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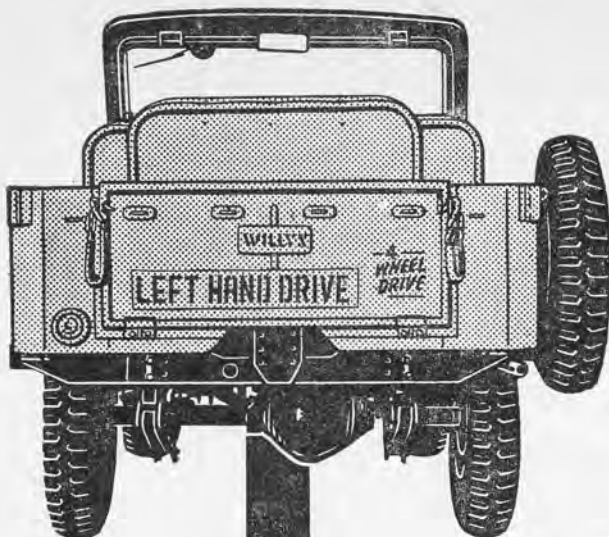
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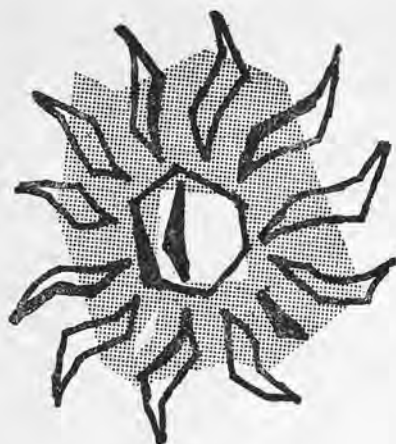
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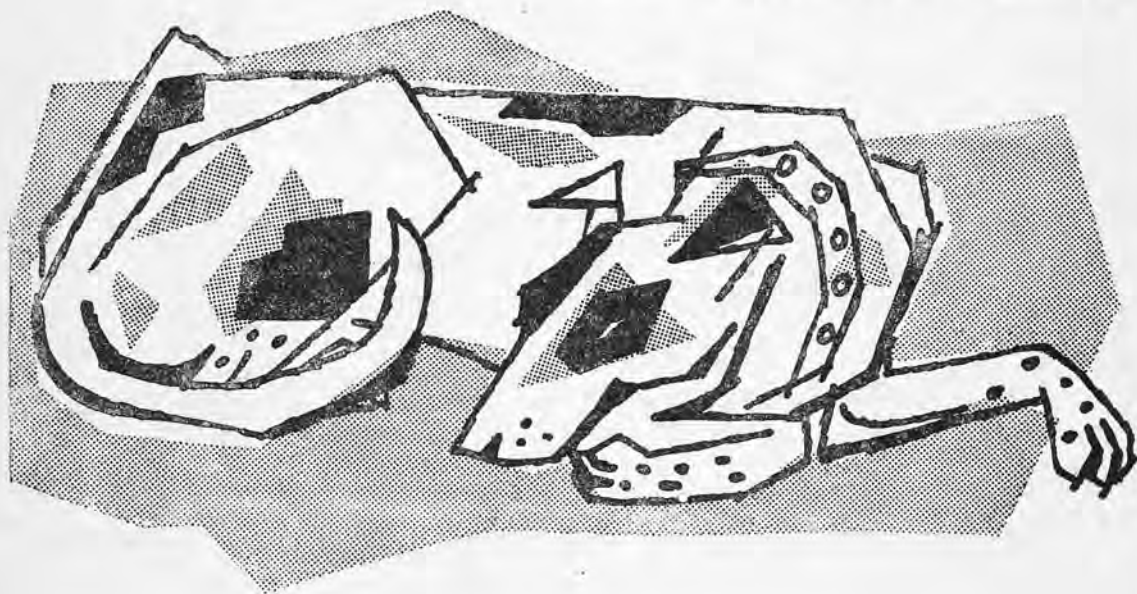
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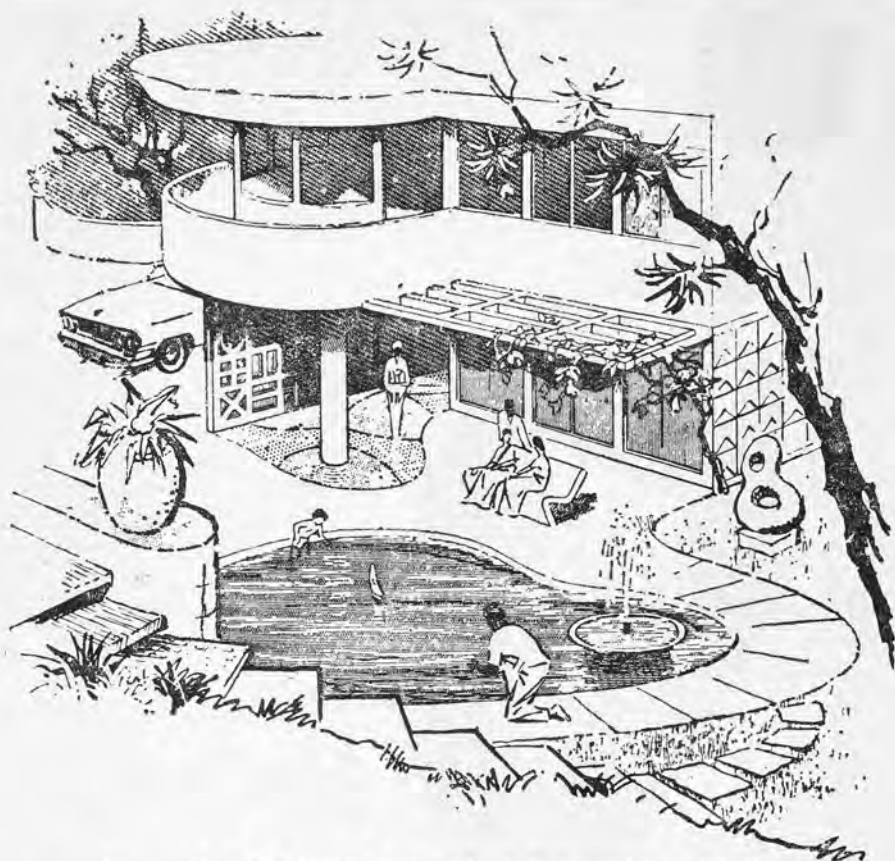
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Modernization in a Moslem Society: The Indonesian Case

CLIFFORD GEERTZ

I

AS a phrase, 'modernization in a Moslem society' begs more conceptual issues in fewer words than almost any I can think of: only the preposition seems straight-forward. First, there are the much discussed difficulties implicit in the notion of 'modernization.' The relationships between 'modernization' and 'Westernization', the usefulness of sorting cultural patterns and social practices into pigeonholes labeled 'traditional' and 'modern', the 'progressive' role certain 'reactionary' institutions such as the extended family, ascribed status or personal clientship seem to play in some modernizing situations—all these have become recurrent concerns in the scholarly literature on the New States. Second, with respect to 'a society', considered as a total, bounded unit, the question has been raised as to whether it can be a proper object of scientific study at all, or whether we must not instead resign ourselves to investigating particular ranges of social institutions—family, class, religion—and the specific relations obtaining among them without attempting to talk about society 'as a whole'. Some have gone so far as to suggest that such entities as 'Indian

Society' or 'French Society' do not even exist, in any recognizable sense, that these terms are merely misleading names of political units—i.e., states. But of the three main concepts in my assigned title it is the third—'Moslem'—which, somewhat surprisingly, conceals the most radical difficulties, for here the sheer possibility of scientific analysis threatens to disappear. Some Orientalists, at least, are coming, as a result of a deepening awareness of the disparate character of 'Islam' as a practiced faith from place to place and of the varying nature of the impact of the modern world on different 'Moslem' countries, to doubt 'whether in the religious realm there is either in empirical fact or in theory anything to which the name Islam can meaningfully be given.'¹

There is the Islamic tradition which the historian can reconstruct and which is, both in practice and in principle, an accumulating, evolving, observable actuality. For some centuries this was sufficiently stable for an abstraction called 'Islam' to be reasonably significant and academically serviceable. But this was not true in the earliest centuries of Islamic history, and is again not true today... The scholar, if he is historically erudite, can report the accumulating tradition, and if he is sensitive and imaginatively perceptive as well as disciplined, he can report the actual faith of living persons. But can he tell what Islam as a religion 'is'? Should he not rather (say)... that he has no access to such a thing, in either Heaven or earth?²

Thus, like some ancient parchment kept as an heirloom, our very problem threatens to crumble in our hands as soon as, ceasing

¹ Smith, W., "The Comparative Study of Religion in General and the Study of Islam as a Religion in Particular", *Colloque sur la Sociologie Musulmane, Correspondence d'Orient*, no. 5, Publications du Centre pour l'Etude des Problèmes du Monde Musulman Contemporain, Brussels, pp. 1-15.

² Ibid.

simply to affirm its importance, we attempt actually to grasp it.

In countering this kind of stultifying historicism, which every significant increase in scholarly realism about social matters seems to bring with it, the anthropologist's response is always to turn again to the smaller canvas, for what in large seems vague and orderless, may in small take on more precise and regular outlines. One can overcome many of the apparent failings of 'modernization', 'society' and 'Islam' as abstractions by applying them within the context of a concrete example. The value of such an example does not lie in its typicality, or the possibility of assimilating other cases directly to it. Rather, it lies in the fact that by viewing social and cultural processes in limited and specific terms one can isolate some features of them which are truly general, features which, suitably adjusted to special circumstances, are relevant to the analysis of a whole family of cases. Whether or not they are in Heaven, Islam, modernization and society are on earth: the problem is to know where to look for them.

I shall look for them in Indonesia, and most particularly in the religious school system there. This may seem an exceedingly odd place, to threaten a reduction of serious intellectual problems to matters of mere pedagogy, and scholastic pedagogy at that. But, in fact, the Moslem educational system is the master institution in the perpetuation of the Islamic tradition and the creation of an Islamic society, as well as the locus of the most serious efforts to modernize that tradition and society presently being pursued.

II

As it was in India, in Persia, or, to a lesser extent, in Morocco, Islam was intrusive in Indonesia in the sense that it came late into an already well-established, non-Arabic civilization, which it, slowly and with great difficulty, only partly replaced. There are a number of results of

this fact, of which perhaps the most important is that even the essentials of the Moslem faith—the Pillars, the acceptance of Koranic authority, the perception of Divine Majesty, and the acknowledgement of the Prophet—had always, and still have, to be maintained in the midst of a number of competing, even hostile, religious orientations of no mean strength, most of them also going, after the conversion of the thirteenth to sixteenth centuries, under the general name of 'Moslem'. Neither supported by the society and culture within which it grew up as Christianity in the West, Hinduism in India or Islam in Arabia, nor unchallenged by other 'great traditions' as were Buddhism in Burma and Thailand or Islam in Nigeria and the Sudan, Indonesian Islam had to secure its integrity entirely, so to speak, by its own efforts. It had to draw from within itself, from its own organizational and intellectual resources, the power to maintain continuity with its origins, to sustain contact with the distant heartlands of Islamic civilization and to establish a clear and positive identity on the spiritually cluttered Indonesian scene. In this struggle, never wholly won and never wholly lost, the Moslem school played, and still plays, an absolutely critical role. Without the *pesantren*, and later the *madrasah* and *sekolah Islam*, Indonesia would not have become even a nominally Islamic society from the simple circumstances of contact.

But beyond this 'acculturational' aspect, there are at least two other interrelated reasons why South-East Asian Islam has been so dependent upon the school, which, as they derive from the nature of the Islamic tradition as such, make the Indonesian case relevant to more than itself. These are, first, the highly doctrinal, legalistic, scriptural—i.e., basically literary—quality of at least the mainstream of the tradition, and second, the general absence of other social institutions within the religion capable of transmitting this sort of tradition effectively. The school has been important because, even on its mysti-

cal side, Islam had leaned heavily toward the scholastic since the other great institutions of scriptural religions—the priesthood, the sermon, even, despite the Friday prayer, collective ritual have been comparatively speaking so weak, undeveloped or, in the case of liturgy, thoroughly simplified.

The typical mode of Islamization, of an individual or of a group, has thus been, like all educational processes, painfully gradualistic. First the Confession of Faith, then the other Pillars, then a certain degree of observance of the Law, and finally perhaps, especially as a scholarly tradition develops or takes hold, a certain amount of learning in the Law, and in the Koran and hadith upon which it rests. The intricate body of norms, doctrines, explications and annotations which make up Islam, or at least Sunni Islam, can be apprehended only step by step, as one comes, to a greater or lesser degree to control the scriptural sources upon which they rest. For most people such control never goes beyond accepting, second hand, the interpretations of those who control, or seem to control, those sources directly. But that learning, however crude, access to scholarship, however shabby, is central to becoming a Moslem in anything more than a formal sense, is apparent virtually everywhere in the Islamic world, for which al-Azahr is, from some points of view, a better epitome than Mecca. Islamic conversion is not, as a rule, a sudden, total, overwhelming illumination, but a slow turning toward a new light.

Certainly this has been the case in Indonesia. Spread first by foreign traders (Gujeratis, Malabarese, Kalins, Bengalis, Persians, Arabs and even, here and there, a few Turks) and then by indigenous ones

(Malays, Bugis, Makassarese, North Javanese), Islam found its initial foothold in the various spice trade bazaar ports which grew up around the Straits of Malacca and the Java Sea after the thirteenth century. Very little is known about this formative period, at least on the cultural side, save that the creed as implanted had a distinctly Indian, thus mystical, cast centered around certain semi-historical itinerant teachers regarded as saints. After the Dutch conquest, which began at the turn of the sixteenth century and was reasonably well established, at least in Java and selected points in the Outer Islands, by the turn of the seventeenth, Indonesian Islam became more autonomous, both spreading out from its coastal beachheads and developing a solidier, more deeply rooted institutional structure not only in interior towns but, even more importantly, in the countryside. With the establishment, in the middle of the nineteenth century of more direct relations with Mecca through the Hadj (by about 1850 transport facilities had progressed to the point that more than 2000 people could make the pilgrimage each year) more orthodox practices and ideas began to penetrate the Indonesian *umma* and transform it into something less completely Indic. By the beginning of this century, nearly 7500 pilgrimages were being made annually, and in the great boom year of 1926-27, 52,000 Indonesians journeyed to the Holy City, to comprise more than 40% of its foreign population.³ By this time reformist ideas, of Al-Azahr and based on the teachings of Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905) were prevalent in the Hejaz—particularly after the triumph in Mecca of Ibn Saud—and a few Indonesians even found their way to Cairo and study at the great university itself. As a result an Indonesian version of reform Islam—a reading of the ideals of nineteenth century liberalism and humanism into primitive Islam, as Caskel has characterized it⁴—grew up in the archipelago in opposition both to the orthodox stream and to the popular syncretism of the mass of the

³ Vredenburg, J., "The Hadj: Some of Its Features and Functions in Indonesia", *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, 118:91-154 (1962).

⁴ Caskel, W., "Western Impact and Islamic Civilization", in Von Grunebaum, G., (ed.), *Unity and Variety in Muslim Civilization*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955, pp. 335-360.

peasants. Finally, since Independence there has been an almost desperate search for a way to relate Islam—orthodox and reform alike—to the modern world in general and to the secular Indonesian state in particular. And at each of these stages of Islamization it has been one or another form of the Moslem school which has been the social structural foundation upon which the entire, now seven-hundred year-old development has rested.

III

The generic name for the traditional Moslem school in Indonesia is *pesantren*—‘a place of religious students’ (*santri*)—and, historically speaking it grew not out of the classical Islamic academy, the madrasa, but out of the Hindu-Buddhist monasteries of medieval Java, secluded compounds in which monks or other adepts studied and composed holy writings, where religious pilgrims rested, sometimes years on end, on their sacred journeys, and where local youths were instructed in their faith. Except that the scriptures involved became koranic rather than tantric and the permanent residents ulama rather than monks, the traditional *pesantren* was—and in some places still is—essentially the same institution. A walled compound of student dormitories centered on a mosque, set usually in a wooded glade at the edge of a village, it consisted of a religious teacher, usually called a *kijaji*, and a number of young, in most cases unmarried, male students—the *santris*—who chanted the koran, engaged in mystical exercises and seem generally to have carried on the pre-existing Indic tradition with but a slight, and not very accurate Arabian accent. The student notebooks—the so-called *primbon*—which have come down to us from this period are permeated with a heterodox mystical monism directed toward the same sort

of personal release as the explicitly Hindu-Buddhist writings which precede them. And in such documents as we have, for example the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century didactic poem, *Serat Tjintini*, which describe life in these schools before the growth of orthodoxy, the atmosphere seems far more reminiscent of India or Persia than of Arabia or North Africa.

But even by the time of the *Serat Tjintini* more orthodox tradition, demanding a closer observance of the Law as written, was appearing, stimulated by the improvement of communications—direct in the case of the Hadj, indirect in the case of religious publications and Arab immigration—with the Near Eastern heartland of Islamic civilization. The *pesantren* (or at least many *pesantrens*) became much more of a proper koranic school, headed usually by a returned pilgrim and supported by a religious foundation by the local well-to-do. Though mysticism hardly disappeared, especially in Java, it came to be more rigorously contained within the bounds laid down by al-Ghazzali and by the orthodox sufi orders. The *pesantren*’s form changed little, but its content changed significantly as knowledge, or half-knowledge, of the classical Islamic subjects—*fiqh*, *tafsir*, *tarich*, *tawhid*, etc. increased.

Thus the orthodox revival which in Arabia took place in the eleventh and twelfth centuries and which, as Gibb has said, ‘marks the turning point in the history of Islamic culture,’⁵ the creation of its still unbroken medieval synthesis, began to take firm hold in Indonesia only six or seven centuries later in the guise of a gradual educational reform which turned the *pesantren* into a mediator of that durable amalgam of sharia legalism and tariqa mysticism which Ghazzali legitimized.

Though as time passed and shipping schedules improved, the scholastic side of the *pesantren* grew rather stronger and the antinomian rather weaker, it was not until the launching of the reformist attack

⁵ Gibb, H. A. R., *Studies on the Civilization of Islam* (S. J. Shaw and W. R. Polk, eds.), Boston: Beacon Press, 1962, p. 22.

upon it, and upon the intellectual tradition for which it stood, that this descendant of the Hindu hermitage and the Buddhist monastery became at least a reasonable facsimile of an orthodox madrasa. The content of the reform movement is familiar from frequent description—a 'back to the koran' fundamentalism mixed with an 'Islam is entirely up-to-date' modernism. But what is less familiar, because less described, is the profound social effect reformism, as abortive as it turned out to be, has had on the mainstream of Islamic orthodoxy. In Indonesia at least, the ultimate importance of reformism is to be measured not so much in terms of its own success as a social movement, which was local and momentary at best, but in its transformative impact upon that to which it placed itself in opposition and seems ultimately to have been unable to dislodge: the pesantren tradition. If the counter-reformation has triumphed, at least for the present, the social changes in religious pedagogy that that triumph necessitated mark perhaps another turning point in the history of Islamic culture. And as developments in the archipelago no longer trail those in the rest of the Moslem world, perhaps not in Indonesia alone.

In these terms, the main achievement of the reform movement in Indonesia was the introduction of the modern, graded, partly secularized, formally organized—in a word, rationalized—school into the established Islamic educational tradition. The modern school was not, of course, introduced into Indonesia by the Islamic reform movement, for Dutch government and Christian missionary schools, on a rather small scale preceded them, and in fact acted as an added local stimulus to and model for the reformer's innovations. But the direct impact of these schools was largely confined, so far as the Indonesian population was concerned, either to the uppermost levels of the aristocracy or to the very small confessional minorities, and even when they were not, the orthodox distrusted and shunned them as infidel. For them,

the ulama and the santris who (both at the pesantren and after leaving it for a more ordinary peasant or tradesman existence) were their followers, it was the reform movement which, however bitterly they at first resisted it, made secular learning, modern modes of teaching, and in fact the whole drift toward a less medieval world-outlook legitimate. As the sufi brotherhood before it, the modern school has become absorbed into the body of the sunni tradition and its effects, though as yet limited, many ultimately prove to have been as fateful.

The reformers called their schools *madrasah*, intending thereby to stress the fact (as they saw it) that the pesantren had been seriously compromised by a too intimate contact with heterodox local and Indic traditions and that a thorough going purification of these 'backward' or 'old-fashioned' institutions was essential before they could qualify for the title of a 'genuine' Moslem school. The major innovations the madrasah introduced included the teaching of secular subjects (arithmetic, reading of Latin characters, national history and literature, geography, etc.), a curriculum organized along a strict subject, grade and text-book pattern, complete with class hours, examinations, marks, diplomas and so on, the employment of teachers who, though believing Moslems, made no claims to be ulama or even especially learned in the scriptures and the law, a day-school rather than a boarding school pattern, and, perhaps most radical of all, the education of (sometimes even the co-education) of girls. Religious instruction continued, of course, occupying anywhere from three-quarters to a third of the curriculum; but even it was conducted in a novel manner. Rather than the chant-and-echo pattern of the pesantren, where the santri, ignorant of the meaning of the Arabic words he was repeating, gained what little understanding of the text he achieved from cryptic annotations offered ex-cathedra by the alim (whose own Arabic was often enough hardly more than rudimentary), in the madrasahs,

an attempt was made either to understand the Arabic text directly or to work with vernacular translations. Religious knowledge, such as it was, was therefore democratized to some extent, and the haji-alim's role as privileged adept seriously undercut. As by 1954 there were somewhere around twelve thousand madrasahs with about a million and a half pupils, as against about fifty-three thousand pesantren with nearly two million pupils⁶ (before the first decade of this century there were virtually no madrasahs in the modern sense at all), the impact upon Indonesian Islam of this most recent transformation in the country's most venerable educational system can hardly have been trivial. The precise nature of that impact is much more difficult to assess, but that it has been in the direction of a loosening of the grip of mindless ritualism and empty legalism seems certain. Secular political leaders and intellectuals, as well as Western scholars, who despair of the narrow confines within which the thought and feeling of the more pious sector of the Indonesian population seems to them to move might do well to consider what that thought and feeling would have been like if the madrasah revolution had not occurred. Whether or not the madrasah has made Indonesian Islam modern, it has surely made it, for what must be the first time in its history, critically, even painfully, self-reflective.

