and original—related to life in time—whereas Professor Iyengar, less attached to the real, is content with

meaning: there is no discussion of language in this book. But without such discussion how are you going to distinguish between:

Ever since last autumn,
I have loved you from my heart's
bottom,
Maiden, oh come!

and

I dream of a Ledaean body, bent
Above a sinking fire...

The first of course is one of those fresh burning wounds, but the sentiments in either case are the same.

No doubt Professor Iyengar, if at all he reads this review, has long since thrown up his arms in despair. Good heavens, isn't there enough conflict and quarrelling in the world? What good can come of forcing people into disagreement?—only bitterness and recrimination: look at the Cambridge English faculty! Let us at least have peace in the realm of literature if nowhere else in the world. A worthy plea, but the facts don't fit the case—certainly not the facts of Western literature, which is rooted not in peace but conflict, not in reasonableness but passion. The ideal of a literature beyond conflict and passion would be an endlessly re-intoned holy syllable 'OM'—there would be nothing else to say. Then there really would be no need for discrimination. At Cambridge the disagreements show that literature is a living issue there. But once we begin to say that taste is beyond dispute, there's a time and a place for everything, different people like different things, and everything is good in its own way...—then we no longer care. And for those who have 'realized' a spiritual world beyond conflict and stand firm in their own relationship to it, there is really no need to care.*

But in another sense Professor Iyengar obviously does care—or he would not have written this weighty volume, nor disciplined himself to the painstaking labour that has gone into it. He may lack the urgency of a partisan, but he cares very much that literature should exist and that people

should be aware of it. Here his catholicism is of service: he writes of everything, from the Indian theory of *rasa* to the Jazz Age, with chapters apiece on the Epic, Tragedy, Comedy, Satire, the Novel, the Short Story, and such old favourites as 'Freedom and Culture', 'Moral Values in Literature', 'Materialism and Spiritual Values'. The authors singled out for special treatment are all modern, and especially American, including Poe, Melville, Allen Tate, Thoreau, Joyce, L. H. Myers, Hannah Closs, St. John Perse. *Lolita* gets a paragraph ('a symptom, a warning') and *Tropic of Cancer* an hon. mention (ambrosial?). In his urge to objectivity and self-effacement, Professor Iyengar quotes an unbelievable variety of authorities: for instance, in a couple of pages from 'Romanticism, Symbolism, Modernism' I notice quotations from Bernard Weinberg, T. S. Eliot, (twice), Desmond MacCarthy, Bernard Fay, James Huneker, Richard Church, Earle Welby, and one anonymous opinion. In short, the essays all add up to a sort of Indian equivalent to Wellek and Warren's handbook *Theory of Literature*. In so far as they succeed in attracting their readers to the original literature from which they sprang, they will succeed in the objective of all critical writing.

DAVID MCCUTCHION

Before and After

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN SOUTH INDIA by T. Scarlett Epstein. (Oxford University Press, 353 pp. Rs. 27.50.)

AT the beginning of this century, Sayaji Rao Gaekwar of Baroda, himself an enthusiastic social reformer, warned the Indian National Social Reform Conference against complacency. Much of the progress was due, he said, to force of circumstances rather than to their own intelligent and energetic efforts. It was a remarkable warning uttered at a remarkable time. The social reform movement was still

holding the heights it had attained during the preceding decade. The Madras Census paid tribute to the dedicated work of the young reformers in the South. The Maharaja of Baroda himself had launched on a double policy of social legislation and practical encouragement. But the tide was to turn and 'intelligent and energetic effort' spent itself in the next three decades and the compulsion of events asserted itself more and more.

Political attitudes and adjustments were still dominant but economic forces also began to play a part which, after national independence, gained increasing importance. With this, the value of specialised and regional studies won recognition. To the names of Irawati Karve, G. M. Carstairs, and F. G. Bailey whose books are marked by scholarship, readability and a painstaking collection of facts, must be added Scarlett Epstein for this comparative study of two Mysore villages.

Mrs. Epstein spent two years—1954-56—in Mandya District in the old Mysore State, studying developing conditions in two comparable villages—'Wangala', a wet village right in the centre of the irrigated area, and 'Dalena', a dry village on the fringe of it. Their populations, less than 1,000, are multi-caste; both were outside the Community Development Project, which meant that they developed without official direction and were equally served by the Public Works, Electricity and Agricultural departments of the State. Before the advent of irrigation in the later thirties, both Wangala and Dalena were nearly the same in every aspect of their social and economic life. The same external stimuli have been exerted on both and, Mrs. Epstein assures us, irrigation is the major factor affecting the two villages in the past twenty-five years. For instance, location shows a difference but one that is not serious enough to matter: Wangala, four miles away from Mandya town, lies on a secondary road usable by cycles, carts and buses; Dalena, six miles from Mandya, is a hundred yards of motorable road from

the main highway, near the main electric lines and a railway station.

Irrigation has integrated the villages into the regional economy and opened up economic opportunities which have been differently availed of by the two villages. Mrs. Epstein from brief visits to other villages in the region offers the conclusion tentatively that the patterns manifested by Wangala and Dalena also obtain in most villages of the two types. She deals in detail with the social relationships within each village and furnishes a mass of statistics on their economic activities. Her conclusions, presented persuasively and without deviating from the orbit of her own experience, *are* the book. The fact that all of it flows from painstaking study and the adjustments which a European needs to make to enter into the life of a village, does not mean that the book is devoid of insight. A friend who had read Bailey's 'Caste and the Economic Frontier' recommended it warmly to me with the words, 'It has all the fascination and interest of a detective story.' Here again, Mrs. Epstein manifests the force and attraction of a disciplined mind engaged in a pioneering effort.

Her main conclusion is that, when a society turns a subsistence to a cash economy, traditional relations are affected and the ferment of new ideas gets to work. The difference between response to economic opportunity in a wet village and such response in a dry village is that in the first the advent of irrigation led directly to improved farming and better cultivation while in the second the move was towards utilising for the benefit of its own inhabitants the increased prosperity of the outlying areas directly benefiting from irrigation. The initiative shown by the leading inhabitants of Dalena in this respect is revealed by the development of black markets which the small cultivators of Wangala who actually grew the crops, were not able to exploit. Further, more Dalena men sought job opportunities outside the village because their dry lands

limited the scope of farming, while Wangala farmers devoted their whole time to their land. As a consequence, women in Dalena increased their dependence on the land on which their active and supervisory work was needed to release their men for outside work while women in Wangala were encouraged to develop supplementary occupations—tending buffaloes and lending money—with social prestige attached to not working on the land.

This difference in outlook is reflected in two traditional social institutions—the joint family and adoption. While in both villages the joint family has broken down—only ten per cent of Wangala and eight per cent of Dalena households were joint families—in Wangala the blame was placed on the quarrelsomeness of the women while in Dalena the selfishness of young men was cited as the main cause. Again, Wangala farmers regard their wet land holdings 'too important to be left without a male heir', and Dalena dry farmers are content to let their women look after their land. Hence, there is frequent resort to adoption in the first but not so often in the second.

About caste relations too, Mrs. Epstein offers some interesting conclusions. Changes have occurred where the traditional relations no longer fit the developing economy. In Dalena, the peasant-untouchable relations altered because the economic ties between the two had altered; in Wangala, on the other hand, the old relations continued to hold, because under even improved agricultural conditions the same pattern was repeated and stressed. There are two points in this regard which Mrs. Epstein brings out: firstly, the inter-caste relationship continues where the two castes concerned continue to serve a useful economic purpose. Secondly, the result of the competitiveness among Dalena untouchables—non-traditional jobs even outside the village are few and indeed very few for the untouchables—the Dalena untouchables lack the cohesion of the Wangala untouchables, which enabled

them to stage a united protest against the peasants. Mrs. Epstein illustrates effectively the difficulty of rousing the interest of Wangala untouchables over temple-entry or access to village wells which entail continuing conflict in the village, and the ease with which they can be provoked over matters that involve a single incident.