The initial reaction of the orthodox to the appearance of the madrasah was, as one would expect, sharply hostile. The new pattern of education struck at the very foundations of ulama power. It was now not so important to have made the pilgrimage or to be able to chant the Koran from memory as it was to be able to communicate something of the intel-

lectual content of the Islamic tradition and, beyond it, modern learning in general, and to relate, in some plausible way, the one to the other. But the orthodox reaction, though severe, was surprisingly short-lived. From the very beginning some ulamas saw the direction in which they must move if they were to maintain their position as spiritual leaders of the more pious element of the Indonesian population. And by 1926, the number of such more perceptive and flexible koranic scholars had grown to the point that a counter-reform organization, called Nahdatul Ulama ('The Renaissance of the Ulama'), could be formed and, being formed, adapt the reformer's pedagogical innovations to the purpose of the pesantren tradition. Madrasahs began to appear, led by ulama but assisted and actually directed by some of their more modern followers, first independently of the pesantren and then finally within its very walls. For their part, the reformers, exhilarated by success and supported by the times, pushed the evolution of their own schools forward, developing the so-called *sekolah Islam*, 'Islamic schools', which, rather like Catholic parochial schools in the United States and much of Europe, are essentially secular schools with a place reserved for religious instruction, not madrasahs where secular learning has no autonomous justification but is a mere handmaiden to sacred teachings. Thus the battle shifted from a simple opposition between the pesantren, 'monastery' or 'hermitage' pattern and the graded school pattern, to one between graded schools of varying religious temper, and arguments came to be centered around the proper relations between religious and non-religious learning, rather than the legitimacy, or even the reality, of the latter altogether. The pesantren persists, as the figures I have just quoted indicate. But few now are without some secular education, offered either on their grounds or in a village madrasah nearby which the santris are allowed, sometimes even required, to

⁶ *Indonesia*, Subcontractor's Monograph, Human Relations Area Files, New Haven, 1956, Vol. II, p. 422. As these are figures reported to the Ministry of Religion, the pesantren figures reported (where no subsidies are involved and a lingering suspicion of the intentions of the government is lodged) are almost certainly much too low.

attend. The few institutions which have maintained the older tradition intact and have continued to exclude modern learning entirely have great difficulty attracting santri and are slowly fading—relics of an earlier stage of the evolution of Islam in Indonesia—from the scene.

In fact, in the distribution of types of Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, one can see reflected the whole development of the religion in this, its most distant outlier. The orthodox synthesis of medieval Islam persists in the pesantrens, usually slightly modified by some fairly weak modern influences, sometimes not. There are even a few examples of the older mystical pattern still to be found in remoter regions. The reaction of this synthesis to the reformist attack, an absorption of a limited amount of basic secular instruction—reading, writing and arithmetic—into orthodox study organized along somewhat more systematic lines, is found in the madrasahs which nearly every pious village now

contains. And the reformers' concept of an Islam at once purified of medieval accretions and adjusted to the modern world finds its expression in the sekolah Islam—'parochial' elementary, middle and normal schools—found mostly in the towns. In the larger cities, there have even appeared a few Islamic 'universities'. Thus the school—far more even than the mosque or prayer house, whose importance is almost purely ritualistic—is the social structural core of Indonesian Islam, now as in the past. And in the changes in its form is written more clearly than in the development of religious thought, legal, moral or theological, which in Indonesia has always been more derivative than creative and not especially profound, the nature of the modernization process that Islam has undergone and beneath the clamor of radical nationalist politics, is still undergoing.⁷

IV

The fact that the renovation of 'Islam' as a religious system tends to find its center of gravity in educational reform, rather than in a reorganization of an ecclesiastical hierarchy or an alteration in liturgical practice or even, at least initially, in a reorientation of theological speculation, has some important implications for the whole process of 'modernization in an Islamic society', not only in Indonesia but fairly generally.

One of the difficulties Islamic reform faces and, perhaps everywhere in the sunni world save perhaps in Turkey, has always faced, is the absence of easily, readily identifiable targets against which to direct its attack. There is no Pope whose supremacy can be rejected, no priestly hierarchy whose mediating powers, special privileges, isolating celibacy or symbolic fatherhood can be dispensed with, no sacraments which can be denied or re-interpreted, not even any official intellectual synthesis which, like Thomism, can be philosophically undermined. There are only the ulama—a loose collection of

⁷ A full review of recent experiments in Islamic education in Indonesia would be out of place here, but attempts to set up new forms of religious schools continue. One pattern—started before the Revolution in Gonter, a village in South Central Java, and attempted after it in Jogjakarta and elsewhere—is to divide the curriculum into thirds: one-third instruction in secular subjects, one-third in religious subjects, taught in a more modern fashion, and one-third practical work in fields, crafts, shops, etc.,—a revision of the old work-your-way pattern of the pesantrens. The proponents of these schools argue that not only will they help to bring Islam "up-to-date" but that, with their practical, work-oriented bent they will provide a more suitable education for Indonesian children than the clerk-oriented government schools. What the future of these experiments, most of which have been encouraged and supported by the Ministry of Religion, will be is uncertain, but that they are being planned and attempted shows that the vitality of the koranic school tradition remains strong. In addition, of course, a great number of ordinary primary and secondary schools have been set up by Muhammadiyah (a modernist social welfare society), Nahdatul Ulama and other Islamic organizations modelled on the state-run school system but with additional teaching in religious subjects. For a detailed description of the range of religious schools now (1952-54) existing in one region of Java, see Geertz, C., *The Religion of Java*, Glencoe (Ill.): The Free Press, 1960, pp. 177-198.

rather individualistic legal scholars and teachers without any formal status or special perquisites, nor at least until recently, any particular internal organization—or the even more elusive and individualistic sufi shaikhs. In such a socio-cultural framework there is no point at which a radical breakthrough, a sudden overturning of the whole system can be accomplished, or at least if there is such a point no one has yet been able to find it. All that seems to be possible is a step-by-step attack on the multiple strongholds of traditionalism, mystical and scholastic alike. The great intellectual and sociological dramas of the Christian Reformation are exceedingly difficult to stage in such a setting of dispersed and rather uncertain religious authority, and attempts to do so lead almost inevitably to fruitless sectarian schism.

It is perhaps for this reason that so many Western scholars of Islam seem to be so disappointed, even personally put out, by the reform movement and have, at times anyway, rather underestimated its transformative effects upon the Islamic tradition. Expecting Luthers and Calvins they have got instead a collection of, for the most part, rather cautious pedagogues; instead of a few great thinkers of surpassing boldness there has appeared a cloud of not terribly distinguished and usually rather unoriginal academicians. This makes history—and history-writing—less colourful; but in the same way that Islamization has been in the past a gradual process, a slow accretion of minor changes rather than a series of spectacular quantum jumps, so too, and for the same reasons, may its modernization be. Sixty years ago the great Dutch Islamic scholar, Snouck Hurgronje, warned his colleagues in the Netherlands East Indies civil service that Indonesian Islam, which seemed so static, so sunk in a torpid medievalism, was actually changing in fundamental ways, but these changes were so gradual,

so subtle, so concentrated in remote and, to non-Islamic minds, unlikely places, that 'although they take place before our very eyes, they are hidden from those who do not make a careful study of the subject.'⁸

Today, after four decades of thoroughgoing and quite obvious upheaval in the Indonesian umma have rendered these words prophetic, the warning they contain is no less apposite. The tendency to underestimate the dynamic of Islam is as apparent both among the governing elite and among learned scholars as it was a century ago, a characterization which holds, by and large, for the leaders of Islamic countries and students of Islam generally.

So far as the topic of this session of our seminar—'reorientation and mobilisation of traditional values in the modernisation process of a Moslem society'—is concerned, the picture I have given of the Indonesian case has, if it is accurate, some important policy implications for the elites of the new states of South and South-East Asia, who have found, as Soedjatmoko remarked in his outline paper, that traditional value systems growing out of long standing religious commitments have proved to represent 'a much more important problem in the modernisation process than had been anticipated by most of these modernisers.'

By far the most important of these implications is that the continuation of a vital school tradition, and especially of its renovation, is essential to what Soedjatmoko calls 'a comparatively smooth modernisation. And this, in turn, leads to what may seem to be a curious paradox: namely, that a strong and active parochial school system (if I may adapt this Catholic Christian term to Moslem uses) is not, in an Islamic country, and certainly not in Indonesia, an enemy but rather an ally of a secularist modernising elite. It is an ally not because it promotes the ideals of a militant and totalistic secularism (ideals which only a small minority of these elites themselves hold), but because it allows, and in fact encourages, an established

⁸ Hurgronje, C. Snouck, *The Achehnese*, Leiden, 1906, p. 280.

religious tradition with a powerful hold on the minds of the population to come to terms with the modern world, neither simply rejecting nor simply capitulating to it, but becoming part of it. More paradoxically yet, it is not a rigid separation of education from religious influence which will make a rendering unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's possible for an Islamic society, but the further integration of secular and religious learning in modern type schools. It is only through such schools that Islam, on the sociological level, and in consequence on the intellectual level as well (for ideas cannot develop in a social vacuum), will be able to come into the

modern world. To cut the umma off from this one regenerating institution in its midst by a strict adherence to a state supported and directed secular school system and a vague hostility to 'koranic' schools as 'backward', 'feudal' or 'fanatic' is to insure the rigidification of Islamic institutions generally and, in consequence, Islamic thought.

Today as in the past the school is the lifeline of the Islamic tradition, and the reformed school is that tradition's path to the present. It is essential that this path should not be blocked by shallow and short-sighted 'modernization' policies which attempt to catch up with the West by a mindless imitation of its external forms.

My God and my Religion

R. DAS

THE other day an intelligent girl student of mine, on finding a copy of *Gitanjali* on my table, asked me seriously whether I could really enjoy such poetry. I replied at once, 'Why not?' But she argued, 'since most of it is addressed to God, and you do not believe in God, you cannot possibly take it all very seriously'. The idea seems to be widespread among my students that I am a confirmed atheist — a position which I have never affirmed or denied. Then came a letter from a student of Dr. D. M. Datta, (whose unfailing friendship, since our University days, has been a source of inner strength and mental comfort to me), from which I was glad to learn that they were thinking of presenting Dr. Datta with a *Festschrift*. Naturally I began to think of my old friend and my thoughts turned to the happy days we spent together in our early philosophical career, and I particularly remembered one remark which he once made about me in a somewhat prophetic vein. The remark was to the effect that I would spend the last years of my life at Vrindaban. He was probably prompted to make this remark as a possible corrective to my open scepticism, to my apparent lack of any religious faith. It may be that in making this remark, he was aided by his knowledge of my mother's religious faith which was Vaishnavism, and I should not be surprised if it coincided with the traditional faith of Dr. Datta's family.

I am now nearing the end of the span of life sanctioned in the Bible, and I have not yet gone to Vrindaban. Physically, of course, I am not there, but who knows whether mentally or spiritually I am not somewhere near about the holy land!

So I have thought it worthwhile to try

to define my position in regard to God and religion. This would no doubt be valuable in itself for me, as it would help me to clarify my own ideas on these important subjects, and it should also serve a useful purpose in that it may allay the anxiety of my friends, who feel concerned about the welfare of my soul, and at the same time, it may satisfy the curiosity of those who are merely curious about my views on such weighty matters. And incidentally, should my essay happen to meet the eyes of my friend Dr. Datta, he may see for himself whether, and how far, I have moved towards or away from Vrindaban — the sacred land designed for the habitation of God's chosen companions.

To begin with God, it is not at all surprising to me that some of those who have come into any near contact with me should think that I am no believer in God. For have I not said sometimes, when I heard people praying to God for help, that it is no use doing so, because God has gone to sleep? I may not have asked them, after Nietzsche, 'Have you never heard that God is dead', but for men crying for divine help, there is hardly any difference between a sleeping God and a dead one. In sober language, I have said that our prayers to God for any change in the course of the physical world are quite fruitless, otherwise no mother would lose her child and nobody would be shipwrecked on high seas. I have heard people give sincere thanks to God for the dangers they escaped while others perished, but I have never felt any enthusiasm for such selective divine mercy. When people have wondered why there should be such iniquities, hideous crimes and senseless sufferings in God's world, I have suggested, almost in

a bantering tone, 'The poor man (Yes, man, because we think of God after our own image), having gone into the business of creating the world is perhaps finding the job of maintaining it in order too much for his slender resources'. I have never concealed my great mental irritation whenever I have heard people in extreme misery — old and infirm, homeless and penniless — declare in simple faith that they were in such a plight through God's will. If I asked how they could have any regard for a God who willed and wrought such miseries for them, and if they replied, as they often did, by saying that it was after all not God but their own sins committed in past lives that were responsible for their present lot, I generally had the wickedness to suggest that God was the worst sinner in that he created such defective vessels as ourselves, so prone to sinning, and was thus the ultimate cause of our sins and sufferings.

Whenever anybody has asked me in a simple way whether I believe in God's existence, I have never given a straightforward answer. I always ask my questioner to tell me first what exactly he means by God before I can tell him whether or not I believe in his existence. Rarely has anybody succeeded in giving me a clear and intelligible idea of God which does not lead to some absurdity or other. Since the idea of God, as popularly held, did not appear to be quite clear and intelligible, I have never felt it necessary either to affirm or deny God's existence. Perhaps I could truthfully say that I did not know whether God, as popularly conceived, really existed; at least I did not know any definite and sufficient proof for his existence. But I do not think I have ever asserted that I know that God does not exist, whatever the term may mean.

About religion, too, I have allowed myself all sorts of negative criticism. I have said that religion, as we find it in history, has always worked as a divisive force, setting men against men, and bringing untold miseries on them. It is because of the religious feuds between Hindus and

Moslems that many of us are homeless now. Religion has no doubt brought many people together, but it has set too many more far apart. I have freely admitted the services which religion at one time rendered to mankind, when philosophy and science, morality and art, music and painting, were all taught and practised in close association with religion. In fact religion gave inspiration to them all. But in course of the evolution of human culture, nearly all higher activities of the mind, science and philosophy, art and morality, have separated themselves from religion and are growing independently. Thus religion has now lost much of its cultural content, and I have sometimes felt that it would be a merciful riddance for mankind, if religion, the root cause of so much hatred and strife, was allowed to disappear from the world.

One can easily make out for oneself how religion necessarily leads to discord and strife. Religion, as it is commonly understood, comes to our view only in some specialised form. We do not find a religious man, merely as such, but only as Hindu or Moslem or Christian or something else. On account of religion, people are organised into certain groups, each committed to certain dogmas or articles of faith. Some of these at least are mutually exclusive or contradictory, so that all of them cannot be equally true, but some true and others, at least partially, false. Now a person, belonging to a particular faith, cannot but think his articles of faith to be the truest and best (otherwise, why should he accept them?) and supposes all persons professing other faiths, to be, at least, partially in error and on the wrong path. He takes pride in his own religion and has scant regard for other religions, inasmuch as he has been conditioned to look upon them as deviations from the correct path. This attitude, which finds expression in the use of derogatory terms like *Melechhas*, *Kafirs*, *Heathens* etc. in regard to persons of other faiths, inevitably leads to mutual hatred.

There are certain proselytising religions which enjoin, on their followers, the duty

of spreading their faiths among non-believers and of bringing them round to their own faiths. This task of conversion is never very easy; often it involves some pressure, sometimes even the threat of physical violence or death. But a zealot would not mind such atrocities, because he would think he was thereby saving the soul of his victim.

Most religions require their followers to accept certain propositions as revealed truths, e.g. propositions about God, soul and life after death. We know how difficult it is to establish the truth of even empirical propositions, for which there is some basis in experience. It is therefore difficult to conceive how a person, with a modicum of critical intelligence, can accept without question propositions about such doubtful and supersensible matters as absolute truths.

Such being my reading of religion, as I find it prevalent in the world, based on dogmatic beliefs, leading to mutual hatred and intolerance and inhibiting critical enquiry — I have found it difficult to be favourably inclined towards it. In fact I have long ceased to identify myself with any particular religious group, because I have not yet found any organised group whose beliefs I could completely share. It is therefore not surprising that I have sometimes said, and have felt no shame to admit, that I have no religion.

But have I really no religion at all? While all, or nearly all, of my fellow human beings, some of whom are, in their intelligence and wisdom, far, far above me, have found it necessary and possible to profess some religion or other, am I so singular, peculiar or perverse, as to have no religion at all? Have not the wise men of our country confidently declared — 'Eating and mating, sleep and fear are common to men and beasts; *dharma* (which may be translated as religion) alone is the distinguishing attribute of men and without it men are no better than beasts'?

So I reflected; and I have found that I, too, have a religion — a religion of my own which may or may not be shared by others.

Also I would gladly grant that religion in my sense is an essential attribute of men, and without it we do not realise our human dignity or worth. When I said I had no religion I merely meant that I could not be identified with any recognised religious group and not that I had no religion at all, no religion in any sense.

Now, what do I mean by religion? Religion, to me, primarily means an apprehension of some spiritual ideal, which touches my feeling and will and which I endeavour constantly to realise in life, in my thought and conduct as well as in the world outside, so far as it is possible and necessary.

There are two or three things to be noted in this connexion. First there must be an ideal, some high end which one may set before oneself and try to realise in life, considering it most worthy of man to do so. I do not think animals have any ideals. They fulfil no doubt, certain ends, but these are all natural ends, which are fulfilled by nature or natural forces, working through or upon the animals. No animals have ever set them up as ideals to be consciously pursued by them.

Secondly, the ideal which forms part of our religious consciousness must be a spiritual ideal. By spiritual I mean, in the present context, what is concerned with our non-bodily self. Primarily we become acquainted with spirit in our subjective self-consciousness. We find ourselves somehow as embodied, as identified with a body which may be short or tall, dark or fair. But inwardly we find ourselves as a thinking, feeling and willing being, as having a sense of true and false, good and bad, beautiful and ugly. This sense, which can never be equated completely with any bodily sensation, discloses some aspects of our spiritual nature. A spiritual ideal would thus be, for a rational being, an ideal of knowledge and wisdom, as well as of moral and aesthetic excellence. If it be the ideal of a man to attain to a height of six or seven feet or to a weight of ten or twelve stones, he cannot be said to have a spiritual ideal. On the other hand, if he aims at

being a very kind and selfless person or at attaining an unerring vision of truth, he may well be regarded as having a spiritual ideal.

The third point, which is perhaps implied in the very notion of an ideal, is that one must have respect for the ideal. In fact, my apprehension of the ideal and endeavour to realise it in life would amount to religion only when I have the highest regard for it.

Perhaps it was not necessary to describe the religious ideal as spiritual. If a person has great respect for an ideal, then, whatever it be, his apprehension and pursuit of it in life would amount to his practical religion. Many people run after money, not necessarily for meeting their economic needs, but simply as something good in itself, they may be said to have made money-making their religion. In my view, a man's religion is wholly determined by the kind of ideal he follows in life. And so I should be ready to admit that even money-making or the pursuit of some other unspiritual ideal could be a religion with some people; but that would be such a low kind of religion that it would be hardly proper to call it religion. It is a sad fact that many of us, in spite of our visits to churches, temples and mosques, do not rise, in actual life, far above such low kind of religion. We waste the substance of our life in the pursuit of some unspiritual ideal. So I think we cannot have religion in the proper sense of the word unless our life is inspired by some spiritual ideal, unless we deeply conceive a truly spiritual ideal and earnestly endeavour to realise it in our life.

In my conception of religion all the three elements of our consciousness — thinking, feeling and willing — are involved. We have to conceive the ideal in thought or, at least, have some apprehension of it and feel great respect or reverence for it, and then endeavour earnestly to realise it in life. It is not likely that one has a clear view of the ideal right from the beginning. Probably one starts with a vague apprehension of something very valuable, emi-

nently real or supremely good. There is always the need to make the apprehension deeper and clearer, as also to strengthen and deepen our respect for it. We have to make the ideal more and more dominant and all-pervasive in all our thoughts and activities.

I certainly believe in some spiritual values, such as knowledge or truth, love or kindness, innocent joy or aesthetic enjoyment, as good in themselves, worthy of being pursued and possessed by a rational being. In conceiving and pursuing this ideal, I realise the dignity of my human being. This is my religion.

Most people, I suppose, take to religion with a view to ensuring their welfare in the next life. I do not think I can hope to derive any *post-mortem* benefit from my religion. Whatever religion I have and am able to practice, has been to me its own reward. I do not wish to derive any earthly or unearthly benefit from it except the satisfaction that I have honestly tried to follow my ideal. But, being weak and human in a bad sense, I do not often get the satisfaction and often fail to live up to my ideal.

Fortunately I have no worry about the next world, about which I am absolutely in the dark. All my concern is with my present life and it will be enough if I can honestly try to live it worthily. Very possibly when one dies, one dies completely and does not merely remain half dead for a time to rise again into some other form of existence. At least, I hope, I shall be content, at death, to die out completely.

By God I understand nothing but the highest ideal conceivable, the substance of all spiritual values. My God is what has revealed itself to me, through the imperfect media of my thought and feeling, as my ideal. This God I cannot deny, and I have no eye for other Gods.

Is my God a real God or a mere idea? Of course I have to conceive it in idea. But what I conceive is not again an *idea*, but the *ideal* which I seek to realise in my thought and action. An idea in my mind

(or in anybody else's mind), which is already real as idea can never have the characteristic of an *ideal* which demands *realisation* only through our efforts. Nevertheless, the ideal is real in an important sense: it is real as a law of nature or a universal is real, over and above the particular instances in which we may find it actualised.

How do we judge of the reality of a thing? Its appearance is not always a guarantee of its reality; the appearance may be deceptive. Normally we become sure of its reality through its action or effectiveness (*arthakriyākāritra*). When we perceive a thing, we take it to be real, because it has been effective in causing a sensation in us, which is implied in perception. In so far as I find my ideal to be effective in me, in determining my judgment and conduct, in moving me in certain lines of action, I cannot deny its reality. It is of course not real in the sense in which a chair or a table before me is taken to be real. A chair or a table is nothing but a passing phenomenon, but the ideal, by its very nature, is conceived as an abiding noumenon, whose manifestation, however, in characteristic phenomena, is not denied.

I have already indicated that I conceive my ideal or God roughly as love, as knowledge and as innocent joy. Wherever I find these, I like to feel the presence of my God there. To find God, I need not retire into mountain caves or climb up to hill-tops, or travel far to well-known holy places or even visit temples, churches or mosques near by. In every act of genuine selfless love, my God seems to reveal himself clearly; in every shimmer of truth, recognised as such, through the foggy speculations of philosophers, we seem to catch a glimpse of God's glorious being; in the joyful mirth of innocent happy children as well as in the peace and calm of a meditative saint, the presence of God seems to be writ large for any discerning eye. My God thus is not a loving and knowing God, far less all-loving and all-knowing. He is love or knowledge itself. In the same way he is not joyful, but joy

itself. This is no mere rhetorical hyperbole but is meant to be taken as sober truth.

Materialistically inclined as we naturally are, and depending heavily on our senses, the image of a material substance seems to have set for us the very standard of reality. It is clear that such an image will not fit my notion of God, — God who has been equated by many sages with love and truth. Nobody can discover these in any material substance however fine.

How do I exist as spirit? Embodied though I am, the flesh and bone, which compose my body, do not in themselves disclose my spiritual being. I exist as a spiritual being in thinking, feeling and willing. My spiritual nature or my being as spirit is manifested in my thoughts, feelings and volitions. In the same way God's being may be disclosed in every act of genuine love or knowledge or innocent enjoyment. Just as I need not be equated with a passing thought, even though I realise my spiritual being in my thoughts, so God is not just an act of love, but the principle of love which shows itself unmistakably in every genuine instance of love. I find no absurdity in this view of God.

Although I am sincerely opposed to all current religious faiths, because of their dogmatic and sectarian outlook, I have never refrained from learning from the scriptures of various religions as well as from the founders of different faiths. From the Upanishads I have learnt that God is truth, knowledge and the infinite, that he is the zest or joy of life (*raso vai sat*). I cannot literally say with the Upanishads that I am God (*aham brahmāsmi*), because I feel I am really far from my ideal. I can however well understand the Upanishadic saying to mean that I am in intention, though not in fact, one with my ideal. I have taken the Biblical exhortation 'Be ye perfect even as your father in heaven is perfect' clearly to mean that I should try to shape myself after my ideal, I try to follow, as far as I can. Buddha's teachings of desirelessness (*Vasana-vilaya*) and friendliness to all creatures (*panca-*

bhute maitri). I do not however think that the extinction of desire is possible in our earthly state or that I should have no desire at all. But I would certainly like to make them as mild and as little self-regarding as possible. Even though I cannot share the religious beliefs of many saints, I have nothing but admiration and respect for saints of all religions for their great devotion to other-worldly interests and renunciation of worldly goods.

My trouble is that rightly or wrongly, I was early launched on a philosophical career with perhaps no proper qualification for it. But I took my job rather seriously. Being in this line, it has been my duty to pursue truth with understanding and reason. I had therefore to disabuse my mind of all assumptions and prejudices as far as possible, and try to see things for myself with the eye of reason. In consequence I could not uncritically accept the mythological and unhistorical beliefs which form part of many religions.

A philosopher, I understand, is a lover of wisdom or truth, who is not already in possession of it, but only seeks it in the spirit of a lover. If the pursuit is to be genuine, one has to admit that one has not yet reached the goal. The philosopher is thus bound to be both agnostic and sceptic. So I am an agnostic, not in the sense that I believe knowledge is impossible but in the sense that complete knowledge is not in my possession, nor is it likely to be mine in the near future.

Naturally I am a sceptic too. Unless I have a genuine doubt I cannot enquire earnestly. I am not certainly at the end of my enquiries. Being thus an unbelieving sceptic, I cannot honestly accept any religious creed which makes a heavy demand on faith. Let any philosopher, truly so called, declare, if he dare, that he has come to the end of his quest, and has fully fathomed the depth of reality. I cannot, and have therefore remained an agnostic and sceptic, unable to align myself with any religious group of men who are bound together by a common faith.

But I have not merely moved in the com-

pany of philosophers, but have lived in society in close association with men, women and children. I have also listened to poets and prophets, saints and seers. And I think my eyes have been opened to other values than truth, to love and friendship, to beauty and goodness of various kinds. I may be doubtful whether any particular statement about reality is true or false, but I am not doubtful whether truth is desirable. Along with truth, I recognised love and friendship, beauty and joy, kindness and honesty, as valuable in themselves, without recourse to any theory or utilitarian consideration. I am doubtful about so-called facts, but I am not doubtful about ends. Hence I can be a practical idealist in spite of my theoretical scepticism.

I am quite conscious that the views I am presenting here will be found very unsatisfactory, not only by the adherents of various current religions, but even by many others who are not particularly attached to any religion. They will, moreover, give rise, in an enquiring mind, to many serious questions, for which I have no ready and satisfactory answers.

Religious people may like to know whether there is any place for prayer and worship in the ordinary sense in my religion, and whether my God is likely to come on appeal to men's help in their troubles and tribulations. Honestly speaking, to such questions, I have to return mostly negative answers (maybe, with some qualification). Philosophers may ask how my ideal of love and truth is related to the real world, in which hatred and cruelty, deception and fraud, are so rampant; what are the chief values that enter into the making of my ideal; whether there is a gradation among them and whether they form a unity or are all separate and discrete; etc. etc. I have to confess that I do not yet clearly know the exact answers to most of these questions. I may have some halting answers for them, but I do not wish to increase the bulk of my essay by stating them here.

After all, I am not writing an essay in metaphysics or axiology, in which one may

try to solve these difficulties. My object in this essay has been merely to state roughly my views about God and religion and in the process to clarify some of my ideas as far as I can. It is no shame for me to admit that I am largely an ignorant man, the keys to the mysteries of the universe are not certainly in my hands. I am somehow gropingly finding my way through life. Fortunately I have been granted, as I believe, some clear light in my sense of certain ultimate values, as I conceive them, which I have described as love, truth or

knowledge, beauty and joy, and I try to shape my humble life in view of this light. It will need some further discussion to determine exactly what these values mean for me. But I believe each of them has a straight-forward sense for unsophisticated minds, and that is for the present enough for me. These values describe the ideal for me, and I have ventured to call this ideal, not irreverently, my God, and my entire religion, if I may call it such, would consist in my sincere appreciation and honest pursuit of this ideal.

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New Poets of England

DAVID MCCUTCHION

There's a cool web of language winds us in,
Retreat from too much joy or too much fear.

—Robert Graves.

POETRY in England today is inhibited by self-consciousness—its wings are cut. 'Spontaneous emotion' is checked by second thoughts. It is all part of current moral sensitivity: the human heart is not to be trusted, things are not what they seem. The poet avoids the passionate and sublime for fear of appearing to strike an attitude: it has all been done so many times before. This self-consciousness is above all evident in the *tone* of the new poetry, which is cautious, precise, self-critical, wry:

She kept an antique shop — or it kept her.
Among Apostle spoons and Bristol glass,
The faded silks, the heavy furniture,
She watched her own reflection in the brass
Salvers and silver bowls, as if to prove
Polish was all, there was no need of love.

(Elizabeth Jennings: *My Grandmother*)

Typical: the awareness of the ambiguity in 'kept', the exactness of 'Apostle spoons' and 'Bristol glass', the deliberately casual—because unexpected—enjambement ('brass/Salvers'), and the literary echo ('Ripeness is all'). There is a curious distance in such writing, a detachment from the subject, the typical sign of urbanity. Instead of passion, indignation, commitment, we have curiosity, bewilderment: life is a puzzle. And the poetry too is often a puzzle, as the poets get more and more involved in the convolutions of their highly civilized minds.

A favourite device is to launch us into a situation which we must work out for ourselves by means of the poet's obscure commentary upon it. A poem begins:

Two masks stare down from the window glass,
tree high above the suburban road

where the caged and dying creatures pass
whose grave codes of conduct fail to please
archaic sobbing of captivities.

(Dannie Abse: *Suburb. Evening. Autumn.*)

The poem speaks not through the logic of syntax but through patterns of images, which require several readings to make sense. The technique is intellectual, strained, the words charged with significance ('stare', 'grave', 'archaic'). Any event may provoke one of these enigmatic little soliloquies—a picture postcard of a Greek statue received from abroad, the sight of a half-built boat in a hayfield, an old man dozing in a corner, a match-box tossed into the street... The half-built boat becomes a cradle, then a carcass—beginning and end in one—the rye grass is 'silk and sea', and following up these associations of birth and death (the mother sea, the voyage of life) the poet may think of the genesis of a poem also from bits and pieces like the scraps of wood that lie around the boat: 'The gathering word was not completed yet' ('gathering' suggested by the incurving ribs). Outward brilliance and inner darkness—the mystery of life (or a poem), the mystery of the creative process which moves out of death to life and back to death again:

Only when these clawed timbers could enclose
Their own completing darkness would they be
Phoenixed from it and phoenixed into She.

And fit then, as such noticing reveals,
To split her first wave open and explore
The many ways that all lead to one shore.
(Norman MacCaig: *Half-built Boat in a Hayfield*)

It will be noticed that if the poet is detached from his subject, his eye is on the

object, and what he lacks in passion he makes up for in discipline. Preoccupation with technique and a desire to reproduce with words the exact structure of an event, the sensation of an object, are the hallmark of contemporary poetry. The poets have inherited T. S. Eliot's 'intolerable struggle with words and meanings' and his extreme awareness of the conscious processes behind his craft (so that one cannot take it entirely seriously—the 'mug's game'). This awareness may also be traced back to I. A. Richard's experiment in 'Practical Criticism' of the thirties in which he exposed woolly emotions and stock responses, and F. R. Leavis' insistence on concreteness. The generalities of 'Break, break, break, on thy cold grey stones, O sea' are replaced by exact observation of oneself on an actual sea-shore:

Around me swung the mews; the limpet's foot
Was fast into the rock; the bladderbell
Sea-tousled like my own wet thatching hung
With salt roan purses strung...

(Hilary Corke: *The Early Drowned*)

By means of rhythm, onomatopoeia, and precision of meaning the poet tries to reproduce the exact feel of an experience:

...through the cutting's murk the sibilant engines
Pounded past slowly gasping in the rain.

(Anthony Cronin: *Responsibilities*)

He looks slowly, carefully, and would have us see what he sees — a moth for instance:

I saw its furred face, the exact design
Of three black circles set in a triangle...

(Carla Lanyon: *The White Moth*)

In these cases metre and rhyme are sacrificed to accuracy, but often 'the fascination of what's difficult' prompts the poet to combine accuracy with strict regularity:

My step just clips a bee
Which sizzles, and plucks free.

(Peter Redgrove: *Dismissal*)

Many poets, in reaction against the free verse and experimental forms of the twenties and thirties, prefer a tightly knit metre with regular stress and rhymes, like

Eliot in the Sweeney quatrains. In conjunction with their deliberative and highly intellectual approach, this brings them close to the seventeenth century poet Andrew Marvell who stands between the Metaphysicals and the Augustans. Marvell loved to weave his intricate ironic parallels (as between the ways of man and the ways of nature) into delicate and deceptively simple verse forms, where every word drops innocently into place disguising the depth and complication of the thought:

How vainly men themselves amaze,
To win the palm, the oak, or bayes;
And their uncessant labours see
Crown'd from some single herb or tree,
Whose short and narrow-verged shade
Does prudently their toyles upaid;
While all the flow'rs and trees do close,
To weave the garlands of repose.

And here a modern poet with a similar precision and neat balance describes the effect of snow in a pretentious suburb:

The snow fulfills its pure design
And softens every ugly line,
And for a while will exorcize
These virulent proprieties.

Within one mile of here there is
No lovelier place to walk than this,
On days when these kind flakes decide
That what it boasts of, they shall hide.

(Alan Brownjohn: *Snow in Bromley*)

Much of the sheer pleasure of reading contemporary verse comes from the skilful play of language, the wit and satire. John Betjeman is especially popular in this respect. Other poets are more serious, less robust. A poem by Philip Larkin describes a faith-healer demanding *What's wrong* in a deep American voice

And, scarcely pausing, goes into a prayer
Directing God about this eye, that knee.

The humour is a punctuating sense of the comic, a defence against the phoney, against all false claims on our emotions (altars, processions, king and country). It is a defence against horror too:

Strange that in 'crimes of passion' what results
Is women folded into trunks like suits...

(Roy Fuller: *Love and Murder*)

These poets thus keep the world and their emotions precariously under control.

Of course self-consciousness is nothing new in poetry: what more self-conscious craftsmen than the sonneteers of the Renaissance? In fact self-consciousness begins where poetry ceases to be folk-song. But the poets at the beginning of a national culture have before them a limitless world of invention which succeeding generations will steadily exploit (to the tune of movements and manifestoes), revealing all the latent possibilities of the language. But the English poet of today is at the end of such a process: he can only look back on the wealth of forms discovered. Instead of revealing the future, he must pick and choose from the past: will he be 'influenced' by the Elizabethans? the Metaphysicals? the Augustans? the Romantics? Nearly all the contemporary English poets are graduates of English literature, and many of them teach English literature at university level. They are so saturated with the past that they can hardly write a line of their own spontaneously. Phrases from Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Pope jostle in their minds: so many echoes inhabit the garden. One effect of this excessive literary refinement is to make poetry intensely introspective: the poet is less interested in the world than in his own reactions to the world – and the ultimate development of this romantic self-reflectedness is to write a poem about writing a poem. At one extreme, language and experience become so personal that communication is a problem (and many modern poems are on this very subject):

Living within the islands of language,
Whose nationality is the poem,
isolated, what can we do but rage?

(Dannie Abse: *Islands*)

At the other extreme, the poets have a hard time putting life into the deadened language of the tribe – B.B.C. English which spreads its uniform urbane factuality all over the country. For the literary language too is devitalized, worn out, loaded with clichés, weighed down with associations. There have been some not very convincing

attempts to revive ballad forms and imitate popular speech. But the most impressive English poetry of the twentieth century has been written by Americans, Irishmen, and at least one Scotsman. No doubt English diffidence and self-irony also play their part. Certainly Hugh MacDiarmid has an unselfconscious directness few Englishmen could achieve without sounding false:

Seen through a murky patch of fog,
Violent, ruthless, incalculable.
I have seen a head blood-drained to this hue.
But this cliff is not dead.
It has an immense life of its own
And will loom, as if it could come rushing
To beat, to maim, to kill
(Damned anti-climax of a notion!)

Just as it looms today
After every human being now alive
Has returned, not to rock but to dust.

(Hugh MacDiarmid:
The North Face of Liathach)

Another factor inhibiting poetic flight is contemporary disenchantment. Hugh MacDiarmid is a communist and speaks with the confidence of his faith, but his fellow-poets – English and Scotch – are victims of contemporary distrust. The mood following the first world war was passionate indignation, the mood following the second has been cynical disillusion. The issues have become too huge, too horrible (Auschwitz, the H-bomb), with no easy panaceas (communism discredited, little trust in natural human goodness). The poet is on the defensive, cagey, and his immediate response to Great Causes is: Count me out! The old values – chastity, patriotism, duty, faith – sound hollow, and the new generation tries to reconstruct its universe on less exalted ideals: a tolerant give and take, a sense of humour, and a sympathy for human inadequacy. These new attitudes are embodied in the novels of Kingsley Amis and John Wain (both also poets and lecturers) or William Cooper. Their heroes come from the working or lower middle classes, beneficiaries of the new free universal education, which has turned them into teachers, librarians or even university lecturers. But beside their appre-

ciation of cultural values (mainly confined to literature), they retain an intense hatred of affectation and highbrow attitudes — they like jazz not Mozart, the public house not the cultural centre. The hero of *That Uncertain Feeling* by Kingsley Amis quotes Yeats to himself but detests the pretentious avant-garde poet who is taken up by the local arts association patronized by society ladies. These heroes are unromantic and shrewd: Joe, in *Scenes from Provincial Life* by William Cooper, finally drops his Myrtle, in spite of all their happy weekends together in a country cottage, because he has no illusions about what it would be like being married to her; all her tears fail to move him, and of course — she marries somebody else. The point about this is that Joe is presented as a nice chap — simply not taken in by sentiment. Such heroes have no time for idealism, or grandiose gestures like internationalism: their attention is entirely concentrated on the little details of everyday life, the petty misunderstandings, the little joys, the vagaries of vanity. Their attitude to the outside world is defensive: the attitude of the working class as described by Richard Hoggart in his *Uses of Literacy* — full of suspicion against an impersonal 'them' (= authority: the police, the government, the landlord, the boss).

The new poets, like these heroes, are much more involved with common life, participants not onlookers like Wordsworth or Shelley. Kingsley Amis' Lucky Jim gives up lecturing to become a private secretary, while the hero of *Hurry on Down* by John Wain (title taken from a Blues song) after failing at the university, runs through a succession of more or less sordid jobs and situations — window-cleaning (he is beaten up by a rival), export delivery driver (plus dope smuggling), hospital orderly (he almost marries a working girl), chauffeur to a chocolate millionaire, and finally, after quarrelling with a drunk in Piccadilly in the small hours of the morning, ends up in the night entertainment world of London. What is significant in this up to date picaresque novel (and the picaresque novel

with its sympathetic rogue hero is back in vogue), is that the hero is intelligent and educated yet feels more at home among working men or in the bohemian underworld of commercial vulgarity, than in the world of middle class respectability and 'culture'. Nowadays many undergraduates do in fact take working class jobs during their vacations. Another factor which has fostered this widening of sympathies (and dislike of middle class exclusiveness) has been the experience of universal National Service — men from all walks of life flung together in the barrack room with a common antagonism: authority. The modern poet accepts the world: he has learnt to live with it, not soar above it — he is no skylark, no albatross.

Many effects of these post-war circumstances can be seen in the new poets — for instance the 'toughness' of Thom Gunn and Ted Hughes (even their names are tough!), or the casual offhand manner of D. J. Enright and Philip Larkin. To read Thom Gunn you would think he went around with his fists clenched and his chest slightly swaying. His first volume of poems was called *Fighting Terms* and presents a wary defensive attitude: you can't fool me. The poems face up to the violence of living and the hypocrisy which flourishes on all sides. Byron is preferred to Shelley — Byron who died for freedom in Greece while Shelley 'fell submissive through the waves'. One of his best known poems begins:

I think of all the toughs through history
And thank heaven they lived, continually.
I praise the overdogs from Alexander
To those who would not play with Stephen
Spender.

Rather a silly poem in its solemnity, but all the attitudes are there — the contempt for the cultivated literary life (Stephen Spender) and 'pale curators', the admiration for the adventurous and independent, for soldiers, athletes, and the steel will. In another poem *Loot* Gunn speaks of the 'tawney warriors' that ride down his blood. It is the Hemingway ethos — or Marlon

Brando's — and the poet even dresses to suit the part: black leather jacket, jeans, cowboy boots. He admires the bums of Skid Row, the aging rake, more symbols of independence:

The very beauty of his prime
Was that the triumphs which recurred
In different rooms without a word
Would all be lost some time in time.

Life is to be lived — passionately, without regret; but the poems are strangely dispassionate, intellectual. For they spring from doubt and questioning:

I, born to fog, to waste,
Walk through hypothesis,
An individual.

Behind the leather jacket lurks the Cambridge undergraduate: diffident, sensitive, controlled.

Ted Hughes, a contemporary of Thom Gunn at Cambridge, shares his honest searching style, and where Tom Gunn praises the toughs of history, Hughes writes of animals, birds and fish of prey: the wolf, the hawk, the pike — again symbols of courageous self-sufficiency remote from a gentle timid world. Of the hawk:

There is no sophistry in my body:
My manners are tearing off heads.

Other subjects are equally elemental: mountains, the sea:

The deeps are cold:
In that darkness camaraderie does not hold:
Nothing touches but, clutching, devours...

Such poems are not exulting in nature's rapacity, her red teeth and claws, but attempting to come to grip with the facts — and the facts of human nature too: air raids, battlefields, sadistic militarism. And the poems themselves are a kind of answer — disciplined, objective, calm, they assimilate the horror:

Dead eyeballs blurred by hard rain,
Mouths that grin into mud and
Puddles unwinding heavy crimson.

They hear nothing of peace.
They remain locked in their problem.

The young clover cannot distract them.

(*Flanders*, 1960)

One may not be able to change the world, but at least one can try to see it clearly. If there's one thing the young poets hate, it's sentimentality and misty wishful thinking.

D. J. Enright and Philip Larkin cannot take themselves or the world so seriously, their attitudes are generally punctured by irony and self-depreciation. They do not turn to elemental nature, but concern themselves with man in society — a subject which does not permit such clear-cut possession as a fish or a mountain. Enright is very much the liberal humanist amidst the confusions of the contemporary world — love in the suburbs ('held in each other's unpermitted arms'), committees taking over from poets ('they burned the midnight fluorescence'), the break-up of the colonies, ambiguous revolutions:

Princes and generals have moderate ambitions
(An air-conditioned palace, a smarter G.H.Q.,
An Armstrong-Siddeley, another little wife).
The families, driven by some curious small
ambition,

Stream away, from east to west, from west to east.
It is in their blood, to stream.

They know what is happening. None of them
asks why —

They see that foreign tanks are running off with
native drivers,

Foreign howitzers are manning native gunners —
As they pass by burning houses, on their way to
burning houses.

Among such small people, the foreign shells
Make ridiculously big noises.

He is always on the side of the insulted and the injured, the small people victims of international forces, children victims of school:

'The thing that makes a blue umbrella with its
tail —

How do you call it?' you ask. Poorly and pale
Comes my answer. For all I can call it is peacock.

Like Gunn and Hughes, Enright sympathizes with the down and out, the ostracised — harlots and bums. These are the heroes and heroines of Bert Brecht, whose poem *The Drowned Girl* Enright has translated — forgotten by men and God 'she

slipped past frontiers, out of sight.' But there is more than social indignation in his sympathy, he admires the independence of those who dare reject society. He imagines 'The last Democrat' a dissipated wreck

In a house full of mistresses and cats and dust
And unpaid bills (a man who liked an orderly life,
Loved peace, detested debt, was undersexed).