If Mrs. Epstein could return to the region and have a second look at the two villages and at Mandya town which has in many ways been a generating influence for change, she could give us more invaluable material. This study was made possible by the Rockefeller Foundation. There is no reason why the Planning Commission which has produced an evaluation of the direct effect of minor irrigation, should not draw upon her services for completing the social evaluation which she has so ably done in her study.

S. NATARAJAN

The Will to Success

THE ACHIEVING SOCIETY, by David C. McClelland (D. Van Nostrand Co. 512 pp.)

WITH the appearance of Professor David C. McClelland's *The Achieving Society*, the discipline of psychology makes a belated debut as a major source of ideas for economic development. It is necessary to mark the event with a beat of drums.

Professor McClelland's argument is easily summarized: The fact that a society shows economic growth is the cumulative effect of large numbers of decisions; and the nature of the contemporary industrial and commercial decision-making is such that it invariably involves a moderate amount of uncertainty, of risk-taking. Not everyone is willing to take risks, however. Devotees of 'common sense' have long told us that a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush: characteristically, the entrepreneur acting for himself, his company, or the government—frequently chooses the two in the bush. He takes risks because he has a high 'psychological need for' achieve-

ment: in McClelland's language, he has a high 'n' achievement. Note that 'n' is equivalent to 'psychological need for.' (Similarly, n Power and n Affiliation, terms to be introduced below.)

Some individuals have high and others low n Achievement. A high level appears to be produced in a childhood which is warm and nurturant, where the father's dominance is low, and where the child is under pressure to meet high standards of performance. Once a person has acquired a high n Achievement, he is more likely to take calculated risks, such as are necessary for economic growth; and if a society places its men with high n Achievement in the pivotal decision-making roles, its rate of economic growth is likely to be high.

Two more psychological factors receive attention: n Power and n Affiliation. If n Power is high in a society along with n Achievement, its members are likely to compete for the sources of power rather excessively; and if the need for establishing mutually satisfactory relationships with other persons (=n Affiliation) is low, these two factors together are likely to produce an authoritarian political system. (In turn high n Affiliation encourages people to neglect task-performance and to concentrate on making each other happy.) Hence McClelland's prescription for non-Authoritarian economic development: high n Achievement, moderate n Power, and moderate n Affiliation.

Now, an argument of this sort would deserve no more than a brief 'how interesting!' were it not built on a decade of research ranging over pre-Incan Peru; the Friends' project in Barpali near Rourkela; psychological tests and questionnaires for adolescent boys and their mothers in the United States, Japan, Brazil, Germany, and India, and for managers and professionals in the United States, Italy, Turkey, and Poland; analyses of children's story books from forty countries; and so on. And so on.

This reviewer has neither the competence nor the inclination to examine here the whole gamut of McClelland's evidence, but some feeling for it may be conveyed

through a brief review of one set of investigations. The author argues that (1) *n* Achievement levels of individuals are related with (2) the *n* Achievement levels displayed in the cultural products of their society—such as the children's story books, poetry, drama, etc.; and these two factors together should show a causal relationship with (3) the overall economic performance of the society. The *n* Achievement level is supposed to determine the person's willingness to take calculated risks; collectively, the greater the willingness to take calculated risks, the faster the economic growth. Part of the evidence for this general hypothesis can conveniently be examined in three units.

A. *Persons who have high n Achievement levels perform better under conditions of moderate risk*: *n* Achievement levels for over 700 adolescents from Germany, Brazil, and Japan were elicited by (a) content analysis of imaginative stories, and (b) scoring spontaneous drawings, or doodles. With this material the investigators could classify the boys as 'high' or 'low' in *n* Achievement. (p. 59). Then they asked the boys to solve a large number of complex problems in arithmetic. They solved these under varying probabilities of success. The instructions were somewhat as follows, 'You are one of a group of four persons. The three persons in your group with the highest scores will win \$2.50. In other words, your chances of winning \$2.50 are three out of four.' This would be a 3/4 condition, a high probability of success. McClelland also used three lower probabilities of success: 1/2, 1/3, and 1/20, (pp. 216-218). He assumes that a low success probability is equivalent to a high risk condition) His data suggest that:

High *n* Achievement boys did *much better* than low *n* Achievement boys under the 1/3 condition (an optimum risk level?); *somewhat better* under the 1/20 and 1/2 conditions; and not as well

under the 3/4 condition (low risk level). (218-220)

B. *The higher the individual n Achievement levels in a country, the higher should be the n Achievement levels shown in its children's story books (and other cultural products)*: We have already noticed the manner of getting individual *n* Achievement levels. For the other variable, McClelland collected samples of children's story books from the same countries, translated them all into English, and scored them for achievement imagery. The two variables did *not* show any clear relationship. (Discussion on pp. 75-79.)

C. *Countries with a high collective n Achievement level should show a high rate of economic growth*: For the latter variable, McClelland rejected the usual economists' measures of national income; instead he employs the rate of growth in electrical production as a measure of economic growth. *n* Achievement levels of children's readers in 1925 and 1950 are presented for thirty countries, together with the corresponding data on the production of electricity. (88-105) The data do provide broad support for the hypothesis.

Space permits us only to invite the reader's attention to the new insights on old problems: how slavery may have doomed complex civilizations by lowering *n* Achievement levels (377-78, 387-88); why a red ideology may be better than no ideology for purposes of economic development (397-99, 406-13); and why Gandhian* notions of village self-sufficiency are anachronistic in mid-twentieth century (394-96).

In his concluding chapter McClelland tries to draw inferences from his theory for purposes of 'accelerating economic growth.' These amount to general recommendations for increasing *n* Achievement and *n* Affiliation, but—at least in the short run—'a government or an outside agency apparently cannot do much to stimulate an increase in national *n* Achievement levels.' (418) Nevertheless, even limited resources

* What is called Gandhian economics probably received from Gandhi little more than his blessings; its ideological framework appears to have come from the late Dr. J. C. Kumarappa.

can be deployed for maximal effectiveness, as the Soviet Union has demonstrated. He has some eminently sensible ideas for the United States government's Foreign Aid programme. And I think it would be worthwhile for us to invite him to examine our mechanisms for manpower distribution.

This is a complex but important book. Professor McClelland has effectively brought a powerful theoretical system and the rather sophisticated technology of contemporary social science to bear upon a set of problems which have an overriding importance for us. Although his focus was on economic growth, entrepreneurs take the lead in many fields. Enquiry would show that P. C. Mahalanobis, H. J. Bhabha, and P. Lal are academic entrepreneurs with high n Achievement; others have noticed political entrepreneurs in action in rural India. We need more of them. We need them in the pivotal places. We need them urgently.

SATISH C. SABERWAL

Our Special Parochialism

CASTE IN MODERN INDIA: and Other Essays
—by M. N. Srinivas. (Asia Publishing House,
171 pp. Rs. 13.50)

A friend of mine who tried to read this book returned it in a hurry, confessing that the very first chapter depressed him so much that he did not have the courage to proceed any further. This reaction is typical: the vexed topic of caste seems to raise over-much emotion and sentiment. Sociologists themselves are too often unable to lay aside their prepossessions and to reach the objectivity which is a condition precedent to any scientific assessment of the situation. But it cannot be denied that Dr. Srinivas has spoken out with unusual candour on some moot points.