How has he got into this mess? in revolt
against the comforts and complacencies of
the welfare state —

the prim foul nursemaids
Trained in the ministries.
Because sin is democratic. Because
Virtue was being rewarded too promptly.

Many of his poems spring from insignificant occasions — meeting an Egyptian at a cocktail party, the evening after a conference, a visit to Fort William, the question of a student in class — and develop an ironic meditation, rich with imagery, wit, and allusion. Sitting in a Singapore restaurant at Sunday lunchtime, watching the birds outside wheeling in the sky, overhearing scraps of foolish or malicious conversation from the other tables, he wonders if any meaning can be given to the shifting patterns of sound and movement, any meaning to social life:

Man in society doesn't care to seem
Just gentle. Prefers to be too narrow
Or too broad. (The women too.)
Vice or Virtue is the party line.

Much movement in a little room.
The flock contracts and swells, with
Sounds of war and peace. And one, perhaps,
Is left to perch on some small truth,

And two may find a sort of home...

This is only a fragment of the whole poem which behind its nonchalant manner and wit (the pun on narrow and broad) hints at the futility of social life (above one or two), the latent panic behind the excited chatter, the sinister background of politics. The method is ironic, reductive — the comparison of human and bird life — and the conclusion humane: that truth is small and personal (as opposed to the grandiose simplifications of politics). The literary

allusions are also ironically reductive — Tolstoy's great novel echoed in terms of society gossip (outside the birds 'manoeuvre'), and calling up in such petty circumstances the great Renaissance motif 'infinite riches in a little room' — not just Marlowe's Jew hoarding his gold, but the infinite mind of man contained in his small head. The title: *Beer and Curry*.

The same kind of deft ironic literary mind is revealed in the poetry of Philip Larkin, and again the poems are mostly occasional; tight self-conscious meditations on all the fundamental themes — life, death, love, religion, the meaning of history, personal responsibility — the seriousness again disguised by apparent flippancy, and prompted by the most ordinary events: old racehorses out to grass, a church tombstone, an ambulance in the street, some old song-books turning up unexpectedly. Ambivalence haunts everything: a church moves him but he has lost faith, ambulances are 'closed like confessionals' reminding us of 'the salving emptiness' which we both fear and desire. Then there is the self-deprecation which manages to be neither self-condemnation nor self-approval, yet a little of both: the mild intellectual tied to

The good book, the good bed
And my life in perfect order

whose blood is nonetheless stirred by violence and paperback sex, and who would like to 'chuck up everything', walk out on his neat little world like the hero of *Hurry on Down*, run away to sea 'if it weren't so artificial' — just another attitude. Or the university lecturer who can write a poem concluding: 'Get stewed: books are a load of crap.' All these poets are aware of their own moral imperfections, inevitable imperfections as our self-analytical culture reveals, with a mixture of pain and self-righteousness — the pain (which might become self-pitying) shrugged off by the use of racy slang as in *Self's the Man*, where the title sets the tone of gay bravado and barrack-room cunning:

Oh no one can deny

That Arnold is less selfish than I
He married a woman to stop her getting away
Now she's there all day.

It looks like self-sacrifice, after all marriage
is the decent thing, and now the poor
fellow hasn't a moment to himself, nor any
pocket money either:

To compare his life and mine
Makes me feel a swine.

But on second thoughts:

He still did it for his own sake
Playing his own game
So he and I are the same.

Then after congratulating himself on playing
the game so much better, the poet ends
on a characteristic note of doubt: 'Or I
suppose I can.' Like Thom Gunn with his
mask of toughness, Larkin adopts the racy
carefree manner as a shield against a world
where there is so little tenderness, so little
self-sacrifice. The attitude recalls early
Brecht:

We'd like to be good and kind every day,
But social relationships — don't work that way!
(*Threepenny Opera*)

It's a restricted world, the world of contemporary poetry, a world concentrated on the self, on private emotions in private situations, the world of the poet's mind. It prefers tenderness to passion, enquiry to revelation, charity to faith. It does not presume to 'legislate' for anybody. It is down to earth, empirical, British. It shrinks away from the howling emotions of the Beatniks, it does not create patterns of marvellous-sounding words like Gottfried Benn or the French tradition; Dylan Thomas stands alone. It rejects the grand vision for the little insight, its stage is not the cosmos or even Eliot's Europe, but the housing estate, the living room. Many poems deal with home and family life — the problems of marriage have replaced romantic love. Peter Redgrove writes of the birth of a son, Anthony Thwaite watches at the bedside of his sick child. There is a return to human fundamentals — the need for love, the difficulty of understanding, the treachery of the heart. Above

all, no dramatics! Thomas Blackburn writes of an attempted suicide:

'So,' said the nurse, 'you've come. She may go out.'
I noticed that my shoe-lace was untied,
But though some words climbed up into my
throat,
Found none appropriate to suicide;
I took her arm, though, like a helpful friend
And led her downstairs to the waiting car,
Thinking, our game we do not understand,
Nor who is playing it, or what we are.
Her landlord came in time, and that was luck.
I changed the gear. Who drives behind my back?
(Thomas Blackburn: *Felo De Se*)

The shoe-lace, and changing gear: life goes on as before, the concrete immediate world is always present, the business of living. Contemporary poetry is rooted in the actual, the physical presence of the world, the objects that surround us: the glass top of a cafe table, china and furniture, stains on the walls. And this world around us is itself the subject-matter of poetry, the richest source of imagery — boys collecting train numbers, the crowd at a football match, a wasp's nest, the cactus on the mantelpiece. Helen Spalding uses as the basis for a poem a telephone conversation interrupted by noises from the street. Keith Harrison gives us the monologue of a dertist:

Mister, if I could illustrate this moment
What a refuse-pit you yawn under my hand...

The sensitive mind responding to the everyday world — that might best characterize contemporary poetry, as distinguished from the twenties (responding to God and History), and the thirties (responding to international politics). It's a rough generalization and only holds up to a point. In other respects contemporary poets continue the modern movement — the conversational style of Eliot, the wit and virtuosity of Auden, the economy and concreteness of the Imagists, the racy aggressive slang of MacNiece, the intellectual conundrums of Empson, and presiding over them all, their envy and star, the grand old man of poetry today: Robert Graves, who long ago rejected the visionary for the real, politics for human relationships, lyricism for the rugged truth.

'The Marathi Writer and His Commitment'

D. G. NADKARNI

I

THE general theme of this seminar is 'The Writer and His Commitment', and this particular paper will deal with it in relation to modern Marathi literature. The word 'commitment' is very slippery indeed; not only because it is liable to be instantly associated with socialist realism but also because, over the years, it has been used mainly in a European context and this has given it a semantic ambivalence. A recent book that actually tries to grapple with this theme is John Mander's 'The Writer and Commitment'. I have myself not been entirely satisfied with the substance of this book, for I believe that Mander has tried to cast a very wide net. Also, since the major part of his book deals with the writings of specific writers, such as Auden, Orwell, Angus Wilson, Arthur Miller, Thom Gunn, Osborne and Wesker, it may not be of much use to us in starting off this discussion. But, conveniently enough, Mander quotes a definition of 'commitment' attempted by Sartre and its elaboration at the hands of his erstwhile camp-follower, the British philosopher-novelist, Iris Murdoch. The word Sartre uses is *engagement*, which might be transcribed simply as "getting involved". In a polemical tract called 'What Is Literature?', written in 1947 — and this year should be very relevant to our discussion — Sartre stresses the idea that the writer must be at pains to discover and work within his unique historical situation. Going a step further, Sartre dilates on the concept of *liberté* which, according to him is descriptive of the human condition itself: Man is Freedom. Extending this usage into literary criticism, Sartre says: 'The writer, a

free man addressing free men, has only one subject—freedom.' Like a true existentialist of the time of the French Resistance, this philosopher-turned-dramatist and novelist concludes that respect for human freedom is a commitment the writer assumes in the very act of writing. Fortunately or unfortunately Sartre does not stop here, but goes on to encompass an austere political commitment within his ideal of the writer's true vocation. Where Sartre errs, Miss Murdoch steps in to help us with her cool-headed English pragmatism and says: 'All that seems certain is that art may break any rule... Sartre's conception of what the disciplined vision will teach is too confined. He cannot demonstrate that good art will, of its own nature, lead to the treasuring of a particular kind of society. His theory of *la littérature engagée* remains a recommendation to writers concerning their craft, not a demonstration of its essential nature.'

In Miss Murdoch's implied belief that good art by itself can perform a social function, we have a peg to hang on. We shall also call in Prof. Allen Tate as a witness at a later stage; but now it is time to turn from abstractions to our guinea-pigs proper, that is, Marathi writing of the last two decades. Every discerning reader of Marathi knows that, in the late forties, there grew up a recognisable body of writing, primarily in the fields of the short story and poetry, which could be termed 'new writing'. In Marathi criticism, it is in fact referred to as such. When we think of similar movements in Western literature we have in the First and the Second World War a very relevant point of reference; but, when talking about Marathi literature, we cannot have legitimate recourse to these contexts. The two wars, or rather

the last World War, did not affect us in the same way as it did the people of Europe and America. Our intellectuals did not find themselves drafted and killed in the battlefield, fruitlessly like Rupert Brooke several decades ago or, like lesser British writers, in the first bloom of their careers, during the so-called war to end all wars. There was also another bitter conflict that engaged the physical and literary energies of Western writers: the Spanish Civil War, when the idea of commitment was perhaps discernible in its modern sense for the first time. Here was not only a fight between the Royalists and the Fascists but a Hamlet-like mental cleavage on the ideological plane such as one sees in a writer like Orwell, who started on the side of the first party and ended, if not on Franco's side, a forthright critic of the Leftists. Hemingway, more romantically attracted to the anti-Franco freedom fighters, found it convenient slowly to forget his political enthusiasm of the thirties and veer away to the ultimate creation of what Miss Murdoch calls 'good art'. An irretrievably committed writer like Ilya Ehrenburg fortunately found in the anti-German war an extension of the political situation which he had found so fruitful for his semi-polemical fiction emanating from the Spanish conflict. In matter of fact, the Second World War was a tame affair, ideologically speaking, compared to the Spanish Civil War which, as it developed into a mutual exhibition of amoral bestiality, split contemporary 'committed' writers into two opposite camps, not to speak of some who found the shame of recalcitration too severe to bear and hence just slunk away.

These Western parallels are cited here not only because they have a bearing on our subject but also because, immediately before Independence, we did have prevailing in this country a political situation which, in its implications, could bear comparison with the European situation. Before we blame contemporary Marathi writers for staying aloof from this situation, it is necessary to find out the nature

of the 'new writing' movement of the forties and explore its relationship with the literature that preceded it and the very recent writing that has emerged since. In the late thirties and the early forties, Marathi fiction and poetry did give an impression of a prolific flowering. Actually it is difficult to judge this vast outpouring of the Muse without losing one's patience. The promoters of this writing are still very much on the current scene; and, if a novelist like Khandekar, unduly revered — I am afraid — by my Gujarati friends, undergoes long periods of inactivity from time to time, the shadow of his puritan thinking hangs quite perceptibly, if not on literary criticism today, on the minds of huge numbers of lay readers. It would be interesting to find out the Western writers who charmed the reigning idols that preceded the new writers. We find Phadke gloating over such an amateurish first novel as 'Hatter's Castle' by Cronin. (Having read it for want of an alternative in a spell of unemployment, my view of this book may be considered unwarrantedly gloomy; but I must confess to having admired some of Cronin's other novels, albeit in my adolescence, and hence claim some objectivity for my opinion). From Cronin on to Vicki Baum, by way of James Hilton — Phadke reaches the height of literary bliss in the skilfully packed and pleasingly ribboned novels of Somerset Maugham. No doubt each of these writers has done useful work within his own domain and, what is more important, Phadke's enthusiasm for them was part of an attempt to instinctively share the current vogue. Later on, Phadke's taste progressed enough — and on the right side of popular approval — to translate William Saroyan's 'Human Comedy', although this gain was offset by the patronage he offered to that journalistic drivel which exploited pre-war anti-Soviet propaganda, Jan Valtin's 'Out of the Night'. To turn to Khandekar, we find a seemingly more ennobling spectacle; such idealistic Germans as Ernst Toller and Stefan Zweig are his constant inspiration. A modern critic might reduce the position of Toller to

that of a liberal propagandist and draw pointed attention to the slushy sentiment and purple patches of Zweig's fiction. Yet, it would be foolish to contest Khandekar's right to enthuse over them; what is objectionable and material to the stagnancy of his own writing is that he never outgrew this enthusiasm. A few years ago, one found him lamenting over the alleged sexiness of Françoise Sagan's novels. His declarations from public platforms have also made it clear that he has lost touch with the truly contemporary and that the humanitarian trench he dug for himself before the advent of his successors is too deep for him to come out of. As for the poetry of the time, it is clear that it had turned full circle after the organised attempts of the Ravikiran Mandal and that the new poetry was still to crystallise in a big way. One treads here on controversial ground, because pioneers like P. S. Rege, Anil and N. G. Deshpande did produce work which was modern in its germ and the significance of which they went on to consolidate later. What we have to make up our minds about is the contribution made by novelists like Ketkar, Waman Malhar Joshi and Madkholkar, the last being one whose name is usually bracketed with those of Phadke and Khandekar. These three novelists can certainly claim an intellectual content of sorts; it is clear that they were more attuned to the social problems of the times and that at least one among them, Madkholkar, did succeed in giving artistic form to whatever abstract thought he incorporated in his fiction. However, these novelists, especially Ketkar and Waman Malhar Joshi, stand more or less as isolated examples of the writer torn between propagation of ideas and their artistically competent and effective delineation. Marathi critics have been rather shy of analysing their lapses in the latter respect, but we can certainly agree about their isolation: about the fact that they did not generate a cohesive movement. Perhaps, if a novelist of a later generation had produced a work of intellect fused with art, it would have been easier to place

these novelists without any more need of merely admiring them for their pioneering position. But we have still to have our Sartre.

Reaction against the sentimental and the effete in writing is always conscious and instinctive; but it cannot lead to any organisational effort. In other words, a literary movement, unlike a political one, cannot be launched with a manifesto, although such a document may rightfully follow. From this point of view, the advent of the 'new' short story writers and poets was an accident. Also mere reaction against the undesirable and the corrupt cannot produce works of literature. It is best not to go into the process of how a body of literature with similar impulses and lasting qualities comes to emerge. Historically speaking, it must be mentioned that, just as in poetry we had the work of Rege, Anil and Deshpande to precede the emergence of Mardhekar and his followers, in the short story, too, there were writers like R. B. Joshi, Prabhakar Padhye and S. M. Mate to precede the utterly revolutionary efforts of Gadgil and his contemporaries. They brought a new realism and honesty of sentiment to the Marathi short story which, I believe, is a sort of bridge between the sad plight of their predecessors and the modernistic urges of their successors. Marathi criticism has failed to assess adequately the work of these writers of the 'middle period' for it is important to note that they, too, were reacting against the barren formalism and lackadaisical vagueness of Phadke and Khandekar. Another germinal influence that may be mentioned here is the contemporary work of European and American writers of fiction. A common mistake is to overrate this influence. The very process of such an influence is a subtle one, and one cannot lay one's finger on a particular group of Marathi short stories or poems and say blandly that they bear the imprint of a Bates or a Hemingway. This error has been committed even by apparently informed observers of the Marathi scene, as for example when one of these tried to trace

in Mardhekar's poetry the influence of Eliot, Auden and Spender (names which come pat to the mind when one is not really conversant with the seminal influences in English poetry itself) and another tries to link up Hemingway and Gangadhar Gadgil on the basis of the so-called importance both of them give to sex. I would rather treat this phenomenon of Western influence as part of the unconscious process of collecting and perfecting one's mental equipment. This process would include the continuous imbibing of physical impressions, the re-orientation of psychological experience through 'recollection in tranquillity' as also a critical apperception of amorphous social developments. All these activities would crystallise in the act of creation itself, and if any influences have to be tagged on to the ultimate product (which, we take for granted, is a piece of genuine and inherent literary merit), we shall have to restrict ourselves to a consideration of only the method and the external trappings of the work and not to its core or spirit. Whatever be the direction we follow in this analysis—which, incidentally, forms only a fringe of the first of our three topics of discussion—it must be remembered that no Marathi writer has tried to imitate a Western model at least during this early period of the 'new writing' and after.

One has to mention dates in this context with some trepidation. Just as the modernistic movement had not started with an organisational manifesto, it did not crystallise or reach its full flowering during a particular year. Also, the four short story writers, namely, Gangadhar Gadgil, Aravind Gokhale, Vyankatesh Madgulkar and P. B. Bhave, who formed the vanguard of this movement did not produce work of the same type, although in later years one finds them reacting on one another. The resultant efforts, however, are of minor significance; and the point is that each of the four, as it were, stuck to his guns and produced a distinctive group of short stories consistently over a decade or so. The year 1950 can be taken to be a re-

presentative norm of their achievement, and before we come to speak of the decline of some of them it is worth recording the individual peculiarities of their fiction. We shall follow a similar procedure in respect of the poets, although a little more cursorily, for, between the two, the short story alone spanned a period which, in literary parlance at least, can be called an 'era' and was of sufficient mass and magnitude to bear searching and comprehensive analysis. I shall also deal with the drama and the novel of the period both of which forms, starting their own resurgence a little late, did reach distinct stages of development in the fifties and later.

II

The common characteristic that binds the four pioneers of the new short story is their interest in the human individual not as a creature guided by moral predilections but as one endowed with a psychological complex which potentially revealed the working of natural reality itself. It may be realised that the social fabric had lost its tradition-bound homogeneity with the stresses and strains that affected our life round about the time of the last war. The individual at odds with himself was an interesting phenomenon to study. Madgulkar studied him against the background of rural poverty; Gokhale and Gadgil did so against the more variegated aberrations of middle class life, while Bhave in his early writing busied himself with the individual bandied about by the disintegrating forces within Hindu culture. There is a strong bond between the so-called urban writers among this quartet. The predicament of man in a changing society is implicit in their stories, although on the surface they might appear to be case studies of modern individuals or groups of individuals. Strangely enough, some critics were deluded by the formal mores that each of these writers developed. Gadgil, with his stress on candid psycho-analysis, appeared to these critics to be a cynic who wanted to propagate the independence of the

writer irrespective of any social obligation. These same critics found in Gokhale a suitable representative of the society-oriented writer, while yet others gave undue importance to the experiments with narrative style conducted with varying degrees of enthusiasm by these writers. Latterly, one also hears the criticism that the village life portrayed by Madgulkar is a thing of the past, a typical attempt on the part of the artist who works in a vacuum to evoke reality only in its palatable and consumable aspect. In all this criticism is implied the charge of dereliction of one's duty towards society, it being taken for granted that art must not only entertain but also improve and ennoble. Gokhale alone has been fortunate enough to escape the charge.

On the plane of qualitative achievement, the years have prepared their own judgment on the work of these four short story writers. It is a judgment that can await its own day of delivery. Bhave was the first writer to disown having ever belonged to the camp of the new writers. Ironically enough, his work since he renounced the company of his contemporary experimenters, has become increasingly undisciplined and erratic. Gokhale, after a brilliant and long spell of creative exploration, now begins to reveal some of the limitations which were inherent in a moral preoccupation which he cherished deep down inside him. Although it is Gadgil who launches the most revolutionary experiments in narrative form, Gokhale has been fond of staging bravura performances of his own. But the years have depleted the value of these, while already the more experimental of Gadgil's stories are being criticised for their comparative lack of substance and their illegitimate nearness to the essay form. (I may cite Prof. V. Y. Kantak's view of his story, "The Dog That Ran In Circles", in review of the anthology, '16 Modern Short Stories', in *QUEST*.) When Gadgil was at the height of his achievement, one could discern a monotony of approach as, say, in the way he opened his story with detailed descriptions

of physical gestures or in the way he employed certain pet symbolic props to convey states of mind. The narrative discipline of the stories of his middle period is lacking in his recent ones — which in themselves are a few years old, although their scope in matters of locale and theme has been enlarged. Considered as a whole, the central core of Gadgil's work in the short story still appears to be impressive and a point from which he may any day break into new directions. Also, alone among the quartet, he has put behind him a solid body of enlightened and studious criticism. In fact, the stories of the first half of his career as a writer to date and the criticism of the latter half both guard an inviolable reputation in the field of new writing. Gadgil also provided a point of contact, through his critical pursuit of Mardhekar's theories, between the new short story and the new poetry, as well as the new creative writing and the new criticism, of which he himself happens even today to be the most acceptable exponent. As for Madgulkar, after years of prolific writing, he still leaves the promise of the middle years unfulfilled, and especially so because he has not followed his first novel, 'Bangarwadi' ('The Village Had No Walls', an English translation published by Asia) with any comparable work.

Already, before the first four had consolidated their achievements, the next generation in the Marathi short story, so to say, had started establishing its credentials. The one thing in which this generation differs from its predecessor is the surprising prolixity which distinguished all the four members of the latter, this quality being maintained for a considerable time without any concurrent falling off of standards. Perhaps a writer like G. A. Kulkarni at the top, Uddhav Shelke in the next stratum and Madhu Mangesh Karnik in the following one may be considered to be exceptions to this rule. Although it is not quantity alone that makes an impression, when it is not divorced of quality, it certainly leaves a more lasting impression when potentially better writers produce

work in dribblets. The stories of writers like Vidyadhar Pundalik, Kamal Desai and S. D. Panvalkar do not present a bulk comparable in any way with the work produced by Gadgil or his colleagues. It is, therefore, in a way futile to pit the younger writers against their forbears on a critical plane. Also, compared to Gadgil, few of these show a consistency of standards. Only G. A. Kulakrni has any claim to come anywhere near Gadgil. In the case of a writer of power and depth such as E. V. Joshi, the same lack of bulk is a devaluating factor. It may also be mentioned that currently one sees the spectacle of even the better writers among the new generation being unable to publish collections of their short stories at a sufficiently fast rate while the established ones continue to find a market for second-rate work. No one knows the business factors that are responsible for launching a particular writer steadily into the market; but, on the creative-cum-critical plane, it must be realised that publication of one's writings always provides a writer with a useful point of reference for organising his future work. Stagnation from this point of view has surely checked the growth of a number of new writers, while again the encouragement given to publication of volumes of second-rate short stories has deluded a few others into unjustified belief in their achievement. A proper assessment of the fresh conquests of G. A. Kulkarni and those who followed him in point of time has only been partially made; it is time that each individual writer in this camp had himself measured for what he is and what he is capable of. Gadgil and his contemporaries were quick to get the benefit of such an assessment, and it is worth noting that the objective role which Gadgil played in this process he has not cared to repeat when he came to judge and warn the writers of the next generation. He has been equally shy of judging the latter day lapses of his contemporaries, although no one can say that he is obliged to do so.