In this collection of essays, there is considerable repetition of ideas which is perhaps inevitable. The critical and descriptive portions are good, but there is nothing new in the constructive suggestions, which are more or less conventional. Of

the eleven essays published here, five have been reviewed by the author himself in his Introduction. In the first and longest, 'Caste in Modern India' which supplies the title of the book, Dr. Srinivas highlights the marked increase in recent times of the activity of caste in the public life of the country. He marshalls a formidable mass of evidence in support of his thesis and goes in great detail into the development of caste organizations in various States, and the powerful incidence of caste considerations in the general elections of 1951 and 1955. The facts are now out of date, but the experience of the elections of 1962 only confirms and buttresses his view. Dr. Srinivas believes that the spectacular functioning of the non-Brahmin movement in peninsular India has created an impression that caste feeling is dominant only in the South, but there are good grounds for holding that caste is rampant in the North also, insidiously but not less pervasively.

Of the ten other papers in this book, three deal with problems facing working sociologists, and methods of study, and are of more or less of technical interest. Elsewhere, the modifications which the pattern and functioning of caste underwent during the hundred years of British rule have been described at some length. According to Dr. Srinivas, caste grouping was never very rigid, and there was at all times noticeable social and economic mobility within groups as well as between groups. All-round westernization and the improvement of communications led to a widening of the range of operation of caste feeling, while at the same time there was a weakening of the sense of interdependence between different castes living in defined areas. As Dr. Srinivas puts it, 'The horizontal solidarity of a caste gained at the expense of the vertical solidarity of the castes of a region.' The result was not a step towards an egalitarian society but the reverse.

Caste which had been primarily a cultural phenomenon got metamorphosed into 'casteism', with the emergence of powerful 'dominant castes' in every region. This per-

version has now assumed the proportions of a public menace. Yet only a small minority sincerely view it as such, while the vast majority acquiesce in it, not without secret sympathy. Dr. Srinivas says, 'I am not trying to be cynical but I cannot help wondering how many of those who have of late started publicly speaking in favour of a casteless and classless society really mean what they say. Now that this ideal is incorporated in our Constitution, and Pandit Nehru is a very powerful and universally respected man, Congressmen, legislators and other leaders find it more convenient to agree with him than to disagree. Most of us — not only our politicians but our intellectuals as well — are bamboozled into agreeing with something merely because we are afraid to be mistaken for being 'reactionary'. Even discussion of the subject is taboo. In the case of caste this disease has proceeded so far that there is great danger that our talk and policy will leave reality far behind. Secondly, coupled with the widespread fear of being dubbed reactionary, there is also a shrewd if somewhat cynical appreciation of facts. I know that what I say may seem a contradiction but it really is not so. Agreeing to progressive resolutions satisfies our consciences and assures us of our worldly prospects, while at the same time our sense of facts tells us that nothing serious is going to be done by anyone, and that caste will continue to remain what it is. The best of both the worlds are secured by taking such a course.'

Historically, caste with its 'vertical' cellular structure, and based on the principle of interdependence and cooperation might have served to stabilize a static, hierarchically organized society in a pre-industrial economy. Caste as such is not dead, but it is overshadowed by its recent metamorphosis into 'casteism' with its sprawling 'horizontality' functioning in a spirit of rivalry and competition. Caste may have its points, but 'casteism' is an unmitigated evil. Dr. Srinivas is of course aware of this; but he does not consistently maintain the distinction. It is obvious that

his animadversions are all directed against the workings of 'casteism', although, more often than not, he uses the word caste. What is stranger is that in one place (p. 6) he actually holds that this recent development of caste is a sign of flexibility rather than a symptom of disintegration.

Among other interesting points raised by Dr. Srinivas may be mentioned his view that the unity of India should be based on a scheme of multiple loyalties representing a hierarchy of values, rather than on the single loyalty to the State. He also thinks that it is anachronistic to envisage our villages any longer as self-contained units, as they form part and parcel of the larger economy of the country as a whole.

In his last essay he presents an admirably compact survey of the outstanding characteristics of Hinduism, and says that on a short term view Hinduism has been purified and strengthened by contact with the West; and that the conflict between religion and science which has been so acutely felt in the West has not been paralleled in India so far. He, however, seems to identify Hinduism too much with the structure of caste. No doubt, in a manner of speaking, caste has been the 'body' of Hinduism in the recent past. But one of the cardinal tenets of Hinduism is that a worn-out body will be discarded by the soul, and a new one taken up. This has happened before and there is no reason why it should not happen again.

The contention of Dr. Srinivas that caste as it actually exists cannot be fitted into the classical scheme of the four *Varnas* is not new, and may be readily conceded. The phenomenon which he refers to as Sanskritization is vague in its outlines, and ultimately of only academic interest. Taken all together, we have here a scholarly and thoughtful collection of essays by a competent hand. Whether we agree with his conclusions or not, we have to respect the sincerity and courage of Dr. Srinivas. In a country hag-ridden by 'casteism', it is not unlikely that his view will be criticised as showing Brahmin bias. But that has to be faced.

K. GURU DUTT

Chosisme

DEGREES by Michel Butor. Translated by Richard Howard (Methuen, London 374 pp, 25s.)

HOW close can one get to Truth? Pompous and obviously futile as the question sounds, it is the sort of remark that may, in the company of a few earnest but discontented writers, touch off a 'literary revolt'. Often, as is to be expected, nothing comes of it but occasionally if the writers are talented and persistent, a Full-Fledged movement might just get started. Michel Butor's *Degrees* is the outcome of a writer's rebellion started, appropriately, in a Paris café five years ago. Still going full tilt, the Neo Realists, as they call themselves, ask the original question about Truth with a difference. Their concern is to get, not close to and around, but *at* it. Designed as always 'to change the appearance of the novel', the cult to which they subscribe (there has to be something to hitch one's art to in these roadside revolts) is known as 'chosisme,' or the 'ism' of things. Critics prefer to term it Phenomenology, which sounds more of a philosophy and less of an eccentricity than 'thingishness'.

What the Neo-Realists are after is to do away with everything that is not a tangible, surface fact. They scorn observation besides the obvious and 'reality beyond appearance', conjuring visions of cliché clogged definitive statements of 'eternal truths' and 'ageless wisdom', with which the lesser Victorians dressed up flimsy stories, are to be avoided at all costs. Heroes and heroines are not to be 'built up' by the author. The idea is not to be *for* the central character, but to *be* him. The style has, however, obvious limitations. How can any thinking person disallow that a fact or phenomenon is coloured not only by the quality but also by the state of one's mind? And in practice 'being' the hero is easier said than done.

Take *Degrees* for example. The book starts:

'I walk into the classroom, and I step up on to the platform.

When the bell stops ringing I...'

So far so good. But it goes on:

'Your uncle Henri Jouret, on the other side of the wall behind me, is coping with...'

It is surely outside the factual experience of the narrator to know what Henri Jouret is doing on the other side of the wall. If the book *is* the central character then it cannot possibly tell what people are doing in places where the narrator is not present. Words like possibly, perhaps, maybe, have been studiously left out and is, am, was, were used in their stead, but the discrepancy is as blatant. The blurb calls *Degrees* 'an audaciously intellectual novel, which challenges the unreflective assumptions of the reader no less than those of the ordinary novel writer.' Mr. Butor, we presume?

While one can hardly agree with the New York Times that this is 'the most unusual and challenging piece of writing to have come from France since the Second World War' (how many books have been hailed thus?), *Degrees* is saved despite 'chosisme'. As a drama of the peculiar tension that can sometimes build up between teachers and pupils leaving a scar not only on the pupil, as is commonly accepted, but on the teacher as well, it has (apologies to the author) a more than surface dimension. As for style, since we have all got used to paragraphs beginning in the middle of sentences and ending with commas, if it serves the writer's meaning precisely it serves its purpose. There is nothing either essentially 'new' or 'realistic' about it.

LINA MAYADAS

A Glimpse of Nothing

GLIMPSES OF URDU LITERATURE by N. S. Gorekar (Jaico Publishing House, 73pp. Rs. 10.)

THE book is written in English for the reader of English if not exclusively for the English reader. It may, therefore, be presumed that the normal conventions of

English usage have been adopted. If this presumption is accurate then the book is not what it claims to be.

If somebody offered to show me the Taj Mahal then I should expect to see the famous architectural masterpiece. I should not be satisfied merely to listen to a dissertation,—no matter how erudite and exhaustive,—on the historical events which led to the Taj being built; on the different types of marble and stone used in the building; on the exact proportions in which the mortar was mixed; on the masons and craftsmen who assisted in the building and on the various schools to which they belonged; on the fact that the Taj is said to incorporate the best in Islamic and Hindu building design and on a mass of other technical information which could only be of interest to a Master Builder. Such a dissertation could not possibly enable me to picture the ethereal beauty which is the Taj Mahal.

As an ardent, though perhaps inexperienced, lover of the Urdu language, I expected, when I opened the book, to encounter some of the brighter gems of Urdu expression. I was, of course, quite prepared to find they had lost some of their lustre by being set, as it were, in the alien element of English. Translation almost invariably mars the pristine purity of the original. Alas for my hopes! What I was actually faced with was a politico-historical survey of the birth and development of Urdu, well laced with the names of Urdu writers and the titles of their works and incorporating an ingenious, though sometimes baffling, form of transliteration. When I came to the end of the book I had to turn, in haste, to my copy of 'Diwan-i-Ghalib' to reassure myself that there really was such a thing as beautiful Urdu and not merely a hash-up of 'Old Punjabi', 'Khari Boli' and 'Biraj Bhasha' duly modified by the addition of a little Persian, Arabic and even some Turkish.

It may be contended that to condemn the contents of a book merely in the context of the title is unfair, if not downright

stupid. It may be argued that credit should be given for the enormous amount of research which must have been involved in the preparation of the volume. I am quite prepared to take off my hat to Professor Gorekar for his hard work and for his profound learning but I cannot accept that he has succeeded in what he himself calls 'an attempt at surveying the entire range of Urdu language and literature in the English language.' I am, in fact, reminded of the story of the two boys who entered in an essay-writing competition.

Tom Jones was the son of a garage owner. John Smith's father was a market-gardener and nurseryman whose seeds, seedlings and potted plants were justly famous in the neighbourhood. Both boys were good writers but when the subject for the essay was announced, 'A Garden', the scales seemed very unfairly weighted against poor Tom. John Smith settled down to his writing immediately, industriously covering sheet after sheet of paper with his neat handwriting. Tom Jones, poor lad, looked glumly out of the classroom window, wrote a few lines on the paper, stared out of the window, wrote a little more and so on. When, on the expiry of the time given for writing the essay, both boys handed in their efforts, Tom's few sheets of paper looked very slim and forlorn against the thick sheaf handed in by John. The result seemed to be a foregone conclusion. *Mirabile dictu*, when the result was announced, Tom Jones had won! Why? Whilst John Smith had been filling sheet after sheet of paper with such information as when to plant certain flowers, always giving their Latin names; what types of manure to use; the advantages of artificial fertilisers against natural manures for certain types of plants and so on; Tom had been looking out of the window at the school flower garden and putting down what he saw!

'Glimpses of Urdu Literature' bears the same relationship to Urdu Literature as an un-illustrated gardening catalogue does to a flowering garden.

A. H. MORTIMER

Russia without Politics

RUSSIAN PANORAMA by K.P.S. Menon, (Oxford University Press, 273 pp. Rs. 15.)

OURS is an age of politicians. They are the theme of our newspapers and wireless, our conversations and our books. And the subjects of our obsession are such little men that if they were stripped of their purple togas one would hesitate to entrust them with any professional responsibility and in some cases even lock up the cutlery when were around. But these little Caesars bestride the world and we tend to see other lands in terms of its petty Commissars and Senators.

One is therefore grateful to find a book on Russia which does not mention the figures of steel production under the Seven-Year Plans or describe the camp at Vorkuta or tell us about Mr. Khrushchev's views on the 'historic ties of friendship' between Russia and India, and which is by an author who sensibly prefers to keep the company of Tolstoy, Ulanova and Gogol to Molotov, Mikoyan and Kagonovich.

Mr. Menon, our Ambassador at Moscow in the fifties has been for long a victim of the wander-lust 'appropriate to my age and spine'. In him, we have a gentle and a cultivated guide who takes us on a tour of the Soviet Union and some of its neighbours, to the cathedrals of Zagorsk, the forest at Yasnaya Polyana, the Sanatorium at Sochi and the little known land of Moldavia. The book is compiled from a travel diary and sometimes it flows as unevenly as would extracts from any journal. Perhaps there is something to be said for writing a book of travels in the manner in which the Chinese landscape artists paint their pictures. The painter, we are told, studies the landscape with rapt attention and then at home sets down his vision transmuted by his genius.

Mr. Menon, with his shrewdness and humour, gives us some interesting sketches. He tells us how Pushkin was descended from an Ethiopian grandfather; how the

cathedral at Zagorsk maintains the book of Ivan the Terrible in which he entered the names of all he killed, starting with his own son; about the Hindu temple at Baku, with its Gurumukhi and Devnagari inscriptions; about the Indian merchants who flourished in Astrakhan (including Mogundsov, son of Mohandas) and about perhaps the most fortunate job, that of the caviare tasters of the Mikoyan Fishing Combine who have to rinse their mouths with cognac.

The book is not a political memoir. But a book about a total state which imposes itself on every activity of its citizens cannot avoid political comment altogether; otherwise it becomes as insipid as a communiqué of the Indian Government. This is particularly apparent in the chapter about the resurgence in Hungary, its suppression and the alternative approach in Poland. The author argues that while the Communist State has not refrained from the use of force, after the death of Stalin, Communism has a broader and more spirited impulse. The State has regarded culture as the opiate of the masses and has brought ballet, opera and drama to the citizens. Sometimes this creates its own problems, for we are told that in the early days of the revolution, there was some hesitation in showing Prokofiev's 'Romeo and Juliet' as the scenes in which the servants of the Montagues and Capulets fought betrayed lack of solidarity in the ranks of the proletariat! Incidentally Prokofiev's death was not announced for a week in Russia, because, though an extremely popular composer, he did not choose the right time to die and since his death coincided with the death of Stalin, the news was deferred for a week. Surely it is difficult to avoid all political comment on a State in the Capital of which, we are told, the more effusive couples are tapped by militiamen gently but firmly on the shoulder and told, 'Enough, Comrade, enough'.

ASHOK DESAI

Nothing new to Report

TRENDS IN INDIAN PLANNING by Shriman Narayan, (Asia Publishing House, pp. 137 Rs. 10.)

MR. Shriman Narayan has 'just' succeeded in writing a 'tolerable' book which deals with almost every conceivable aspect of Indian planning from land reclamation to naturopathy and decentralization to the development of the 'ethical' dimension. 'Trends in Indian Planning' is concerned less with the analysis of current trends in Indian planning than with the advocacy of 'a Sarvodaya pattern of democracy and planning based on decentralization, mutual co-operation and peaceful methods.' The justification of this title, if any, lies in the highly debatable observation of the author that the general trends in Indian Planning during the last ten years are, more or less, in the direction in which Gandhi would have liked India to progress in the social and economic spheres.