In the fifties the poetic scene shows more heartening development. Mardhekar gave

Marathi poetry a new idiom and thematic content. More transparently than the short story writers he reflected the agony of a sensitive creature reacting to the artificiality of contemporary living. The transparency no doubt arose from the nature of poetic statement itself, which is terse, direct and in a way meant to be more evocative than a piece of fiction. A poet is also never in two minds about speaking out his own true self as if he were soliloquising; the short story writer has to be outwardly at least an objective chronicler of an outer world. While P. S. Rege nurtured his lyric individuality and his musical phrase, poets of the next generation like Vinda Karandikar and Indira Sant proceeded to establish themselves, the first with an impassioned rhetoric that suited his humanistic urges and the second with the innate lyricism of a thoughtful introvert. N. G. Deshpande's muse showed us new and subtler flowerings and, by the time Anil resurrected himself through poems quite unlike his old work, the pioneer in Rege had already metamorphosed from his heightened sense-preceptivity to intriguing abstract composition. What was even more promising than the consolidation of these poets and their sustained output over a number of years, was the flowering of such young spirits as Dilip Chitre and Arati Prabhu. Of these the latter has outpaced his likely mentors with not unexpected facility, making each poem of his a chiselled work of fetching morbidity. Here is another poet who is a path-breaker, and although he is a writer of significant and powerful prose himself, there is no parallel for him in the Marathi short story.

Now the real difficulty about posing the many questions that will lead us to a discussion of these writers from the point of view of their commitment or otherwise is that such questions may appear relevant in relation to representational writing but ridiculously irrelevant in relation to poetry, much of which does not depict reality in the same way as fiction does. It is easy to discover which way the wind blows when

deciphering Vinda Karandikar's beliefs from his poetry, although critically speaking this amounts to doing an injustice to his vocation and the product of it. We may wonder whether Gadgil was right in keeping himself aloof from the 1942 movement—I am saying this only hypothetically, to start with—but would it be equally natural for us to enquire whether Arati Prabhu is aware of all the social and economic changes that are revolutionising the face of the country in the era of planning? In other words, how far is the individual as a social phenomenon a theme of poetry? Can there be verse with social awareness? Before we answer these and related questions, it would be useful to make a short survey of the rest of the prose writing of the fifties, especially of the representational genres such as the novel and the drama, both of which can claim somewhat equal credit with that of the new short story.

During the first half of the last decade S. N. Pendse stands towering above contemporary novelists. His early work had been preceded by the attempts of other novelists of promise, say, like R. W. Dighe. But his portrayal of the life and people of the Konkan was something new to Marathi fiction. At first one espied a certain artlessness in Pendse's narrative style, although he did not err on the side of sentimentality or fake idealism. His great virtue was that he was, as an artist, thoroughly immersed in his milieu. With 'Garambicha Bapu', however, we saw unexpected power in him and, after a few uncertain attempts that followed, he has attained a surprising perfection and depth in his craft in his recent work, 'Rathachakra'. This novel would set the standards not only for current Marathi fiction but also for the short story which, to a certain extent, has walled itself in with its own decadence. Perhaps, this kind of path-breaking may not be discernible in a form like the short story, because of the limitation of canvas of an individual work. It would do us no harm if we were not to consider any novelist of the early fifties apart from Pendse. But potentially significant attempts such as

E. V. Joshi's narrative of the Hyderabad population's struggle before the take-over, 'Raanhool', and Sharadchandra Mukti-bodh's sensitive tracking of the growth of a young boy, 'Kshipra', which he has followed recently with a sequel of rather limited success, must be recorded. The work of G. N. Dandekar, suffering as it does from an excess of pious sentiment, still presents in its totality—especially in the early novels of the Konkan and of the Maharashtrian hinterland—a considerable achievement in realism. It is, however, the decisive promise being shown by novelists of the next generation, including Ranjit Desai, Uddhav Shelke, Jaywant Dalvi and C. T. Khanolkar, that should be considered important from the point of view of the future of Marathi fiction. The best of their fiction is so good that one may venture to suggest that the novel will replace the short story as the dominating prose form of the coming years.

The progress of Marathi drama has not been so very full of certainties. From the point of view of our subject today, it is worthwhile noting that an early and neglected pioneer in attacking social problems such as Nana Joag attained maturity only while adapting a Shakespearian classic. The period of his first plays was coterminous with a spate of adaptations from European and American playwrights. These vicarious achievements no doubt helped to keep the Marathi theatre alive and humming with resurgent activity. But one had to wait for the appearance of Vijay Tendulkar, Vasant Kanetkar, P. L. Deshpande and S. G. Sathe in order to be assured that drama was indeed about to be a major branch of contemporary Marathi writing. I can only briefly say that the experimental urge thrives in all these dramatists and that they have refreshed our sensibilities which were jaded with the hangover of the post-decadence period of the Marathi theatre. Drama can be a more obvious mirror of the current social scene than the short story, especially when the latter is busy with revolutionising the very substance and expression of the form. On

the surface at least, we can see the modern Marathi playwright drinking deep into what might be called contemporary history. One sees him in a play like 'Tuze Aahe Tujapashi' and, more unassumingly, in Tendulkar's plays or Sathé's 'Sasa ani Kasav'. He is in a position to lord it over the short story writer, claiming that his conscience is easy of the pressure of social comment, that he launches an unambiguous and frontal attack on social evils while not forgetting that the psyche of the individual is still the centre of his fictitious portrayal. And he can go a step further and proceed to cite the heritage of Deval and Khadilkar or of Atre and Warekar. Can the Marathi fiction writer swear by Hari Narayan Apte in the same way or the Marathi poet by Keshavsut?

All this should lead us to exploring whether social reality and awareness of one's times do not manifest themselves more subtly in the modern Marathi short story. The traumatic experiences of the last two decades, such as the 1942 movement; the pre-Partition riots of 1946; the coming of Independence and the assassination of Gandhi that followed fresh communal troubles; the linguistic agitation of 1955 and the Chinese invasion, were real enough and far-reaching in their consequences to affect the sensibility of any Indian writer of the time. Was it that the exponents of the new short story were so much predisposed towards making stylistic experiments that they had no time to portray these mass upheavals that reweave the social fabric? Or was it that they, like most of the Indian intelligentsia, were fairly untouched by these phenomena? Perhaps they were so busy with exploring the nature of man as such that they considered it a nuisance to be made to adjust their sights to the socio-political firmament. Whatever be the actual character of the drawback, it is true that all these historic developments have not been significantly reflected in the Marathi short story—and only partially so in the Marathi novel. On the other side, we do have fiction, poetry and drama of a third rate kind which deal with these

political storms. A few explanations may be tentatively suggested, for I do feel that we are too near the times to pronounce any definite judgments. For one thing, the 1942 movement, which is one of the most crucial of the developments listed above, did fail to encompass the Indian intelligentsia within its fold. This is a fact hard to swallow, but it will at least be granted that our writers were not involved in this national struggle in the same way and to the same extent as our Western contemporaries were in the last war. If one were to put forward the excuse that it takes some time for a writer to digest an unprecedented social experience, one can only point to a work like Norman Mailer's 'The Naked and the Dead' to prove the contrary. The fact we have to face is that our experience and exploration of life are academic, and woefully restricted compared to those of our Western counterparts. It is not without significance that most of our writers should carry the indelible traces of the academic profession in their mental make-up and in the raw material of their writing. We have few writers who have penetrated life at all its levels, or at least at its most eventful and pulsating levels. Many who have practised their craft successfully over the years have picked only the crumbs of life, although the new generation of Marathi short story writers and novelists has conducted its explorations on a wider ground and with more urgency. One is sometimes alarmed by the doubt whether Gadgil, for all his solid contribution to psychological realism, did not give excessive attention to narrative refinement. When Marathi stories are translated into English, one realises with a shock what a lot of chaff surrounds the grain. Perhaps, in their championing of the new short story, the critics erred in sneering at strength of narrative content, a quality which crucially sets apart the modern English short story from the Marathi one. It is from this point of view that the work of a writer like E. V. Joshi gains new significance. Even the outpourings of G. A. Kulkarni, germane as they

may be to the genius of the Marathi language, sound like so much bright journalism when rendered into English. I cite all these examples with some hesitation for I myself am not clear whether linguistic accommodation into a medium enriched by centuries of phenomenal achievement can be the only criterion of gauging the quality of our writing. Of one thing I am, however, sure—and that is, it is one of the most valid criteria.

To portray the great events of national history perhaps requires a different kind of vision than Gadgil and his contemporaries displayed in unearthing human impulses and motives within a social context. For, it is urgent to remember that awareness of the strains within the social fabric is implicit in Gadgil's stories. In this context I venture to put forward a theory which may be incidentally considered. I propose to say that the short story as a form is itself limited so far as the reflection of vast social movements is concerned. In the literature of the West one sees it as a bye-product of its leading exponents' output of fiction. The novel has both the physical compass and the stylistic character to suit the depiction of a society on the move. If this suggestion is supported, then our task becomes easy; we can just wait and pray for the novelist to arise who will be another Tolstoy or Pasternak or Camus. Already glimmerings of this hope are discernible in the work of E. V. Joshi, Sharadchandra Muktibodh, the band of younger novelists and of S. N. Pendse by implication. I qualify the reference to Pendse thus, because the social scene is very much alive in his novels and it is nobody's business to charge him with neglect of contemporaneity. In an introspective mood, Gadgil has recently been urging his colleagues to develop wider interests, to acquire the dimensions of philosophy and politics and to hearken to social promptings. He has said this more pointedly in the context of the so-called 'rural' short story writers, though he means to apply the rule to all creative writers, of prose as well as verse.

I may passingly refer to the role criticism has played in clarifying his social context for the creative writer. In the early period of the resurgence of the short story, poetry and the novel, it stuck to a groove, undertaking fine analysis of these forms mainly from the point of view of style, indulging in such barren discussions as those of the relationship between style and content, the role of imagery, etc. etc. Indirectly, in such a work of scholarship as 'Sahityache Mandand', as also in his early critical writings, Gadgil broke new ground. In the first book, a collection of critical assessments of established Marathi classics, he does provide a historical perspective of the kind which is essential in measuring the progressive relationship of literature and socio-political development. Marxist criticism has flowed rather feebly over the years, and in its early days has erred in putting Gadgil in the dock and glorifying Gokhale for his 'humanity'. As for the new generation neither the Marxists nor the aggressively literary critics have had any time to consider its work. One continues to mention the work of Ranjit Desai or Shankar Patil in subdued tones; so oppressive is the prestige that still surrounds their worthy predecessors. No doubt the absence of worthwhile critics in their own generation is somewhat responsible for this situation of unrecognised merit or, rather, unassessed achievement. A writer like Gadgil, on such firm ground in both creative and critical writing, is yet to arise in the new generation.

III

The lack of physical consolidation that one sees in the creative writing of the generation that followed the pioneers of the new short story and in the critical assessment of this effort is in distinct contrast to the fortunes of the big four. As if scholarly appreciation of the younger writers was not the need of the day, we discovered amongst us half-baked and adolescent critics, or rather reviewers trying to present an organised front. The Beat

Generation that we see in the U.S. has no parallel at all in Marathi literature. Every sane student of literature also agrees that the term 'Beat' itself is rather arbitrary, although it must be noted that it is more so in the case of the so-called Angry Young Men of modern British literature, for near about San Francisco there is a recognisable group of artists, poets and novelists which is bound by similar creative urges and social habits and which has come to be known as the Beat Generation. The few 'Beats' that we might have amongst ourselves warrant no serious consideration in the field of literature, both critical and creative. It is none of our business if their modes of dress and their manners are moulded, after a fashion, with an Allen Ginsberg in view.

What matters to our discussion is: does this small and barely discernible group represent a timely assault on respectability of a type of which earlier writers fought shy? It must be remembered that, within the considerations of literature itself, Gadgil and his contemporaries did sport a distinct non-conformism. Like their awareness of the social reality, however, this attitude, too, is implicit rather than explicit. But it would be going too far to say that this non-conformism amounted to a total disownment of values and a rejection of personality itself. Far from it, not only does even a so-called cynic like Gadgil and a pessimist like Mardhekar possess a sense and a scale of values, but it is their great achievement that there was an instinctive correspondence between their literary values and their moral or philosophical values. There is certainly a difference of degree in Mardhekar's philosophical and political commitment as seen in his poetry and his few novels and that of Gadgil as expressed in his short stories. But, firstly, there is no reason why any philosophical belief should preponderate and weigh over their creative effort and, secondly, there is no reason why it should act as the first premise of which the literary product is the syllogistic conclusion. To put it simply, every writer of fiction need not be a Camus

or a Sartre; he can certainly afford to follow the pattern of a number of other novelists and short story writers who are content to paint the life around them—sometimes with a show of apparent listlessness, sometimes with a mixture of cynical candour and predilection for amorality and yet, sometimes, like readable Soviet writers, as dour documentors of the immediate reality. Now we may return to Allen Tate and quote him from days when the writer was very much worried as to the need or otherwise of commitment to the struggle against the Fascists. Opening his essays, 'The Man of Letters in the Modern World', Tate says forthrightly: The man of letters 'must do first what he had always done: he must recreate for his age the image of man, and he must propagate standards by which other men test that image, and distinguish the false from the true.' He goes on to elaborate the norm which should be accepted in discovering the writer's responsibility in a world which is alarmingly open to the influence of mass communication media. And as if he were presaging Gadgil's favourite argument, Tate says in the course of this discussion, 'While the politician, in his cynical innocence, uses society, the man of letters disdainfully, or perhaps absent-mindedly, withdraws from it: a withdrawal that few persons any longer observe, since withdrawal has become a social convention of the literary man, in which society, insofar as it is aware of him, expects him to conduct himself.' For the writers of the forties and the fifties this should provide a convenient instrument of defence, but it must be remembered that the politicians had in no way taken hold of our society before Independence; or rather, if they had, then we were part of that society because we shared the common struggle for Independence with our politicians many of whom did retain a vast amount of intellectual integrity. Even today we cannot say, in spite of the distinct incursion of the State into cultural and literary matters, that we as writers are in competition with the politicians. On one point there certainly

can be agreement and that is, at no stage in our history of the last six decades had we writers reached the end of our tether and been prompted to withdraw in disgust from the social and political scene. All that we can maintain, for the sake of argument, is that we saw it as part of our literary vocation to keep ourselves independent of the temporary significance of public events. As a sentient creature endowed with an existence in the very midst of a socio-political milieu no writer of any time can fail to react to the larger movement of men and ideas that goes on around him. It is worth noting that, while asserting the independence of the writer and his fidelity to his vocation, Allen Tate takes Ezra Pound to task not because he chose to broadcast on behalf of the Fascists but because he indulged in an activity which, by its very nature, was alien to the integrity of the writer's chosen mission. He criticises the wartime activities of Archibald MacLeish, albeit conducted on the other side of the fence, for the same reasons. Tate's view may be thought to be rather extreme and believers in socialist realism will be justified in calling him a pacifist heretic, or even a henchman of the dictators; but to my mind he does succeed

in drawing the fine line between a creative writer who is committed to himself and one who is committed to an ideology outside himself. I know that this is a matter which encourages fierce discussion, especially when we come to the role of a writer and his freedom of ideological commitment as a citizen, but I would rather leave this end of the general theme untouched for it does not centrally approach the scope of this paper. As for the expected and unexpected Beats, let us remember that the American Beats were reacting against the extreme mechanisation of civic life which they believed to have corrupted all creative urges among individuals enmeshed by the daily manifestations of that life. Most Beats dress normally and work in offices on week-days and indulge in Bohemian outbursts only during week-ends. Also, they take their writing and their painting pretty seriously. None of our alleged Marathi Beats shows promise of conforming to this requirement, and hence they may at the most be called non-conformists twice removed from the central core of contemporary literature. As for the Marathi writer's commitment to anything other than his creative temperament, the situation is still very fluid and none too alarming.

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Literature and State Patronage in India

M. GOPALAKRISHNA ADIGA

LITERARY patronage has been a part of our tradition and the courtier-poet was the order of the day for ages. Even so, there have been in this country poets, however small in number, who refused to bow to any earthly patron. Although our first, and perhaps the greatest Kannada poet, Pampa of the 10th century, was willing to compromise his artistic independence to the extent of glorifying his patron Arikesari by comparing him with Arjuna throughout his epic poem "Vikramarjuna Vijaya", neither our Naranappa nor Harihara who came later would dedicate their works to any mortal, however highly placed or to any mortal institution, however exalted. Still, the latter type was the exception while the former was the rule. This was due not so much to any defect in the character of our ancient poets as to their general attitude to poetic creation. That attitude to literature and patronage began with Kalidasa and has continued up to modern times. It was only for a few mystic or religious poets that poetry was not a means to some worldly end such as money, entertainment or fame. After the splendid and epoch-making achievements of Valmiki and Vyasa, poetry was on the whole relegated to the position of a craft, a social act, or a literary skill in which only a part of the inner being could be employed. Very few of our poets considered their creative activity as embodying their own experience or as a means to self-realization. As their attitude was substantially more social than individual the problem of freedom as the essential condition for creative activity could not have bothered them much. But the situation is entirely different today, due both to the changed view of literary

creativity, and the all-pervasive power and influence of the modern state.

I should like to base my observations on two fundamental criteria of creative activity: that the most essential character of literature is to be true to experience, which requires as a precondition freedom from any external authority mundane or spiritual and from passions and prejudices that tend to distort the image of life reflected in the mind; and, secondly, that literary creation is an end in itself, an activity sufficiently self-justified to require no extra-literary vindication. Of course I realize that there will always be different kinds of writers with different degrees of personal and artistic integrity. But the pity is that, because perhaps of our traditional subservience to authority even the best minds engaged in literary creation do not seem to feel that to compromise their creative freedom would undermine the literary values which we have learnt to prize in recent times as a consequence of the impact of the liberal values of the West on our national life. The urgent problem today is to make writers in general aware of what is at stake. When there is all-round debasement of taste, disparagement of values and disintegration of life, the creative writer at least should stand by and uphold the highest human values and try to embody them in his work. It becomes his duty to stake everything to preserve those values which alone can give any meaning to his work.

What we find in our country today is a sorry state of moral chaos where in no branch of life are we insisting on objective standards of impartial assessment. The whole atmosphere is poisoned by the worst kind of pragmatic cynicism expressing itself as an unscrupulous

pursuit of self-interest in the most sordid manner. It seems as though the whole nation has made up its mind not to think on its own but be guided by slogans, half-truths and make-believe. No intellectual currents disturb the age-old stagnant waters. Truth and justice have fallen victims to the most vicious type of careerism parading as love of people, of community, language or country. No person, problem or issue or work is judged on its merits, objectively, scientifically; instead, we have judgements based on such irrational grounds as casteism, groupism or patriotism. Democracy is surely the best form of government that any nation could have in the context of modern industrial civilization. But we have done nothing for the last fifteen years to make the spirit of democracy take root in our country except flaunt its outward show to the world. Therefore all the uglier features of democracy which could be restrained only by a proper recognition of the inequality of intellect, merit and achievement, are spreading confusion and poison everywhere. As most of the important positions of life and state are now occupied by upstarts of the weakest moral calibre, the best and noblest are not only disregarded but actively suppressed as potential enemies. This is the context in which we have to view the effect of state patronage on literature.

Though there is a respectable body of modern literature in all the Indian languages, we have failed to establish any critical standards. This makes an objective assessment of literary works very nearly impossible at present. The little criticism we have had has been vitiated by moral cowardice, the critical judgement adjusted to the demands of friendship and mutual benefit, to fear of authority and dictates of prudence. This lack of objective critical standards in the literary world has helped the writer-politician to lord it over the writers, confuse the general public and blackmail the state and make it yield to him and his henchmen. Ignoring the fundamental need for objective critical

standards, and fired by idealistic dreams and superficially-formed good intentions, our state under the inspiration of a heroic dreamer, has been taking on the role of universal benefactor to everyone in the country. That this paternal attitude on the part of the state goes against the very grain of democracy is forgotten in the befogging zeal to bring down heaven within the shortest possible time and with the least possible work. But good intentions proverbially lead to hell.

This solicitude of the state to foster and fondle writers and encourage and inspire literature can only bring disaster upon creative writing in this country. Such solicitude has manifested itself in various ways both at the centre and the different state capitals. Our present rulers though they owe their existence to democracy, act as though they were the natural heirs to the old Rajas and Nabobs in their attitude to writers and artists in general. They invite the writers to seek patronage and most of us have been only too ready to pay homage at the shrine of authority. The working of the Sahitya Akademi which has been established with very laudable motives, shows how state patronage works. The Akademi finds itself helpless before the hard realities of political life such as lack of integrity, exploitation of caste and group loyalties, personal factors and unashamed pursuit of self-interest even by most of the elderly writers of undoubted merit. It is a very sad commentary on our general moral standards that no principle could stand up against the lure of money. In this context the Akademi has been dangling before writers, who might otherwise have been innocently active, temptations of various kinds. There has been a rush to get contracts from the Akademi to translate books from other languages into one's own language. Among the conditions for selecting writers to translate, ability to do a good job has been assigned the last place. Every member in the local advisory committee has his own nominees, in addition to offering his own invaluable

services for the purpose. More than this, the Akademi Award (whose worth is not really more than 5000 Rupees) has become literally the bone of contention among writers in all Indian languages. In a poor country like ours this sum is not negligible, and so we have the sad spectacle of even our most spiritual writers fired with the noble aspiration of receiving this award. The story of how persistently extra-literary methods are employed to wrest it would make amazing reading.

The Akademi Award might not have been really harmful if it were possible to decide the worth of a book objectively and if the Akademi were thus able to select the really best book when awarding the prize. But even when judgement is impartial, many a time a really good book, a great original work of art which by its very nature throws a challenge to conventional literary values and stock responses, fails to earn recognition. In the history of literature few really great works of art have gained immediate recognition, but our Akademi would decide the worth of books published during the course of only the last two years and declare a particular work as the best and deserving of the prize. Can anything be more futile than this attempt? In such cases even when it is possible to secure the services of impartial critics, they take the safer course of choosing a mediocre work written on conventional lines rather than one that offers challenge. Even so, if the worth of books were decided, however unsatisfactorily, according to objective standards of judgement, it would do more good than harm. For the very effort to assess merit impartially would help the development of a critical atmosphere, however wrong a particular judgement might be. But unfortunately today in India and certainly in my part of the country it is impossible to get even half a dozen critics and men of letters who could judge a work impartially—forgetting the author and concentrating only on the work. If by rare good luck a few critics of this calibre are available, they cannot

get into or stay long on the advisory bodies dominated by powerful writer-politicians. With these advisory bodies as they are today it is the author, his name, his fame, his caste, his power, his position and the influence he can wield that really count. A third rate or fourth rate work of an author in his dotage—an author who certainly deserves much more than a prize for his life-work is invariably selected by his friends on these advisory committees in which every member is a candidate for the honour. Old writers who are already dead as writers have made a final effort to come back to life in a new work specially designed and produced for the award. The advisory committee itself is essentially a mutual benefit society. It is a very sad thing that our older writers who adorn these bodies do not even have the minimum decency to keep out of them at least when their own works are being considered for the award. What a strange sense of moral uprightness we observe when the author himself is a party to conferring the prize on himself! It is true, however, and good too, that some excellent writers have been able to secure the award. But the Sahitya Akademi, instead of telling the truth that the prize is for the writer's life-work, would perpetuate the lie that the particular work that is selected for the prize is the best book of the previous two years. In most cases the book selected for the award can never be described as the best of the books published during the period. The effect of calling a mediocre book great, under official auspices, is to confer greatness on small things and create false standards in the minds of ordinary people regarding the worth of books. And the mischief is sure to increase as time passes. Now we have at least the small consolation that in most cases the prizes are given to really gifted, old and honoured writers. When their list is exhausted and we shall have no choice but come to younger writers, the real horror will manifest itself. For the older writers at least grew up in an atmosphere where there was no such

temptation as state awards, while the younger generation has been taught to have an eye always on the award and use all resources both literary and extra-literary to secure it. A glance at the books recommended for consideration is enough to make us see how things are shaping. The danger, however, is not that a spurious writer and a counterfeit work may get the award but that even a genuine writer of real worth may be tempted to compromise his work for the sake of the award. This is the surest way to make the writer lose his essential inner freedom and convert his work into a trade commodity. Such deflections have already started.

Literary prizes and awards are not given in any free country by the state. They are always made by private bodies far beyond the reach of interested legislators pulling strings to secure a prize or recognition for their own man. Even private bodies may fail to do what is right and just, but the damage done thereby would be less, as it never can give, as the state can, the seal of national greatness to a work of indifferent worth. If our state has any concern for freedom and the real growth of literature, it would be better if it wound up the Akademi or restricted its work to getting important books on science and philosophy translated into various modern languages. To attempt to do anything more in the present situation will certainly stand in the way of developing a healthy tradition in literature and creative activity in our country.

So much for national patronage. What is happening at the state level? This solicitude for the good of writers is being expressed by the Mysore State Government in an even cruder form. It distributes prizes every year to the so-called best books in every branch of literature. It is so economical and so careful not to spoil the writers too much that it has limited the prize money to a mere 500 Rupees. It is so chivalrous that it awards special prizes for women writers. One hopes that very soon we may have prizes

reserved for backward classes and for scheduled castes and tribes. How else can the government achieve social justice through literature? The most interesting point, however, is that the Mysore Government in its high regard for writers calls for entries from them for the disbursement of prizes. They are asked to send copies of their books published during the course of the year to the Department of Culture. The government then decides through a committee nominated by itself which of the books thus submitted deserve prizes. It does not care to consider books which are not duly submitted. It cannot be bothered with the few writers who would not enter into this competition. The pity is that most writers do send in their entries without stopping for a moment to consider whether it might not be below the dignity of a writer to submit his book as if he were competing for a school-prize. While the government is quite sure that when it is a question of money a writer is bound to put up with any insult, the writers do not seem to mind insults so long as they may give birth to a prize. Moreover, when the results of this literary competition are announced, it is stated that the prize-winning books are the best written and published during the course of the year. Thus the state shows no regard for truth as its declared plan is not to consider *all* the books published during the period but only those that were sent for consideration. The most bewildering aspect of these disgraceful goings-on is that no serious protest has come from the writers. Even established writers of very high standing in the literary world do not hesitate to send entries and grab prizes. How is it they fail to understand that here is no honour but only charity? Or is it taken for granted that no dishonour is too painful when it is for a handful of lucre?

This vulgar attitude on the part of the government and writers has resulted in a number of ills far outweighing the little monetary benefit a needy writer might have derived from it here and there. As these prizes are awarded not according

to any critical standards but strictly on such extra-literary considerations as parity and equity among the various dominant classes, these annual bestowals have been working against the establishment of any serious standards in literary criticism. As no objective standards are insisted upon, it prompts writers to use political and caste influence. It has given rise to a mushroom growth of all sorts of poems, novels, plays, essays and what not, written just for getting the prize. Written in a hurry and printed in a greater hurry these books, most of which are not even worth the paper they are printed on, keep the printing-presses busy during the last months of the year. So now we have a new class of hack writers, the prize-writers, in addition to the text-book-writers who have been thriving on a similar business for years now. It might be thought that a book should be before the public for some time and the best minds should work on it, views being publicly stated and discussed, before a critical opinion could be formed on it. But no such thing is presumed necessary by the state. For one book is as good as another, and for the state the only thing to decide is to whom the prizes should be given. The criterion really followed by the committee nominated by the government is that no major caste should grumble and agitate that its authors are being neglected, and that no questions should be raised in the legislature regarding its even-handed bounty to all castes. Nobody of course, ever raises any objection to the merits of the books adjudged best, or questions the very basis whereby these prizes are awarded.

The best writing, of course, is always done in seclusion with little regard for earthly profit. Therefore these state prizes or awards would not harm a really gifted writer of the first rank, who would scorn to curry favour or submit an entry for a prize. But this kind of temptation is ruinous to the second rate writers who may once in a while write really good and worthwhile things in an atmosphere

free from such temptations if they keep true to their own experience. Such writers as these always form the majority and to corrupt them is to corrupt the whole literary atmosphere. These middling writers to whom literary creation is not a sacred means to self-fulfilment, have yielded and are sure to yield to such temptations. Then their anxiety will be not to find out how best they might say what they want to say, but to discover what topics and what manner might best please the judges. The result has been a plethora of books reflecting and extolling the different fads at different times of the ruling class.

It is true that even in such advanced countries as the United Kingdom there are writers actively engaged in the industry of producing books with a popular appeal. They make no bones about giving people what they want—crime fiction and magazine romance, but would not care to pose as creators of literature. For they get what they want, money in abundance, and do not give a damn whether they are considered men of letters or not. In such a country true literature is sharply distinguished from merely popular writing. But in our country all that is written is supposed to be literature and every word-monger can easily pass for a renowned man of letters by sheer industry, output and age. Now that the prospect of winning a prize and making a little money is before him he tries desperately to prove that he is a great writer so that he may get the prize, or vice versa. For to bestow state prizes and awards on such writers is as good as putting the seal of greatness on mediocrity, counterfeit or worse. In a country where to be recognized, approved and commended by the ruler has been for ages the seal of greatness, the mischief done by state patronage now under democracy cannot be exaggerated. Though the form of government has changed, the psychology of patronage in the rulers and of subservience in the writers has not changed. I have read in the newspaper of the Chief Minister of Mysore saying

that writers and artists need not worry about losing royal patronage as the new governments are ready to extend the same to them in the name of the people. Writers and artists also again and again complain and criticize the government for its neglect of art and literature and demand more and more patronage. With the power of the state increasing from year to year politically and economically and with a people looking up to the state for every improvement in their material conditions, the danger of a totalitarian state suddenly overtaking us is not just a fiction of the panic-stricken mind. And the subservience of the writers is the first aim of such a state. Writers can ignore this impending disaster only at their own peril. The habit of seeking favours from authority must by the very law of its nature end in the destruction of freedom and in all of us becoming paid servants of the state furthering the cause of a determined clique at the top hugging their own absolute power and nourishing the myth of their infallibility.

Therefore if our state is sincere in its solicitude for the good of literature the best it can do is to leave the writers alone. Let the writers fend for themselves, seeking sustenance from the people or go under. Let the state concentrate its welfare activity on providing the country with excellent education in which all the faculties of the mind can properly be trained and developed. For a good education is the only way to breed more and more cultured people who will find pleasure and enlightenment in the best literary works. Literature can thrive only when it has a discriminating audience demanding the highest standards. The main thing both from the point of view of democracy and of education, is to foster critical intelligence in the people. For this purpose, let the state concentrate on a conducting its affairs on non-communal, non-sectarian, scientific lines for the good of all.

But in this regard the responsibility of the writers is even greater. Such of us as

realize the importance of our work and vow to stand undeflected in our devotion to truth and artistic integrity against all these temptations have to bestir ourselves and do something to safeguard our freedom and provide our work with an economic base. For it is very difficult to maintain freedom and integrity without some sort of material and emotional backing. The hard way of destitution and neglect, though inevitable at times, need not be the only solution. The psychology of martyrdom, however heroic and adorable, is not conducive to human dignity and civilization. It is possible only in an uncivilized society and degrades most of its members. Therefore we have to think of methods and modes of action that would enable even the most heterodox rebel to do his work as he likes and feels right.

First let it be clearly recognized that creative activity is the activity of an individual done in loneliness where he confronts himself face to face. No co-operation from others can be of real help in writing a poem or a novel. For creative purposes, then, he cannot join others, but can he not do so for mutual benefit and aid? To achieve this, writers have to come together bearing two points in mind. Firstly, if our aim is to be true to our own light and experience, any patronage from any quarter can only impede the growth of this new spirit of truth and freedom. Secondly, we must remember that no writer can claim recognition and honour from the world as a matter of right, because the value of his work cannot be accepted or established immediately. That is why most serious writers in India today do not and cannot depend upon their creative activity for their livelihood. They do something that is recognized as really useful by society, and write perhaps because they feel that the best in them could express itself only thus. In the present circumstances in India the best way for the writers is to earn their living somehow so that their creative activity may be kept free, sacred and inviolable.

But the human problem of the writer's welfare still remains, and something should be done towards solving it. A solution has to be found consistent with the dignity of the writer and the spirit of democracy. Something could certainly be done if writers ceased to seek patronage from the state and learned to depend upon themselves, learning to cooperate with one another. Only through such cooperative effort the pitiable state of the poor and neglected writer could be improved a little without hurting his self-respect and dignity. For the suffering and helplessness of the writer is as real as those of any other poor section of society. His condition is really worse because he is seldom good at domestic economy. A true artist has always scorned money though he has always needed it. It is impossible for him to save even if he could. If a sudden misfortune should overtake him, where should he seek sympathy and succour without degrading himself to the level of a beggar? It is very necessary to provide him with some sense of security regarding the future of his family, some assurance that his children will not be abandoned, his widow not starve and he himself not be allowed to die in sickness, want and misery. This could be done through the founding of writers' cooperatives at all important places with the sole object of promoting writers' welfare. Under such cooperatives, writers' Benefit Funds could be raised and utilized to help them in times of utter need. Each writer should contribute a small part of his income to the Fund so that none of them may feel alone and isolated entirely from his fellow-beings. There is no doubt that a feeling of comparative security would create an atmosphere of freedom in which even writers of moderate courage and self-respect could stand up against the temptations of authority. This would also bring the writers together and promote a sense of comradeship. For the best that a writer can expect from society today is a tolerant indifference while active hostility from the many may also be his lot. The only consolation against this can

come from cooperation among writers, cooperation for material ends, for emotional release and a sense of common destiny. And this has to be taken up seriously and done early before complete intellectual disintegration takes place and a totalitarian regime overtakes us.

Wherever possible the cooperative societies may undertake publication and sale of books. For one of the most urgent needs of today is to provide means for younger writers to publish their works. Our publishers are so cautious and so timid that they will not take even the slightest risk in their enterprises. Their only consideration is whether a particular book will sell or not. Therefore they are generally concentrating on novels of all sorts which have some demand from the public. Even then a really good novel may fail to secure a publisher if it is not from an established writer. Poetry, the short story, the essay or a critical work cannot find a publisher unless they are from renowned authors. It is surprising how easily they forget that it is only by providing a chance to a young talented writer that he can, in course of time, become established. Meanwhile our younger writers of talent and imagination cannot even have the natural satisfaction of having their work published and set before the public eye. They have to find what satisfaction they may in getting some space in weeklies or monthlies. In these circumstances many young writers of undoubted merit and promise remain long unpublished. Some of them take a loan, publish their work and face all the financial risks of their venture. Sometimes, a few friends put their slender resources together to bring a work to light. The only way out is a cooperative effort on the part of writers to see that the younger members of their fraternity get a chance to make their mark in the literary world. This is the crying need of the hour, but will the writers rise to the occasion? For this is the the only effective measure against the evils of state patronage and for the preservation of the writer's freedom,

A Model for Indian History

KASTUR CHAND LALWANI

THE term 'history of India' is usually used to mean the history of a vast geographical expanse from the foot of the Himalayas to the Indian ocean which we have known as a single political unit since our school-days; but to our remote forefathers the expression must have sounded a misnomer, since, to them, 'India' must have been not a country but a continent, not a single political unit but a group of contending states, not one culture but a conglomeration of many. Even when the Iranians and the Greeks referred to 'India', surely they did not include in it either the Gangetic plane or the Deccan; their India was the land of the Indus river and its great tributaries. The Aryans had carved out a portion of this sub-continent for their settlement; this gradually came to be known as the *Aryavarta* or the land of the Aryans. *Aryavarta* never included the Deccan nor the far eastern provinces and was, therefore, by no means synonymous with our notion of India. To the Muslim invaders, *Hindustan* was the land of the Hindus or the infidels—a religious notion pure and simple. Even to the people of the Deccan, down to the close of the Mughal Rule, *Hindustan* meant the country that lay to the north of the Vindhya. With the gradual political unification of this sub-continent from the middle of the 18th century, it gradually became a single country with one name and one administration. The benefit of a unitary form of government for the whole country continued from the middle of the 19th century till the end of the First Great War. Barring this very short but remarkable epoch, when we can speak of a 'history of India' in the sense of the history of a

single country united under a common political system, the history of India over the vast expanse of time has remained more akin to the history of Europe than to that of any single European State. To the 'classical' man in India, or even to the 'medieval' man, the history of India could not, therefore, have the same significance as it has for us today. For, ours is a new notion of Indian history that we have acquired only during the last two centuries.

European scholars, following the path of chronology, laid the ground-work of Indian history, and historical research in India since then has been almost exclusively devoted to the discovery of fresh material that simply goes to strengthen the chronological superstructure that already exists. By virtue of this 'ant industry', historical scholarship in this country has, through individual as well as corporate efforts, added voluminous material to the existing stock. What is, however, lacking in this enterprise is that in its blind adherence to chronology, it has hardly sought a glimpse of the historical process operative here since the dawn of history. Chronology is hardly capable of throwing light on that. India is not simply a continent; it is a continent where world-transforming forces have periodically burst upon the scene: Aryan, Islamic, and finally European. So very complex has been the entire course of Indian history that a chronological approach cannot provide a full view of it. Besides, chronology cannot impart life to history and thereby give it meaning for today. Hence even though we claim we have a history, we cannot say that history with us has been a living

thing, since we have never approached it as a living object, and we have never tried to take lessons from it, so that we are as much history-less today as we were at any time in the past.

On the other hand, if in the past we sided too much with chronology and failed to seek patterns which would give life and meaning, in recent years we have swung to the opposite extreme. Prompted by considerations of national pride, we seem to have mortgaged the future with distortion. Chronology has a positive value upto a certain stage but distortion is positively harmful not only in putting wrong and motivated interpretations but also in misguiding the people and thereby wrecking the foundation of historical research. It was in the midst of the chaos created by Romanticism in Europe that Ranke declared his intention to adopt an objective approach, merely to show 'how things actually were'—*Er will bloss zeigen, wie es eigentlich gewesen*. It might well be argued that for Indian historical scholarship also, only a similar objective approach may be recommended at the present moment so that it may exclusively devote itself to the propagation of truth and nothing but truth. In these days of political chauvinism, however, the chances of distortion are very great. Leave aside the interpretation of the vast range of Indian history, even in interpreting isolated events, the historian's balance is likely to be disturbed under political pressure. Take, for instance, an isolated event like the Mutiny (1857) on which a fairly large volume of literature already exists presenting both sides of the medal: of late a letter of the Rani of Jhansi could be 'manufactured' and a diary of Azimullah could be written by a 'modern hand', simply to establish what R. C. Mazumdar would purport to call the politician's thesis that 'in 1857 an organised attempt was made by the natural leaders of India to combine themselves into a single command with the sole object of driving out the British power from India in order that a single unified and politically free and sovereign

state may be established'. If this be the attitude with regard to isolated events, it may be imagined how much more distortion is possible in interpreting the entire range of Indian history. In existing circumstances, therefore, it is Ranke rather than Danilevsky-Spengler-Toynbee that should be the source of inspiration to the Indian historian so that the latter, incapable or incapacitated, may at least pass the material on intact to posterity so that it may, from the detachment caused by a distance of time, raise up an impartial structure of the history of this country. At the present moment, for circumstances probably unavoidable, a dispassionate construction of history is becoming a problem to historical scholarship in this country. However, rather than leave false models unchallenged, an attempt may be made to suggest a true one.

The known history of India runs into slightly more than two thousand five hundred years, starting its career about the time when Buddha was indicating in the eastern part of India a new way of life based on 'reason'. It was probably a period when the curtain was being drawn everywhere in the world on the 'creative' phase, when mass inertia had become consolidated and the great masters were preaching reason and moderation in the face of a growing, active resistance. The period prior to this, in Indian history at least, is 'pre-historic', for which no historical reconstruction is possible in our sense of the term. Not that this earlier period has not left some written evidence about itself, but it is baffling for the narrow purpose of the chronologist. For the prehistoric man in this country at least was never bothered by a time-sense, and hence has preserved neither dates nor names, the main object of interest to a chronologist.

Much of the prehistoric literature is now available through English translations, mostly the work of European Indologists.¹ The knowledge of the Indian historian about this prehistoric period is derived

mainly through these translations. It is, again, the European scholars that have done the pioneering work in making these texts available, spurred on by their habitual exclusive concentration on chronology. Unfortunately, however, their pioneering effort has remained the only one, and when the Indian scholars took over, they made little attempt to open fresh grounds. Hence Indian history to this day remains a drab account of dynastic rises and falls, isolated wars, victories and defeats, from which no conclusion has been drawn. In other words, Indian history has produced no 'theory' of its own. Even the attempt of Nirad Choudhury, the 'unknown Indian', to present a theory of Indian history as an appendix to his *Autobiography*, opened no new ground in historical scholarship in this country.

Merely to raise the question of a 'theory' of Indian history raises another: must the history of a country have an underlying theory? If the answer be in the affirmative, then there will develop so many theories round the histories of so many countries that the very purpose of theory-building will be nullified. Even historiographers have not tackled this question nation-wise. Nevertheless, broad general theories may be built up when the unit under observation is not a nation or a country but a group that is ethnologically distinct enough to constitute a sufficient unit for the purpose of generalisation. For, when out of a large number of such units extant, a particular unit is marked out by Destiny to grow, it grows no matter whether it is in the Nile Delta or the Indus valley, in the rugged mountains of the Balkans or the desert of Arabia. Once the group starts growing, the rest of its career follows a set pattern. India, however, is not one culture; it is an arena where a number of them have clashed. Nor is it a country,

but a continent where a number of countries have always existed, sometimes under one loose central government, but more often under separate independent governments. Hence the usual models that explain the life-history of a culture or a country are not applicable to our own case, and must be replaced by a more suitable one.

For the purpose of providing a model for our own history, we cannot go earlier than three thousand B.C., which, by common consent of the historians, is the approximate date when the Indus valley civilisation was flourishing. We know nothing about its genesis nor do we know at what date it had started growing (which must have been several centuries earlier) or how it had reached the stage when it was swallowed up by Destiny. Only this much is apparent: that somehow this civilisation went under the sand, despite its elaborate drainage arrangements and constructional skill, owing obviously to its failure to respond successfully to the frequent and vigorous challenges of geography. Only its skeleton has been discovered in the grave several layers beneath the ground. When, after a long trek, the Aryans reached the land of the Seven Rivers, — even here the date is a matter of surmise — the major part of this civilisation was already dead and the Aryans could obtain almost vacant possession of this region where they must themselves have lived for several centuries before moving further east. According to R. P. Chanda,² the people of the Indus valley were driven out by a new group of people who had come from the Pamirs. It is, however, not known whether the Pamirian pressure preceded or followed the disintegration of the Indus valley civilisation. Whatever might have been the actual process, — a pressure from Nature or from man — the fact is almost certain that these prehistoric people, identified as the Dravidians, migrated *en masse* to the South in order to preserve their culture-elements from total extinction. The Aryans on their arrival had to

¹ A comprehensive list of these translations is given in an appendix to the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan publication, *The Vedic Age* (George Allen & Unwin Ltd.)