Pleading passionately for the development of the human personality, Mr. Narayan asserts that the measure of success of the new social order is not the accumulation of material comforts and luxuries, but the high standard of moral and ethical values that govern the life of a nation. A high degree of economic and political decentralisation is required for this purpose. Such decentralization will also solve the problem of increasing unemployment and under-employment. In a country like India, with limited resources and a large population, this will mean the organization of small-scale, cottage and village industries, particularly the processing or the agro-industries, on a co-operative basis. We are further shown that this does not militate against the idea of utilizing the fruits of modern science and technology. In fact this is in keeping with the latest scientific and technological developments which are gradually rendering centralised industries 'unscientific'.

The use of electricity instead of coal power and the demands of strategy in the superatomic era clearly underline the



Kingship and Community in Early India

CHARLES DREKMEIER. This intellectual and cultural history of ancient India, from the Aryan invasions in the second millennium B.C. to the rise of Islam, places chief emphasis on political and social thought—the relation of social theory to religious belief, the values that replaced the heroic ideal of the Aryan warrior, the ways in which society was ordered and coercion justified. *Stanford Rs 25*

Hinduism

R. C. ZAEHNER. Hinduism is both a way of life and a highly organized social and religious system. Professor Zaehner has distilled from a mass of material 'the fine essence that seems to be Hinduism'. *Home University Library, No. 247. Cloth boards, 10s.6d. Paper covers, Rs 6*

Tibet and its History

H. E. RICHARDSON. This is a lucid and straightforward history of Tibet from its beginnings as a separate country in the sixth century A.D. to the present day. The book opens with an account of the geography, race, language, communications, government, economy, and law of Tibet, the character and social customs of the people. There follow accounts of Tibet's relations with China and the West, leading up to the Chinese Communist invasion and the ensuing tragedy. *12s.*

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

urgency of decentralising industry. For a time we may have to put up with coarser and costlier things; but decentralised machines will soon outpace the centralised machinery. Moreover, decentralised production will also reduce the heavy strain at present imposed on our transport system. Organisation of such industries in the villages, side by side with agriculture, will also enable villagers to stay in the rural areas and prevent them from being 'up-rooted'. So far the greatest tragedy of village life has been that the whole of it fails when agriculture fails; but the provision of supplementary occupations and civic amenities will solve this problem and prevent an exodus from rural areas.

The author emphasizes the need for restoring the dignity of labour, because physical labour is a source of moral and spiritual development. We have to endeavour to retain the 'human touch' in the midst of the progressive development of science, technology and specialisation. The sooner we resolve the race between men and machines by making the latter the instruments of service for the good and well-being of the former, the better for the progress of our planning.

Planning for national unity is an urgent matter for us and this is not possible until we have solved the problem of unemployment, until we have reduced glaring economic inequalities to the minimum; and until we have brought about a climate of complete national solidarity based on emotional integration. The principle of co-operation can be of considerable importance in this connection. Though at the moment it is confined to agriculture, in course of time it will be extended to all spheres of national life, such as industries, including heavy ones, housing, trade, and commerce.

This then is the nucleus around which the contents of the book revolve. There is not a single original idea of the author's own in his book of 137 pages. Any man who has gone through even the summary of the Third Plan; has some idea of the philosophy of Gandhi and Vinoba and who

reads a newspaper (and this is what every educated man generally does) would find it difficult to stand such a large scale borrowing of ideas.

Nor is the pattern of the book calculated to sustain the patience of the reader. For the book abounds in irritatingly silly repetitions even after liberal allowances have been made for the nature of its subject.

Though on the whole consistent, the book also contains a few contradictions. For instance, the author says that since Independence there has been a lamentable decline in the spirit of self-help. Thereafter he proceeds to lay down the principle that official resources will not be dumped in the areas where people are not prepared to shoulder their basic responsibilities and duties. But in the same breath he adds that by the end of 1963 the entire country will be covered with Community Development Blocks.

The publishers deserve congratulations for having 'deviated' from their usual habit of allowing frequent misprinting. Considering the number of misprints, for example, in 'At the feet of Mahatma Gandhi', the misprinting of 'order' for 'other' and 'hamunty' for 'humanity' is quite excusable.

SUDHIR CHANDRA

SHORTER REVIEWS

Lack of space prevents us giving full-length reviews of 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

MY LAND AND MY PEOPLE *The memoirs of His Holiness the Dalai Lama of Tibet. (Asia Publishing House, 248 pp. Rs. 16)*

THE Dalai Lama was sixteen years old when the Chinese first invaded his country. Even in a land where childhood is shorter than in the West, he could have taken shelter behind his Regent for another two years. The plight of his country made him decide to assume his full powers earlier than he had to. His people would have to be asked to accept many difficult deci-

sions, and it seemed to him that the least he could do was to assure them that these decisions came from him, the incarnate Spiritual as well as Temporal Head.

From this point the story of Tibet was a series of despairing attempts to 'appease' the Chinese and to stem the tide of their physical brutality on the one hand, and on the other to cast about for some source of help from outside. Tibet had no formal relations with any foreign country, nor did it have on any piece of paper, a certificate to say that it was a free and independent nation. One would have thought that treaties, in themselves, are not remarkable for always being unquestioningly honoured. But it seems that the lack of a treaty does not entitle a country to any moral support, let alone material help, from other nations. Perhaps it was naive of the Dalai Lama to have expected any gesture of help from outside. He did not get even lip sympathy; and we now know, from first hand experience, how important lip sympathy can be to a people in trouble.

The Dalai Lama speaks with a natural restraint and dignity of the horrifying brutality of the Chinese. He admits that when he visited China he saw many signs of efficiency and 'pro-

gress' which impressed him. But the appalling grey uniformity in dress, speech and thought was to him unbearable. The stereotyped speeches of marathon length in the National Assembly in Peking 'were often irrelevant..... and usually mere echoes of the glorification of communist achievements'. On his visit to India, he reserved his greatest admiration for the strong terms in which Opposition members criticized the Government in Parliament. The Dalai Lama might now have realized that, in the ultimate analysis, the reason Indians are so unitedly opposed to letting China have a foothold here is that they are determined to keep their precious right to shout abuse at their own government.

The Dalai Lama reveals a most attractive personality in every line of the book. That the enormous culture-gap between himself and the ordinary reader of his book should have been so completely bridged is a tribute not only to his own high intelligence, but also to the understanding of the editor, David Howarth. In helping the Dalai Lama to address the world in so effective a manner, he has, it seems to me, done as much as any individual could do to help the unhappy people of Tibet.

THE WEST AFRICAN INTELLECTUAL COMMUNITY

Papers and Discussions of an
International Seminar on
Inter-University Co-operation in West Africa,
held in Freetown, Sierra Leone
11-16 December 1961

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FAITH AND FRIVOLITY by Krishna Kripalani
(Malancha, New Delhi, 218 pp. Rs. 6)

IT has to be a strong-minded writer who can allow his less momentous works, i.e. magazine articles, to be forgotten. There is an increasing tendency among our writers to collect and reissue between hard covers the material which has once been published in a more ephemeral form. It is true that articles written for journals are sometimes outstanding and well worth reprinting; but the important thing is to set a sufficiently high standard in judging which pieces are likely to have a permanent value, and therefore a claim to be reproduced. This is where many of the recent collections of old articles and essays have failed.