² Chanda, R. P., *Indo-Aryan Races*, pp. 33-38.

fight a number of skirmishes here and there with the remnants of the Dravidian population in the region, and with others described as the *Dāsas* and the *Asuras*, but there is nothing to indicate a long-drawn battle between the incoming and outgoing populations. The implications are that the major part of the Dravidian migration to the South must have been completed before the advent of the Aryans. According to the Dravidian standard, the Aryans, being an agrarian people, must have been less civilised with a lower standard of living. But they must have carried portions of the Vedas from outside before they reached the Indus valley. Scholars like the late B. G. Tilak have discovered four distinct stages in the development of the Vedic literature, and all that we can say with certainty is that only the last stage of the Vedic literature, which must have lasted for several centuries before the birth of Gautama, had been composed in the Indus valley. For, those who discover the origin of the Vedas prior to 1500 B.C. and insist that these must have been written in their entirety in the Indus valley region, cannot explain the inconsistency how two civilisations, one Aryan and another Dravidian, could have simultaneously existed in the same region and at the same time without knowing each other. Such a construction might have been plausible several decades back when nothing was known of the flourishing Dravidian civilisation of the region, but now with its grave dug out we cannot say that the Aryans composed all their Vedas in the Indus valley region. Still less plausible is the claim of some Indian scholars that the Indus valley civilisation was the creation of the Aryan peoples. The mere fact that the script used by the Mahenjodaro-Harappan people is

totally different from that used by the Aryans should be enough to dispel such a fantastic claim. The fact is that the Aryans who had developed a greater part of the Vedas during a *Völkerwanderung* and had carried them as sacred texts, reached the Indus valley at a time when the Dravidian civilisation there was already in decline. So the difficulties from both natural and human agencies encountered by them in this country were considerably less than those encountered by the Aryan peoples that had penetrated into the Balkan peninsula. As a result of their long trek over several thousand miles probably spread over a few centuries, even the Aryans migrating to India had lost their virility. The Vedic culture was probably in the last stages of development at the time of their settlement in this country, and a reaction had started against excessive ritualism before the birth of the Buddha, and that too within the pale of the Aryan settlement, from the eighth century B.C. or even earlier, in the philosophy of the Upanishads and the six systems of Indian *Darshan*.³ In this pre-Buddhistic reformation of the Aryan religion, the contribution and the influence of the remnants of the Dravidians must have been very significant. It was this reformation that became the spiritual forerunner of later 'Hinduism' which is distinctly separate from Vedic religion. Hindu culture must obviously have spent its childhood before the Christian era, enjoyed its noonday splendour during the days of the Imperial Guptas and steadily disintegrated after the sixth century A.D. Then followed, as R. C. Mazumdar has put it, 'the darkness of the long night, so far as Hindu civilisation is concerned, a darkness which envelops it even now.'

If Buddhism is not important as a reaction against Vedic culture, it is, however, significant for other reasons. For, with the Buddha in India, as with Socrates in Greece and Confucius in China, there started an emphasis on 'reason', not known in exactly the same sense before. For, did not the Buddha say: 'One must not accept

³ The word 'Philosophy' though widely used, does not convey the sense of the Indian synonym 'Darshan', which is much more than a mere intellectual speculation and is 'realisation' itself. 'Darshan' comes from the root 'Dris', which means 'to see'.

my law from reverence, but first try it as gold is tried by fire"? And the Buddha, like St. Paul and Muhammad at a later period, asked his disciples to 'go unto all lands and preach this gospel'. Despite all this, however, Buddhism could not become a serious rival to Hinduism, and, despite subsequent royal patronage⁴ on an extended scale, became extinct in the land of its birth. The significance of Buddhism, however, lay in a different sphere, viz., that it was only from the time of the Buddha that Indian history had its first great historical dynasties and political systems from outside the Aryan settlements. The first powerful state, an outcome of the Sisunaga enterprise, appeared at this time and its noted king, Bimbisara, was not only a contemporary but an important disciple of the Buddha. When the Aryans were thus busy in the Gangetic plane with a religious reformation, in the border province of Bihar, which was inhabited by people of mixed tribes, an empire developed, first under the Sisunagas, and then under the Nandas and the Mauryas, that was destined not only to bring about the political subordination of the Aryans, but also to play an important role in Indian history. During its best days, the Magadhan empire had political sovereignty over the Aryan domain. The political activity of the Aryans during these centuries must have been insignificant. Even during the *inter-regnum* between the decline of the Mauryas and the rise of the Guptas, the Aryans could not regain their political self; they only changed masters, —first, they took the Satvahanas and then the foreign groups, of which the most dominant were the Kushanas. Socially, however, the Aryans were still absorptive

with the consequence that all the foreign peoples who became politically supreme in north-western India found themselves swallowed up by Hindu society. But of political or military resistance offered by the Aryans, during the historical epoch, we know next to nothing, and although it is at present becoming a pet subject of the pseudo-historians in the reconstruction of Indian history on 'nationalistic' lines to build up a theory of 'resistance' in every epoch, historical records do not give support to any such construction. There were, of course, occasions of resistance, not from the Aryans of northern India, but from the non-Aryans of the South, and in these the name of the South Indian, Gautamiputra Satkarni stands without parallel. He called himself the 'destroyer' of the Sakas (the Scythians), of the Yavanas (the Greeks) and the Pahlavas (the Parthians); but so far as the Aryan north-west was concerned, it was reconciled to foreign domination for about four hundred years, from 40-30 B.C. to 320 A.D. Then came a sudden turning point in which the lead was taken by the Guptas who, strengthened by a number of matrimonial alliances with border peoples apparently non-Aryan, gave northern India the benefit of a unified administration from 320 A.D. to 467 A.D. The mission of the Guptas, like that of the Romans in Europe, was predominantly military. It is, however, not definitely known if the Guptas were of the Aryan, South Indian or mixed stock. But it must be said that during their administration, Hindu culture, as distinguished from the Vedic, flourished for the first and last time. The political disintegration of northern India started after 467 A.D. which the short-lived glory of Harsha could not prevent; but worse still, there started a cultural retrogression of Indian society from which it was never able to recover.

If, therefore, a theoretical model is to be provided for the course of Indian history, it must run on some such lines as indicated above. Taken as a whole, it must

⁴ Be it noted that these were either the non-Aryan monarchs of Magadha or the non-Indian monarchs of the Kushan dynasty that offered patronage to this non-Vedic non-Brahminical religion. The Dravidian contribution is significant not only in the transformation of the Vedic religion into Hinduism but also in the subsequent crusade against a dilapidated Buddhism led by Sankara.

be, not a story of genesis and growth, still less of a central continuous urge to look up through syntheses and renaissances from epoch to epoch, but one of decline from the very dawn of history. But in this decline, Indian society shows, unlike the Egyptian, the Babylonian or the Hellenic, a wonderful tenacity to drag on, imparting thereby a continuity to Indian history which is conspicuous by its

absence in every other case. This continuity, however, instead of being an asset, has in reality been a liability. At times, under foreign impact, as in the nineteenth century, Indian society did show some signs of pulsation, but it did not prove to be the vigorous looking up of a creative society. And yet Indian society is not dead; it is still in disintegration as it has been for more than a thousand years.

CURRENT POLITICS

Some Aspects of the Sino-Soviet Conflict

K. K. SINHA

I

WITH the beginning of open confrontation between the Chinese and the Soviet Communist parties, each trying to dominate over the other, albeit as yet only ideologically, a new phase in the world Communist movement and in the re-alignment of world forces has begun. It is therefore time to take stock of some of the most significant trends in the last few years within the Communist movement before we try to anticipate the future lines of development as a result of the impact of the now more open Sino-Soviet conflict.

The major subjective factor in the emergence of the conflict appears to be the temperamental dislike of each other between Mr. Khrushchev and Mr. Mao Tse-tung. They have not hit it off well in the past and now each of them is trying his best to knock the other off from his position of leadership in the Party of his country. Nothing less would seem to satisfy either of them, although neither has clearly indicated this 'minimum demand'. This personal conflict can easily be understood if one remembers that Mao Tse-tung is ideologically senior and his present stature is mainly of his own making, as he had to struggle against Stalin's wishes and efforts to make him subservient on several occasions over the decades during which Khrushchev was blindly and over-enthusiastically executing the orders of his infallible Guru. How can a man of

such a 'low calibre' and 'low record' be the leader of the world Communist Movement after Stalin, even threatening to guide and direct the Chinese Communist Party of Mao Tse-tung, while the latter is still alive? Is it not simply because he happens to be the head of the CPSU, which post he may have secured by all kinds of manipulation? This question of personal succession to the leadership of a world movement is not a small matter between individuals after the death of the Master. It cuts across national and state considerations. The 'best' man only, the man who has made some original contribution to the theory and practice of communism, the man whose personal record in the movement can be a shining example, should be chosen as the true successor; not the man who for entirely different considerations in the setting of the purely local situation of a particular Communist country may have been selected as the leader of that national party. But it did not happen like that. It was taken for granted that as the Soviet Party occupies the leading position in the movement, its leader would therefore lead the entire movement, irrespective of his personal background and competence. This may be so formally; but how can it be appreciated actually, emotionally, by those who have made far greater contribution to the cause and have shown far greater integrity and character?

Thus there is this unspoken contest

and conflict of succession in the world Communist movement which provides such great heat and tension and protractedness to the debate—more so because it has never been openly spelled out.

Closely related to this aspect of the approach and partly emerging as a corollary to it is the underlying conflict between Russian and Chinese (Han) chauvinism. In the Communist 'animal farm' the Russians and the Chinese are the two obvious big brothers. But which is the bigger brother? Evidently both of them are inclined to play the big brother to the bunch of little ones. For so long Moscow was playing the role exclusively, as it was there that the revolution succeeded first by historical accident. Now that there are two big brothers among the other little ones, the conflict is inevitable. Both Russia as well as China have been expansionists and imperialists by long historical tradition. After their respective revolutions the old 'greatness' is revived in their memories and while Russia under communism is enjoying an empire much larger than at any time under the Tsars, and has a greater influence in the comity of nations today, China under communism would naturally not like a place under the Russian umbrella and would dream of a modern Genghis Khan and create its own sphere of influence in Asia if not in the world.

Thus, while formal and written words of the controversy give one the overwhelming impression that the Sino-Soviet conflict is 'ideological', pertaining to and restricted to the limits of the theology of communism, the psychological motivations go far beyond and the images that nurture the impulses of the conflict are deeply historical and cultural as well as personal. Marxism is too narrow and rigid to adequately interpret these 'unexpected' contradictions in the Communist movement.

Let us examine one more major characteristic of the movement that emerges from a study of the last decade. Ever since 1917, the world Communist movement has

functioned like the solar system. That is, Moscow remained the converging centre of attraction and from it flowed rays of guidance and help. Any other independent Communist movement that could not be drawn into the main stream was soon ostracized and denigrated as pseudo-Communist, howsoever earnest and dedicated to the ideology its workers were. This centralisation was institutionalised by Lenin by the establishment of the Third International. Under Stalin the movement was further centralised, to such an extent that it became a mere apparatus of Moscow and for all practical purposes acted as the organ of the Foreign Affairs department of the Soviet State. The latter's interest and policy provided the *raison d'être* of the world Communist movement. For nearly three full decades the entire movement was thus brought within the control of a single grip as it were and manipulated by one single mind. If, for some reason, He neglected a certain sector of the movement, it was all in confusion and again His emissary would come and decide matters.

With the death of Stalin, the man behind the human—though dehumanised machine—was no longer available. Such an authoritarian—and consequently helpless—structure was bound to be unstable and it was inevitable that a degree of 'chaos' and 'instability' would follow. In the Soviet Union these did follow and ultimately a new equilibrium was created after a certain period of 'in-struggle'. A 'collective leadership' was formally announced and soon enough the new 'personality cult' emerged out of it. In Eastern Europe after several outbursts, such as in Hungary, Poland and East Germany, a delicate balance was re-established with the help of the Red Army and with the realisation among the ruling class that unless 'authority' establishes itself by sheer force, not only will the ruling elite of one small country be the loser but the entire set of rulers throughout the Communist world may be threatened. It was then indeed in the

interest of *all* Communists, irrespective of their differences *inter se*, to hang on to power together.

The Chinese, although living far to the east in another continent and extremely involved in their own problems, and having no previous record of interfering or advising in the affairs of Europe, played an extremely important role at this delicate stage in bringing about 'order' out of the erupting 'chaos' in Eastern Europe. They severely objected to Khrushchev's policy of 'unpersoning' Stalin and thus helping to remove the psychological lid of discipline based on fear and awe and mystic reverence of the Great Leader of Communism, for they thought this single act would set in motion a whole train of emotional and intellectual forces that had remained under the deep freeze of the unconscious in the millions of people including of course members of the Communist Parties. The Chinese were very right. Though Stalin was a Russian and had on several occasions placed obstacles on the path of the Chinese Revolution, the Stalin mystique and the cult and myth connected with his name were extremely essential to keep cohesion within the movement.

And again when the nine days of Budapest were literally shaking Moscow, it was Peking that persuaded Moscow to go back on its word and order the Red Army to crush the Hungarian Revolution ruthlessly.

Thus by these bold strokes Mao Tse-tung in far off Peking, which should traditionally have been a mere satellite revolving round Moscow, intervened and successfully influenced the radiating centre itself. These events by implication altered the psychological analogy of the solar system. Rays come not only from Moscow; they could also come from any of the other centres of Communist power. China had on other occasions strengthened the hands of Poland and East Germany against Moscow. Albania is of course another recent obvious example of an impudent satellite challenging Moscow

against which act the latter could not do much. Yugoslavia was ostracized and expelled from the Communist community by Stalin himself and subsequently it was successively welcomed back and rejected and wooed again. Castro's Cuba even tried to play off one big brother against another.

Thus we see that in the course of only ten years after Stalin the 'Communist empire' is converted into a sort of a 'Commonwealth of Communist States' with a much weaker centre at Moscow and with different degrees and shades of communism not only as ideals but also in terms of current policies. This growing pluralistic nature of the Communist world is one of the most significant characteristics of recent times—a 'degeneration', or an evolution, from the rigid, well-knit solar empire of the Communist Tsar. And this is becoming true not only in Communist States but also in Communist parties elsewhere—Italy, France, Indonesia, India, Cuba, New Zealand. Not only are the Communist regimes more flexible in relation to Moscow, the parties are also showing signs of independent reaction (compare the Italian CP's criticism of the Soviet official attitude to abstract art).

Another conclusion that can be drawn from the above analysis is that a new factor has emerged today, namely, that of 'the Communist public opinion'. In the past one had to impress only Stalin and waited nervously for his reaction. Now what is needed to influence Communist action in the movement is *not merely* what Khrushchev thinks or says but also how other leaders of the Communist world react; and Khrushchev himself is today substantially influenced by what these leaders say. This was never the case till 1953. (Not only do Communist leaders rush to Moscow for advice today but Khrushchev himself dashes to other State capitals where only a wink by Stalin to Molotov did the work). This is a lot of difference indeed. Thus, neither Khrushchev nor the CPSU enjoys the

supreme powers that Stalin did till his last day.

Finally, it is also important to note that slowly and steadily the emergence of Communist nation-states is becoming a reality. The Sino-Soviet conflict is itself a great accelerator of this process. The stresses and strains of Comecon planning of priorities in industrialisation and Rumania's and Bulgaria's recent discomfiture and protesting attitudes, the slow emergence of lobbies of States within the Comecon, the more frequent conferences between Communist State leaders of Eastern Europe independent of Moscow albeit to discuss economic and social problems—all these are promoting the tendency that it is not merely the enveloping ideology of communism that informs State policy but that there is some such thing as 'national interest' as against 'proletarian internationalism'. One may be an enthusiastic 'Communist' as against the West, but among themselves they are to safeguard their 'national interests'. After all the Yugoslav, the Hungarian and the Polish tangential movements of the past are being slowly recognised and absorbed in the general attitude.

II

From an overcentralised monolithic empire towards a faltering and haphazard pluralistic and polycentric gravitation of Communist politics has been the dominant feature of the last decade. But the Sino-Soviet conflict represents something more than that. It is tending towards the crystallisation of two opposing and conflicting camps within the Communist movement. An ideologically pretentious movement such as communism still is, a movement that is frankly authoritarian in character, cannot just decentralise and peter out into ineffectivity. It must go through a process of violent conflicts and clashes. Therefore, on the one hand there is bound to be a tendency on the part of the old dominating centre (Moscow) to re-establish full control; on the other,

there will be an attempt to loosen the hold of the traditional centre of domination and to build a new and parallel centre of challenge on the part of the more aggressive among the other States. What China is trying to do is to confront the Soviet Union with an alternative world strategy which is completely opposed to Soviet interests and policy. If the Soviet Union compromises, as it did in 1960, China secures a major place in the movement, and with this position of vantage it will drive further towards victory. The objective clearly is either to secure full leadership of the movement, which obviously may not be possible, or to split the movement completely vertically, carrying as much with it as possible.

Evidently this major operation cannot be completed by one or two single political events. It is bound to be a long process. All the major sectors of the worldwide movement have to be educated in terms of the alternative Master Strategy, establishing its greater merit. This protracted process has been going on since 1956. The July 1963 meeting has also not ended conclusively either way and more time still must elapse before the formal and open break takes place. But about one thing we may be certain: given existing leadership of the respective countries, the break is inevitable.

This prolonged process of splitting the movement vertically may be termed a 'civil war' among the Communists. This civil war has not yet experienced violence; such an eventuality, however, is not excluded. It may yet take place in such spots as Albania, Sinkiang or Outer Mongolia, for example. Through this internecine 'civil war' the participants of the movement would separate into two opposing camps at first mentally and then politically and organisationally. It is this process that is now proceeding and its pace has speeded up since the July confrontation.

But apart from this conscious and organised recrystallisation and polarisation,

there is bound to be an indirect psychological impact, namely, that of demoralisation and frustration. Many participants are still imbued with a sense of dedication to utopia. Although decades of experience of communism in State power have made a queer amalgam of idealism and power-love, and although a whole generation of Communist elite has grown who are entirely addicted to power and have developed a cynical attitude towards idealism even communist idealism, there are still many who feel generally attracted to the ideals of communism as against capitalism. It is this class of people who will begin realising that whatever communism can be in reality is already here and it has exhausted its potentiality for further growth. It is no longer a utopia. Is it then worth dying for, craving for? Is it not ridden with power politics and exploitation, not only material but also moral and intellectual? Is it not as 'bad' a system as 'capitalism'? Has it not developed its exploiting class? Is it not ridden with narrow nationalistic and cultural (and even racial) prejudices that are bourgeois? Disenchantment with communism has been going on ever since the thirties. And yet a core remained, having been constantly replenished from new reservoirs. With the acceleration of the 'civil war' among Communists, this process of frustration will take a new dimension as much in numbers as in depth and intensity.

III

Apart from the question of succession to the leadership of the movement, the core of the differences between the Russian and the Chinese points of view lies in the overall world strategy that should be adopted by Communists. To an ideologically-oriented movement, an overall strategy to guide local policies is necessary. Also, with the development of technology, especially of space and nuclear sciences, and with its rapid adaptation in the field of weaponry, regional strategy

cannot be very autonomous in character, unintegrated with those of other regions. Finally, the Communist States and parties taken together have an impact on all continents and if they have to maintain and even enhance this impact they have to have an overall Master Policy.

In the formulation of such a Policy the Russians, who have built up with great sacrifice for more than four decades an economy which only now has begun to give some results in terms of the needs of their people, and who have experienced a terrific devastation in terms both of men and industries in the Second World War, and, again, who have a realistic view of the potency of destruction of the nuclear weapons, are no longer keen to be confronted by another world war. They are well aware, further, that the 'other party' is fully armed and well determined to confront the Communist power, if and when a showdown becomes necessary. This realisation was beginning to dawn on the Russians for some time. But it was the Cuba incident of last October that finally drove home this negative lesson. Thus the only other road is to make communism attractive, to develop a policy of competition with the Free World in foreign aid, economic, technical and educational.

It is, however, easy to state what should *not* be the policy. But to work out a positive policy in all its details on a world scale in an everchanging political and economic context is not that easy. To carry out that policy will again be more difficult. However, the principal idea is that with the huge resources freed from armaments and armies and with a relaxation of tension all around, it will be possible for state-monopolist economies to regroup and reorient quickly their aims and activities and thus the Communist bloc as a whole can both develop itself faster and compete with the Capitalist bloc and win major victories for itself. Khrushchev in his report to the 21st CPSU Congress provided some details of this strategy when he said:

'Indeed when the USSR becomes the world's leading industrial power, when the Chinese People's Republic becomes a mighty industrial power, and when all the socialist countries together will be producing more than half the world's industrial output, the international situation will change radically.... One need not doubt that by that time the countries will have freed themselves from colonial oppression.... The new balance of forces will be so evident that even the most diehard imperialists will clearly see the futility of any attempt to unleash war against the socialist camp. Relying on the might of the socialist camp, the peace-loving nations will then be able to compel the militant circles of imperialism to abandon plans for a new world war.

'Thus there will arise a real possibility of excluding world war from the life of society even before the complete triumph of socialism, even with capitalism existing in part of the world'.

The Chinese have thought fit to oppose this Master Strategy. But given the grim tasks that face them in their own country, such a policy would suit them much better than any policy of tension. They would be able to secure much massive Russian aid in terms of technical personnel and capital resources. And if the international tension eases and a *détente* with the West is arrived at, the acceptance of China into the comity of nations should not prove difficult. This would have opened the gates of Western trade to China. So that in course of decades the problem of poverty and economic development could be seriously tackled by the Chinese.

But the Chinese under Mao Tse-tung refuse to travel that road. This decision appears inexplicable unless we start with the hypothesis that Mao Tse-tung is a megalomaniac and has become more so after the death of Stalin and his ambition to be the historic successor of Marx-Lenin-Stalin has gone to his head.

But is it not curious that China has accepted this disastrous road under Mao

and there does not seem to be any effective protest? Are we not witnessing a repetition of the Stalinist phenomena in a new context? There are close similarities between the two phases and it would indeed be interesting to make a study of it. Meanwhile it is necessary to record that Mao has been able to secure this unchallenged position only after the liquidation of millions of people who included not only innocents but also Communist party members and leaders. One of the recent dramatic turns took place when the Minister of Defence was removed because he pleaded for a more modern Chinese army and for this wanted China to take liberal help from the Soviet Union for several years. This indicated that Mao wanted China to be completely independent of Russia so that it might remain free to attack the latter politically, if not otherwise. The massive withdrawal of Russian economic aid and specialists all of a sudden must have been a logical consequence of Chinese provocations and the Chinese leadership must have counted on this development earlier. If the Chinese had remained interlocked with Russian cooperation on a major scale at a time when the ideological controversy with them would generate increased heat, it was likely that the Chinese party—at least its elite—would be sharply divided. Therefore, from the point of view of Chinese leadership the withdrawal of Russian aid before the controversy warmed up was necessary and when it did take place it could at the same time be branded as an indication of the Russian big-brotherly attitude.