Faith and Frivolity is another such collection, and the material is inevitably uneven. Some of the pieces are thirty years old. Most of the earlier articles are serious ones about personalities like Gandhi, Tagore, Nehru, C. F. Andrews and Romain Rolland. The more recent pieces, which the author himself describes as *obiter dicta* are lighter and more amusing, while the third group called *Frivolities* is composed of comments on everyday events in political life since 1947.

THE WRITER AND HIS SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY Report on the Seminar sponsored by the Pakistan P.E.N. in collaboration with the Congress for Cultural Freedom, Bureau of National Reconstruction and Bengali Academy (Pakistan P.E.N. — 95 pp.)

FOR the purpose of this Seminar, the Papers were divided into four groups — The Writers' Freedom and Social Responsibility, The Writers' Responsibility in Totalitarian Countries, the Writers' Social Responsibility *vis à vis* Art for Art's sake and the Writers' Role in a Technological Society. Except for the last group where the point was not raised, the paper writers in the first three were unanimously agreed that political pressure applied to writers was the least tolerable kind of restriction. Pasternak was the hero and example quoted in most of them.

The inaugural address was read by Syed Ali Alisan, General Secretary of the Pakistan P.E.N. The President of the P.E.N., Shahid Suhrawardy, and the Minister for Information and Natural Reconstruction, Habibur Rehman, also delivered general addresses before the Seminar proper began. Among the participants were two women writers, Begum Ikramulla and Zeb-un-nissa Hamidulla.

In a discussion of this kind it must be assumed

that the writers are not speaking either to themselves or to each other; they are speaking collectively to a large amorphous group outside — in other words to their public. Every writer must set for himself the individual degree of freedom or social responsibility within which he can and must write. He does not need a fellow writer to chart these for him. On the other hand what he does need is a certain lack of interference from outside persons and bodies. That is why I assume that when writers sit in conferences to discuss their social responsibility, it must be thought that they are, as it were, a craft guild addressing the great world of non-writers.

Jaleel Jalibi, a man who uses vigorous terms, seems to express the opinion of most of the participants when he says succinctly, 'The writer's responsibility is to remain a writer and not to become a courtier'. Many of the best Urdu poets have of course managed in the past to combine the two offices with some success; but there is no doubt that there was a strong inverse ratio between their successes in the two different fields.

If any improvement in one's standing as a courtier implies that one must lose something as a writer, then most of the Pakistani writers seem to be firmly decided that they would prefer to be good writers and bad courtiers.

BIG MAC *The Strange Story of the Whale* by Erih Kos translated by Lovett F. Edwards (Methuen & Co. 117 pp. 15s)

THERE is obviously something about the shape and size of a whale which makes it lend itself again and again for use as an allegorical figure. Here it has been used to denote communism, totalitarianism, or perhaps just mass-cultivism.

Big Mac is the story of a man who is instinctively non-conformist in a conformist social milieu, and of his love-hate relationship to a giant whale, caught off the Adriatic coast and brought to the city to be exhibited 'at Government level.' The people, in answer to official directions, immediately lose their heads about the whale. As long as there are tickets and it is difficult to buy them it is, naturally, a sign of status to have seen the whale; once the exhibition is thrown open to all without any charge it is a sign of steadfastness to visit the whale every day; while the real cream of the citizenry, the really devoted and loyal members of the state continue to pay homage to the whale even after it has perished. They drown themselves in perfume and pretend that the whale is just healthily dead.

The whale has by now become the *raison*

d'être for the lives of most people in the city. Our friend Rade, the narrator of the story, finds himself hating the whole whale business from the first day – but somehow unable to stop talking and thinking about it. 'My whole relation with the whale was not clear even to me. (What rubbish! Had I got to the point of defining my attitude towards it?)' He quarrels with his friends and landlady, parts with his mistress and has to change his job because he refuses to admire the

whale. But he cannot prevent himself from secretly going off to look at it – after it has begun to decay.

There are two important facts about this book. One is that it is a good though not brilliant satire on urban totalitarian society; and the second fact is that it is written by a man who is considered one of the outstanding authors in Yugoslavia. He is, in fact, an important official in the Yugoslav Ministry of Culture and Education.

Our Reviewers

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CORRESPONDENCE

Tasks Before Philosophers and Tasks Before Indian Philosophers

Dear Sir,

These are a series of comments about Prof. N. K. Devaraja's presidential address at the Rajasthan Philosophical Conference in 1962, reproduced in toto, obviously, in QUEST 35 (Autumn 1962). These comments are philosophical, or cultural, if you will, but they are not 'Indian' vs 'American' or other — for this should be an axiom for any serious work — there is only good or bad philosophy, plus perhaps mediocre philosophy, or history of philosophy, but there is no such thing as 'Indian' or 'American' philosophy, unless these terms are used in a purely descriptive, non-evaluating sense, i.e. as in anthologies of American philosophers (Dewey, James, Quine) or Indian philosophers (Bhattacharya, Murti, Radhakrishnan). Patently, Prof. Devaraja uses these terms in a value-loaded sense throughout his paper, as he juxtaposes American-Anglosaxon-European *qua* positivistic, analytical, existentialist, with Indian, *qua* traditional 'spiritual', redemption oriented. Philosophy must not be flag-waving — nor any other science, including political science. The speech was delivered well before the Chinese conflict, so there is not even any emotional cause for the display of such time-honoured feelings as patriotism pronounced by the thinker from his dais.

There are quite a few points in Dr. Devaraja's paper which are either wrong, factually wrong that is, or inexcusably vague, and the latter charge holds particularly for his frequent references to 'young Indian philosophers' who disdain the ancient tradition, who will have nothing to do with Vedanta or Mahayana, who defy the Indian speculative bequest in their admiration for Wittgenstein and Ayer etc. Who are these young Indian philosophers? I do not know a single one who uses analytic methods (i.e. what Devaraja would presumably call 'Anglo-Saxon'), and who

derides or defies ancient Indian thought; there may be some lecturer in some of the numerous departments of philosophy at any or more of the numerous Indian universities — but of the younger Indian generation that has published anything, I have not seen one who 'will not put up with the metaphysical nonsense of the Mahayanists and the Vedantists' (p. 39). There are quite a few young Indian philosophers who are just not interested in Mahayana and Vedanta. This is an altogether different matter, for no philosopher can prescribe interests to another philosopher. It seems to me Prof. Devaraja confuses derision and disdain with lack of interest. On the other hand, I find that some of the most brilliant young Indian philosophers (I am thinking of Daya Krishna and J. L. Mehta) do hold Indian thought in high esteem, and if they do not write about it, they admit that they know too little about it or that they are more interested in analytical, or perhaps existential thought.

'The positivistic insistence on verifiability as the criterion of meaningful discourse' (p. 38) has long been abandoned or strongly modified by the very same persons who stipulated it — obviously, Devaraja thinks of A. J. Ayer's early output (Language, Truth and Logic) — texts read occasionally in some departments of philosophy at some Indian university — but Ayer himself has long rescinded this view (vd. 'Problems of Knowledge', Penguin, and much earlier than that, in 'Foundations of Empirical Knowledge'). There is not a single teacher of analytical philosophy in the western world who 'insists' on atomistic verifiability in the manner taught in 'Language, Truth, and Logic' twenty years ago. Why beat a dead horse with holy indignation?

Nor do contemporary analysts 'deny cognitive significance to all talk of values' (p. 38); not in the sense 'cognitive' has been used, both by

philosophers and anthropologists, in America and Europe since the last War. It appears Devaraja has such excellent, but antiquated works as C. L. Stevenson's 'Ethics and Language' (now out in a Yale Paperback, for students of the history of modern philosophy) in mind. I am not sure if the late G. E. Moore himself denied cognitive significance to value talk — but I doubt it; and he wrote his *Principia Ethica* well before the young Indian philosophers were born.

Having withdrawn from tradition, and aping western models, Devaraja, avers, 'contemporary Indian philosophy presents a sorry spectacle' (p. 39). It lacks verve and originality, he complains. But what sort of writing would satisfy his standards of verve and originality? Daya Krishna's 'Nature of Philosophy', highly commended by Bertrand Russell, A. J. Ayer, and G. Ryle, K. Bhattacharya (jr.) and the writings, by Indian authors, in the excellent Indian Journal of philosophy (Popular Book Depot, Bombay) are as vevy, original and interesting as anything written in the West.

Who are the people, among young philosophy teachers in India, who advocate 'complete rupture with the past' (p. 39)? I wish Devaraja had not cast aspersions on 'people' whose names are not mentioned. M. N. Roy no doubt advised complete rupture with the past, but then he was no philosopher in any academical sense.

I do not understand whom Devaraja includes among 'positivists' — there are no positivists in the Comtean or even the Wittgensteinian sense left in Britain and America (J. Wisdom being the only self-styled Wittgensteinian still teaching — yet, methinks this lady, too, doth protest too much: Wisdom has long superseded Wittgenstein, at least the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein to which Devaraja obviously refers; who are the 'neo-Wittgensteinians?'). I have a sneaking suspicion that Devaraja identifies 'positivists' with analysts. Then, let him say so. If this is the case, then there is no analyst — and there is no non-analytical positivist — who contends that 'the philosopher's activity should be confined to the analysis or clarification of scientific concepts and statements' (p. 39). What about the philosophers of ordinary language (More, J. L. Austin, Warnock, etc.)? If it were to be tabulated, I have a hunch that the majority of British and American philosophers are interested in ordinary language and ordinary concepts and statements, and not in scientific language and statements. Some casual reconnoitering on my part showed that it is people from the mathematics and physics departments at

Berkeley and Ann Arbor who check out Carnap and Quine, not people from the philosophy departments.

The rest is anything but silence: Devaraja most persuasively declares his 'patriotic pride in those achievements' (p. 41) — meaning the *rishis* and their *bhasyakaras*; he implies that Aurobindo produced 'philosophical writings of marked originality' (p. 40). Finally, he enthrones Gandhi as a sort of *deus ex machina* transplanted into the philosophical universe of discourse, and winds up with a rather impressive poetical panegyric of the Mahatma, containing such hyperboles as 'almost the replica of a perfect, Platonic man living in a necessarily imperfect... society' (p. 42). Which Plato? the one who abolishes poetry, or condones infanticide, or fathers totalitarianism, or the philosopher king who knows what's good for the children? Gandhi, that 'man of superhuman courage and divine compassion deserves careful study and analysis by the philosophers of values (sic), particularly the philosophers of moral and religious values (sic again)' (ibid). By the psychiatrists, perhaps, no?

An afterword: there can be, I believe, a sound collaborative contract between models based on Indian traditions and analytical models: not by that woolly mutual respect and sympathy which good men and good organizations propound *ad nauseam* *ataque depressionem*, sponsored by funds and by goodwill, but by using analytical tools to go over tracts of Sanskrit, Pali, and Tibetan speculative writing: for just as analytic philosophy has separated the chaff from the grain in classical and pre-Russellian philosophical literature, it may do something similar with philosophy written in India and commented on in India, Tibet, and China: a lot of philosophy will remain as philosophy, a lot will fall under the table as nonsense. Contrary to the secret fears of many Indian traditionalists who have heard about analytic methods, there is a lot of sound, secular, philosophical thought even in Hindu literature — not only in Mahayana text and commentary. But I believe that only analytical method can bring this out. Unfortunately, there is so far only one man in India, who has made this effort, and with success: vl. 'The Jewel Ornament of Liberation' (Rider & Co., London, 1959) and the other writings of Prof. Herbert V. Tuenther of the Sanskrit University, Varanasi.

Syracuse University
New York

AGEHANANDA BHARATI

Dear Sir,

Prof. Bharati's comments do not appear to have been inspired by any serious purpose; their author seems to be concerned only to make some verbal points by the use of certain obvious journalistic devices.

Prof. Bharati feels righteously indignant over my 'factually wrong', 'inexcusably vague' and 'frequent' references to 'young Indian philosophers' who are anti-metaphysical. Since he, the omniscient statistician (or philosopher?) does not 'know a single one', it follows that there are none! Before replying to this most serious charge, however, I would like to clarify the meaning to be attached to my statements about the younger Indian philosophers. Most of these philosophers have no direct acquaintance with the texts of the Vedanta and the Mahayana systems, and have learnt about them from such works on Indian philosophy as the the histories written by Dr. Radhakrishnan and Prof. S. N. Das Gupta. On the contrary, they have direct access to some of the texts (original or translated) of contemporary European philosophy. Their apathy to the Indian systems, particularly the idealistic ones, may take one or more of the following forms: (a) the feeling that the systems in question are too religious and too other-worldly, not suited to the secular set-up of present day India; (b) the impression that they are too speculative and metaphysical; and (c) the suspicion that they are more or less useless or irrelevant from the viewpoint of the thinker philosophising in the modern world. Among the factors at work in the India of to-day, which tend to undermine the prestige of traditional Indian philosophies particularly of the idealistic schools, is the recent general decline of idealistic thought in Europe.

The antagonism of some of the younger Indian philosophers to systems like the Vedanta finds pointed expression at the gatherings of philosophers. Thus, at the annual session of the Indian Philosophical Congress held at Annamalainagar in December, 1956, Dr. T. M. P. Mahadevan was so much provoked by some 'angry young men' that he thought fit to deliver a speech in defence of the position that Shankara was a genuine philosopher!

I have a poor memory for proper names, still I will mention the names of a few younger scholars, well-meaning and serious in their own way, belonging to the type under reference. They are: Dr. Rajendra Prasad (Patna) and Mr. Suresh Chandra (Lucknow), both of whom have contributed papers to *The Indian Journal of Philosophy* (see also the former's article in *Seminar*, Bombay,

September, 1961, dealing with Philosophy Today); Dr. Sri Chandra (Lucknow) whose Ph.D thesis on G. E. Moore was highly commended by Prof. Lazerowitz; Mr. Yash Deo Shalya (Secretary, Akhil Bharatiya Darshan Parishad, Faridkot) whose Hindi book *Philosophical Analysis* recently secured a prize of rupees five thousand from the U. P. Government; Mrs. Pratima Bowes (Calcutta); Mr. J. Swamidasan (editor, *The Indian Journal of Philosophy*, Bombay); Mr. Mohit Sen (see his paper in *Seminar* referred to above); Dr. G. Mishra (Utkal University), who has worked with Prof. A. J. Ayer; etc. Among more elderly people may be included the name of Sri Narasingh Narain, Secretary, The Humanist Union, Nainital (see his paper in the *Proceedings of the Indian Philosophical Congress*, 1956).

Prof. Bharati alleges that I have tried to beat the 'dead horse' of logical positivism which suffered demise many years ago. He seems to take too naive, almost a journalistic, view of the history of philosophy. And he also expresses, unwittingly of course, his unconscious contempt for the 'brilliant' intellects of modern European philosophy whose revolutionary schemes of thought can barely stand the test of two decades. (The surprising thing is that, with characteristic historical myopia, he completely fails to see the limitations of the current vogue of linguistic analysis — though he is not behind anybody in claiming acquaintance with the great classics of Indian, and presumably Greek, philosophy. I have no doubt that he will triumphantly proclaim 'linguistic analysis' to be a dead horse, once it has been discredited by a new Wittgenstein!)

I certainly disagree with the view of philosophy propagated by the neopositives and the new followers of Wittgenstein (i.e., the followers of Wittgenstein in his later phase), but I have not attempted to beat a dead horse. On the contrary, I have commended logical positivism for having induced a more developed sense of evidence. I do not believe that logical positivism became dead by 1940, or even by 1950. Many writers of the school including Carnap, Reichenbach, Arthur Pap, etc., published important books and papers during the last decade. Apart from this, neopositivism continues to be a living influence against metaphysical thinking, and against normative ethics. Mary Warnock observes: 'One of the consequences of treating ethics as the analysis of language is that it leads to the increasing triviality of the subject. . . One aspect of this trivializing of the subject is the refusal of moral philosophers in England to commit themselves to any moral opinions. They

have for the most part *fallen in happily with the positivistic distinction* between moral philosophers, who analyse the logic of moral discourse, and moralists, who practise it.' (*Ethics since 1900*, 1960, pp. 202-203, italics mine). Nor has current logic been able to free itself from the influence of the atomistic philosophy of the earlier Wittgenstein.

As a matter of fact, unlike scientific theories, significant philosophical ideas do not allow themselves to be discredited completely. The *Theaetetus* of Plato, the *Karika* of Nagarjuna and the *Pramanavarttika* of Dharmakirti make as exciting reading to-day as the *Investigations* of Wittgenstein. In a paper contributed to *Faith And Logic* (Ailen and Unwin, 1957, p. 181f) Mr. R. M. Hare finds it useful to refer to Aristotle's 'practical syllogism' in order to elucidate the nature of moral and religious discourse.

Prof. Bharati seems to think that analytic philosophy has for ever 'separated the chaff from the grain in classical and pre-Russellian philosophical literature'. This reminds one of a remark of G. P. Stout with respect to Bradley's *Appearance and Reality* (quoted by Russell in *My Philosophical Development*, 1959, p. 38) that this book accomplished 'as much as is humanly possible in ontology! Surely we may trust the future generations to do their own gleaning of useful ideas from the past philosophies including our own shortlived systems!

Prof. Bharati introduces the reader to a new semantics when he declares that I use the words 'Indian', 'American', etc. in 'a value-loaded sense'. He also feels annoyed with my avowal of 'proper patriotic pride' in the achievements of ancient Indian philosophers. (He deliberately omits the word 'proper' in quoting from the 'Address!') He finds fault with me for attributing 'marked originality' to Sri Aurobindo as a philosopher, refusing (apparently in good faith) to notice the qualifying adjective 'probable' ('with the probable exception of Sri Aurobindo', I had said). Aurobindo is 'markedly original' in the same sense in which, say, S. Alexander is original, their differences being due to their respective cultural backgrounds; and the word 'probable' implies that his originality is not likely to commend itself to our anti-metaphysical age.

Prof. Bharati is eager to contradict me even at the cost of self-contradiction. Having earlier made a jeering reference to 'rishis' and 'bhashyakaras', he cannot later on resist the temptation to display his profound acquaintance with 'a lot of sound, secular philosophical thought' in Hindu literature. As if the authors of this literature were a species

apart from the 'rishis' and the 'bhashyakaras'! One wonders how a scholar with such wonderful erudition in Indian thought has permitted his attitude towards values to be 'trivialised' (to use or abuse a phrase of Mary Warnock) to the extent that he resents appreciative references to spiritual heroes of the tallest stature. It is also not at all clear to me why the 'Viennese cultural critic' should express such holy discomfort at certain experiments of Gandhiji which the latter had the courage to broadcast to his lifelong admirers.

While commenting on the shortcomings of the Indian philosophical tradition, I was matching it against the total rich and varied tradition of the European subcontinent. There can be no question of comparing Indian philosophy with the Anglo-American tradition taken separately: one for one, the classics produced by that tradition before Moore and Russell, or even including Moore and Russell, will not exceed, either in number or in quality, those belonging to the single Indian school of Nyaya-Vaisheshika: think of the numerous distinguished authors of this school, Vatsayana and Prashastapada, Uddyotakara and Vachaspati, Udayana and Jayanta, Gangesha and his several great commentators. The parallel, of course, is not intended to be exact: the Nyaya-Maisheshika literature is lacking in significant reference to science and mathematics, British empiricism in any profound approach to spiritual values. The highly intellectual theism of Nyaya conceived the liberated soul as holding absolutely no commerce with God; such a conception is wholly beyond the capacity of a Christian thinker.

I am not a traditionalist, and I am not one of those who have 'secret fears' in regard to the worth of the Indian tradition. Nor am I a person with antipathy towards any tradition: witness my statement, in the concluding paragraph, that we Indians should seek to be heirs to all the great traditions. And yet I believe that significant philosophy cannot help being national in the sense that such philosophy alone can preserve and do justice to what is unique in the insights and intuition of a great culture. It is not an accident that England has failed to produce, up to date, a literary philosopher of the rank of Pascal or Sartre, and no European prophet or philosopher has so far succeeded in founding or evolving a religion which, while incorporating the highest spiritual values, would dispense with God in the manner of Buddhism and Jainism.

Banaras Hindu University

N. K. DEVARAJA

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Yours faithfully

Sd/- DEBI RAI

Editor of the Occasional Manifestoes

We publish the letter without correction or comment, except the diffident suggestion that a little appetite for grammar might not spoil their reputation as spokesmen of the 'Hungry Generation.' The poetic meaning of the epithet still remains obscure to us.

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Of the signatories to the manifesto of SVADHIN SAHITYA SAMAJ, **Tarasankar Banerjee**, **Buddhadeva Bose** and **Premendra Mitra's** names are well-known outside Bengal. They may well be regarded as the most distinguished living Bengali writers. **Subodh Ghosh** established his position twentyfive years ago with his first highly original and powerful short story *Fossil*.

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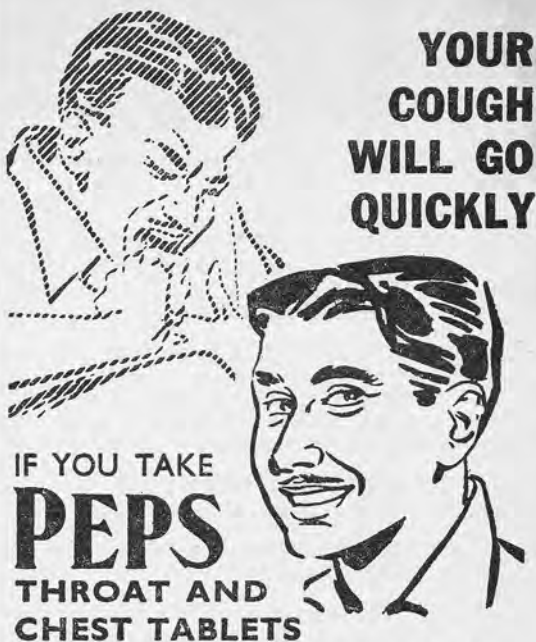
1. Place of publication Bombay
2. Periodicity of its publication Quarterly
3. Printer's Name MISS SHEELA SINGH
Nationality Indian
Address 148, Mahatma Gandhi Road, Bombay 1
4. Publisher's Name MISS SHEELA SINGH
Nationality Indian
Address 148, Mahatma Gandhi Road, Bombay 1
5. Editor's Name ABU SAYEED AYYUB & AMLAN DATTA
Nationality Indians
Address 5, Pearl Road, Calcutta 17.
6. Names and addresses of individuals who own the newspaper and partners or shareholders holding more than one per cent of the total capital. Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom 148, Mahatma Gandhi Road, Bombay

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