From the Chinese angle of vision, the Russians cannot spill over their influence into the rest of Europe any more. Therefore the Russians cannot but talk in terms of 'peaceful coexistence'. It is only the Chinese with their enormous, albeit primitively equipped (compared with the modern standards of weaponry), armies that can secure military and political victories in Asia (where the local Chinese population can also play a significant

role), if the Communist movement adopts the militant revolutionary policy. If this happens, not only will China gain a major influence in Asia and, as a consequence, in the world too, it may tip the balance in its favour as against Russia within the world Communist movement. China will then be able to lead the movement and Russia, as an industrialised sector of the 'Communist world', will have to feed the machine, this worldwide revolutionary apparatus controlled from Peking. Thus the centre of gravity of communism would be decisively shifted from Moscow to Peking. The 'East Wind' would prevail over the 'West Wind'!

Chinese leadership is fully aware of the implications of nuclear warfare. That is why it is desperately trying to develop its own N-bombs. But it also seriously believes that if time is taken by the forelock and if some daring initiative is taken with its armies, it will score victories even before the nuclear deterrents can be decided to be used by the flabby liberal 'paper tigers'. In this respect if the Russians, who are in possession of nuclear weapons, played their cards well against the West, China could collect its victories while the West remained locked with the Soviet Union in nuclear arguments. Of course millions of Chinese soldiers and civilians would be at stake in this game. But, for the prize aimed at by the Great Strategist, is that a very big sacrifice?

Here one may note again: what Mao really wants is not only that Moscow should forego its leadership but also that it should actively *help* Mao to achieve the leadership and to extend his domination over Asia and then over the world.

Obviously the Soviet Union cannot oblige the Chinese in this respect, not because the bolsheviks have suddenly become pacifists but because they are not prepared to commit political suicide.

IV

Now that the July confrontation has taken place and still there is no end of the

tension and conflict between the two parties, a new situation has emerged, and although it will take some time to unfold its full possibilities, it is not very difficult to foresee its broad contours. The two opposing leaderships will try to work out their policies in different spheres and sectors, and as they do so they will try to win over other Communists to their respective sides, of course not always by simple persuasion. In a 'civil war' everything is fair.

It will naturally be Russia's policy to work out a *détente* with the West, and the fact of having a nuclear Test Ban conference even as the ideological catch-as-catch-can was going on behind the screen in Moscow, indicates that the Soviet leadership has worked out the logical details of its policy, having come to realise that there is no basis for compromise with China. But another major consideration for seeking such a *détente* may most likely be that if tension with the comrade on the east grows it may become necessary to be on guard in the eastern flank militarily.

On the other hand, just in order to upset these Russian initiatives and to show up Russia in an awkward pose before other comrades, China may threaten peace in some parts of Asia. The recent reports of massing of armies in the Himalayan range may be in response to a decision to test the impact of its policy, for in that case India will be aided by both the West and Russia. This will prove to be a great emotional strain for many a Communist; think of being on the same side of the barricade with the imperialist West as against, not fascism or nazism or apartheid, but against one's own Comrades!

It would be demanding too much space of this journal to discuss the various shades of conflicting policies that are likely to be pursued by China and Russia in the different regions of the world. We shall therefore refrain from going into that field here. Suffice it to note that what was ever since 1956 just an undercurrent or sub-

terranean flow, what began as a mere ripple of friction between the two countries, has steadily gone on gathering both momentum and speed, variety and complexity, and has now erupted as a major septic sore within the body politic of communism. It is bound to have increasing impact and significance on world events and relations. We were for some years after the Second World War accustomed to think only in terms of bipolar pulls in world politics. From now on there will be three major pulls operating on the world arena. In other words, poised between the West and China, Russia will try to lead a separate group of powers and in this delicate position will try to carve out as much flexibility and uniqueness for itself as possible. The old image or pattern of reactions may slowly (or even rapidly) change and a new image will emerge based on a new balance of forces, of course after many a jolt and jerk.

V

In this unstable setting, it will be interesting to examine how India might be affected. Obviously, the reports of massing of troops on the Himalayan borders so soon after the inconclusive adjournment of the July confrontation of Moscow indicates that China would like to set a fast pace. Before Russia is able to educate the world's Communists very much against China's strategy, China should so act, and act swiftly, that Russia can be painted not only as a bad Communist but also as one who is helping the enemy to oppose a major Communist country. Very embarrassing indeed; particularly when 'non-aligned' India under Nehru has already agreed to have joint air-exercises with the West and to establish a powerful transmitter in partnership with the VOA.

In this peculiar psychological setting where India has never taken a clear and unambiguous stand and has been accustomed to tight-rope dancing from phase to phase, the situation has become more delicate than it need have been at least

for India. A further Chinese action will naturally force the unspelt issue and India should take the initiative in stating its position clearly, and on that basis welcome Soviet and Western aid. The essence of the Indian position should now be to work out, in cooperation with other south-east Asian countries, both a short term and a long term defence strategy not only for India, but for South and East Asia as a whole, as an integral but semi-autonomous part of the worldwide Western defence system, and any Soviet aid should be supplementary to and a further strengthening of that system in the region. It is my view that for several considerations the Russians would not ultimately mind adjusting themselves to such a proposal once they know that India has a decided mind of her own and a perspective of her own. The Russians would be interested in helping India against China in her own interest simply in order to have a strong southern state not sympathetic to the present regime in China. They would of course be only too eager to have India to their side more than towards the West and for that purpose would offer unexpectedly liberal terms. But even if these apparently favourable terms are not accepted by India on mature consideration, the Russians will still cooperate with India to the extent India wishes them to cooperate. Therefore it is not a question of choice between the West and Russia before India; it is a question of perspective, of making up her own mind as to what kind of defence system would be more stable, dependable and effective against the continuing threat of China.

VI

A major turning point will again come when Mao Tse-tung—China's Stalin—will not be there to guide its destiny. To what extent the Soviet Communist Party can contribute to bringing about such a situation is difficult to say in the absence of adequate information. But it is known that some such thing was attempted by

Khrushchev himself at a time when a significant section of Chinese Army leadership was not in accord with the Party leadership. But it is undeniable that in pursuing China's present policy it will have to experience an intense degree of pressure of circumstances both internal and external.

Similarly, after Khrushchev's withdrawal from the scene a difficult period will arise, for the question of succession in totalitarian States always poses problems, as uncertain and unforeseen forces arise and interact. But the chances, if there were any, of the Chinese influencing the removal of Khrushchev are no longer there. The major factor there is the existence of the overwhelming desire for continuance of peace and for increased fulfilment of the people's needs for a better standard of living among the Russian people. For four decades they have been starved of this growth and have been living on expectations. As Khrushchev has taken to a policy which is at least likely to contribute to the continuation of peace, there is a lesser likelihood of a prolonged period of uncertainty of policy after Khrushchev than in the Chinese case, although personal rivalries may yet persist.

VII

It is now over a century since Karl Marx wrote his Communist Manifesto. Did the movement initiated by his writings take the shape and contours he had in mind? Obviously not. The period upto 1917 was essentially one of the spread of the message of communism. From then to the end of the Second World War Russia provided an example—a practical demonstration of what communism means in day-to-day life. From 1945 till today many countries came to be ruled by Communists but none of them provided an example of conversion of the people

by persuasion. Either the Red Army of the Soviet Union imported and imposed a regime in these countries, or the Chinese Red Army, again fed and nurtured by Russia, fought a bitter violent struggle against a regime of feudal war-lords amidst a people confused and tired of maladministration and war, or else power was gained by duplicity and treacherous *coup d'état*. Nowhere has communism been able to win over the overwhelming mass of the working-class in spite of the four decades of demonstration by several 'animal farms'. On the contrary, the experience of the 'farms' themselves has forced even Communists to lead revolutions in the classical Leninist style against the oppressive State of the New Class. Nowhere was communism courageous enough to face the people's verdict in a really free election with a secret ballot and a choice of candidates. Not even in Russia after four decades of Communist administration.

Thus the period of the tidal bore of communism is now over. Whatever new victories it may still gather will be achieved only under violent pressure. In fact the ebb period has already begun. If the 'curtain' is raised even slightly, the farm will soon be empty. The spectre envisaged by Marx is thus literally true today. The world is already in the period of 'Beyond Communism' *ideologically*. But politically and militarily the nightmare still exists. The Sino-Soviet conflict, at present ideological and political, may extend and percolate into the far-flung organisational ramifications in the coming years. Whether it will take military dimensions is still uncertain, but this perspective is not to be excluded from the realm of possibility, authoritarian and chauvinist as both sides are. Thus the fanatic passion of communism will be partly dissipated and released by their mutual conflict to the great relief of humanity at large.

August 6, 1963

Castro, Khrushchev, and Mao

THEODORE DRAPER

EVER since he came into power four and a half years ago, Fidel Castro has not been able to pursue a consistent course for more than six months at a time, and the last half year has been no exception. He has again made an abrupt turn, especially in his relations to the two main Communist powers, Russia and China.

After Khrushchev agreed to take the Soviet missiles out of Cuba last fall, Castro made no attempt to conceal his grievances and wounded pride. This mood was most notably reflected in speeches on January 2 and 16 of this year. In the first, he angrily reaffirmed the 'right' of Cuba to possess missiles and rejected 'unilateral inspection,' whatever Khrushchev may have said or implied to the contrary. Castro also seemed to stake out for himself a Communist sphere of influence by holding up the Cuban revolution as the 'example' to be followed in Latin America. And he injected himself into the Soviet-Chinese conflict by giving little Cuba the mission of striving for the 'unity' of the two great antagonists, a formula that at least enabled him to avoid choosing between them.

In the second speech, Castro added sharp references to some of his Communist brethren to his bill of complaints. He berated them for spreading 'false interpretations' and distorting the historic truths of the Cuban revolution in order to justify a policy of 'peaceful transition.' He taunted them by saying that the 'objective conditions' for revolution already existed in most Latin America, and that only the absence of the 'subjective conditions,' or their own lack of revolutionary will, held it back. He accused them of such monstrous vices as 'conformism' with imperialism and 'fear of revolutions.' He even turned on

'some people' within Cuba itself, evidently old-time pro-Russian Communists, who had spoken privately in support of 'unilateral inspection,' and charged that the same people would surrender to an invasion 'without firing a shot.'

This was Castro's most extreme expression of both his resentments and ambitions. His emphasis on the immediate, violent overthrow of most existing Latin-American régimes and his scorn for the 'beatific,' 'reformist' policies of most Latin-American Communist Parties seemed to be more than a faint echo of Mao's line. In any case, whether intentionally or not, Castro reacted against Khrushchev's handling of the missiles crisis by giving aid and comfort to Mao, and some non-Cuban Fidelistas apparently took the cue to mean that Mao should be openly supported against Khrushchev. In the United States, for example, Leo Huberman and Paul M. Sweezy, two of Castro's most ardent and indefatigable admirers, changed the political line that had bound them for decades to the Soviet Union and, in the May, 1963, issue of their *Monthly Review*, came out with a militant manifesto repudiating Khrushchev and embracing Mao.

Yet, Castro, even at his sulkiest, had carefully abstained from taking sides openly in the Khrushchev-Mao struggle. Instead, he had offered himself as the 'honest broker' to patch up their differences, with the implication that his interests were divided between them or that he was less interested in seeing one win over the other than in getting the most out of both of them. If his external ambitions had Maoist overtones, his economy at home was almost totally dependent on Khrushchev. Nevertheless, even when he seemed

closest to Mao in his revolutionary prescriptions for Latin America, his goal was unquestionably his own aggrandizement, not Mao's.

In his January speeches, Castro clearly indicated that solving his own problems through Latin-American insurrections appealed to him far more than the hard, slow economic grind at home. But this initial impulse confronted Castro with some grave questions. Was he ready for the job of virtually declaring war on the most important Latin-American Communist Parties? How long could he keep up his precarious balancing act between Russia and China? And if he had to come down on one side or the other, what would be the practical consequences for Cuba of defying Khrushchev or of disappointing Mao?

Whatever Castro's heart may have told him in January, his head soon had second thoughts.

Neither the Russians nor the Latin-American Communist leaders closest to them could permit these crosscurrents and mixed motives in Castro's behaviour to continue indefinitely. In February, the outstanding leader of the Brazilian Communist Party, Luis Carlos Prestes, journeyed to Moscow and then flew directly to Havana. This was Prestes' first visit to the Cuban capital, and what brought him there was clearly intimated in an interview published in the Cuban Communist organ *Hoj* on March 9.

'There are persons', said Prestes, 'Who mistakenly believe that the initiation of an armed struggle in Brazil to depose the government would constitute the best support for Cuba. In the present conditions of Brazil, this would be completely wrong. It would isolate the Communists from the masses and facilitate the work of those who are pressing the government in the direction of breaking relations with the Cuban government.' Prestes added: 'For Marxism-Leninism, revolution is not synonymous with violence; it is fundamentally a change of classes in power; and that is possible, in certain countries of

Latin America, in present conditions, without civil war and without armed insurrection.'

This was not at all the language that Castro had been speaking, and it brought out into the open the long-standing resistance of the oldest and largest Latin-American Communist Parties to the violent extremism that had become the distinctive feature of Fidelism. That the time for decision had come was suddenly disclosed by the arrival of Castro in Soviet Russia on April 27. The two basic documents that came out of this extraordinarily protracted sojourn were a joint statement signed by Khrushchev and Castro on May 23 and Castro's television report of his trip on June 4.

To say that Castro made his peace with Khrushchev is hardly to do justice to the change that has taken place in their relations since the missiles crisis. In his June 4 speech, Castro went far beyond the call of duty in his ecstatic account of Soviet military might and economic progress. He spent about twenty minutes extolling Khrushchev personally — 'extraordinarily human character', 'extraordinarily intelligent', 'extraordinary mental energy, a complete, mental lucidity; not only a great mental clarity, a great mental agility, quick mind; he is without the slightest doubt one of the most brilliant intellects that I have ever known,' and much more of the same. In the present circumstances in the Communist world, the following eulogy of Khrushchev cannot be accounted for simply as the conventional flattery by an honored guest of his official host: 'I do not know what opinion the imperialists have of Khrushchev, but I have the opinion that Khrushchev is a serious adversary of imperialism... I have gained the impression that he is a great leader and a formidable adversary of imperialism.'

Castro may not know what the imperialists think of Khrushchev, but he can hardly claim complete ignorance about what the Chinese think of the Soviet leader. In fact, Castro immediately followed his lengthy adulation of Khrush-

chev with a passage that the Chinese could only interpret as addressed primarily to themselves. Castro recalled that the Cubans had come out for 'union and discussion' among the warring Communist leaderships, and he advised all and sundry that '*Companero Khrushchev*' was pre-eminently a man with whom one could have a frank, honest, sincere, satisfactory discussion. Castro thus gratuitously advised the Chinese to abstain from any more 'public polemics'—advice which they evidently preferred to ignore.

Indeed, I cannot recall when Castro has spoken of any living person with the admiration and enthusiasm he bestowed on Khrushchev. No East European satellite leader has found it necessary to put on such a performance in praise of his chief.

The timing of Castro's visit to the Soviet Union was just as significant as its tenor. Instead of waiting for the outcome of the formal Soviet-Chinese meeting in July, Castro arranged his trip to give the Soviets the maximum benefit of his support. He chose to make known his complete faith in the Soviets and to sing the praises of Khrushchev at a time when Chinese-Soviet relations were deteriorating rapidly and 'unity' was farther away than ever.

Since Castro reported that he and Khrushchev had talked at length on 'all problems, all questions,' and analyzed 'everything' together, they could not have overlooked the Chinese-Soviet dispute, and Castro clearly chose to go all-out for Khrushchev with that, among other things, in mind.

Why did Castro do it? The chief clue lies in the new line on Cuban economic policy Castro brought back from Russia. In his June 4 speech, he contrasted the Soviet and Cuban economies. In Russia, he said, 'everyone is dedicated to the economy' with such seriousness that 'a Cuban visitor feels a little ashamed' of his own people's attitude. He called the Cubans 'somewhat idealistic revolutionaries' who 'agitate a great deal' and 'mobilize a great deal' but 'build all that in the air',

without realizing that everything must have an 'absolutely fundamental basis in the economy'. He was somewhat 'ashamed' that many good Cuban revolutionaries ate, slept, wore shoes, and dressed without even knowing that the economy existed.

In this area, Castro served notice that the Cubans would have to become like the Russians. The Cubans, he said repeatedly, had had it too easy. It was a 'great vice' to permit anyone to make an error in production and merely transfer him to another job, sometimes with higher pay. From now on, this vice, 'among many others', would have to go, and the only question would be how well anyone performed on the job. All salaries would be based on 'productivity' and 'norms.' Workers who did not do their jobs well would have their wages cut.

The lesson, then, that Castro brought back from Russia was that Communism could not work in Cuba without far more 'discipline' and 'responsibility'. In some ways, the Cuban people will only now begin to learn what a thoroughgoing Communist régime is like. And 'Communist' is now the official designation for Castro's régime. Heretofore, circumlocutions like 'socialist' and 'Marxist-Leninist' had always been favored. But in January of this year the Cuban leaders, including Minister of the Armed Forces Raul Castro, Minister of Education Armando Hart, and Guevara began to refer to themselves publicly as Communists. Fidel Castro himself the following month poked fun at Secretary of Defence McNamara for having inferentially distinguished between *Castrismo* and *Comunismo*. And in his June 4 speech Castro went all the way and proclaimed: 'We are Communists and we belong to the socialist camp, and our fate will be the fate of all Communists, of the international Communist movement, of the Communist revolution.'

The open adoption of the term 'Communist' coincided with a decision to speed the building of a new full-fledged Cuban Communist Party, called the Partido Unido de la Revolucion Socialista, or PURS. The

new party had been projected as far back as the early summer of 1961 to supersede the preliminary form of party organization, the *Organizaciones Revolucionarias Integradas*, or ORI. But the purge of the former Communist leader Anibal Escalante in March, 1962, and the missiles crisis last October set back the schedule, and Castro concentrated on building up his armed forces instead of a political machine. Early this year, however, the organization of PURS began in earnest on a provincial and municipal level. Here again, Castro brought back an important new concept from Russia. Party organization, he discovered, had been largely responsible for Russia's economic development, and what was good for Russia had to be good for Cuba too. This new emphasis on the party has also been accompanied by another great reconciliation between the old-time Fidelistas and the old-time Communists. The twenty-fifth anniversary of *Hoy* on May 16 served as an occasion for tributes to the old-time Communists such as had not been customary since the purge of Escalante.

Castro's unconditional backing of Khrushchev was influenced by another and, according to Castro himself, the most important economic factor. From now on, the Cuban economy will be based on an 'international division of labor' within the Soviet bloc. Castro agreed in Moscow that Cuba should specialize in certain fields of production for which the island is best fitted by nature. Subsequent statements by Carlos Rafael Rodriguez, the old-time Communist head of the agricultural reform institute, INRA, on June 15 and by Castro on June 18 made clear that this meant primarily agriculture and fishing. Castro on June 4 also remarked that Cuba would ultimately be integrated into a Latin-American economic system, but he had put that off into the distant future 'when historical conditions and the process of evolution of the people determine it.'

In the past, the Cuban Communists had waged war against the so-called doctrine of 'complementary economies,' according

to which Cuba was supposed to produce raw materials and buy other goods from more highly industrialized countries. As long as this doctrine served to make Cuba economically dependent on the United States, it was violently denounced as an imperialist invention designed to perpetuate the semi-colonial character of the Cuban economy. Now essentially the same doctrine has been resurrected in a 'socialist' version as the 'international division of labor.' The Khrushchev-Castro statement committed the Soviet Union to installing three steel-processing plants and a large power station as well as developing the nickel and chemical industries in Cuba, but it remains to be seen whether these promises will be fulfilled any better than previous ones. In any case, it is clear that the old aim of quickly industrializing Cuba has been given up. Cuba has been assigned a predominantly agricultural role in the Soviet economic scheme, and the Cuba of the foreseeable future, according to the latest blueprint, is not going to be very different economically from the Cuba of the past.

Even sugar is making a comeback as the dominant factor in the Cuban economy. An 'anti-sugar policy' had characterized the first years of Castro's regime. On June 27, Castro revealed that a fundamental decision had been made in 1960 to reduce cane lands and cut down on sugar production, one of the reasons for the smallest sugar crop in years in 1962. He also declared that from now on the Cuban economy 'fundamentally depends on sugar'.

From a 'Marxist' point of view, the complete integration of Cuba into the Soviet economic system could not fail to have the most far-reaching political implications and consequences. A Cuba that attempted to stand between Russia and China would have required a degree of economic independence that Castro had long ago surrendered to the Russians. Thus, Castro's economic and political positions in the Communist world had to be — and now have been — brought into line.

In his June 4 speech, Castro took pains

to protest that his latest turn was 'honorable, objective, disinterested', and not based on 'economic interest.' It is amusing to observe that self-styled Marxists always attribute economic motives to their opponents but cannot bear the thought that they might be subject to the same motives themselves. In any case, according to the new line brought back from Russia by Castro, the economic problem has been given top priority in Cuba.

Not that Castro has surrendered all claim as a Latin-American Communist leader. The *modus vivendi* worked out in Moscow by Castro and Khrushchev largely represents a victory for Soviet policy, but it apparently contained some mutual concessions and compromises. The section on 'peaceful coexistence' was clearly Soviet in inspiration. The Chinese would hardly subscribe to the proposition that 'In the present conditions the struggle for peace is the most important problem of humanity.' The Chinese insist that the struggle for revolution is the most important problem, and the struggle for peace is dependent on it.

But Castro was undoubtedly far more interested in what the joint statement said about the specific role of force or violence in future revolutions, especially in Latin America. On this score, the statement of May 23 declares: 'CPSU and PURS consider that the question of a peaceful or nonpeaceful road to socialism in one country or another will be answered in the final analysis by the struggling peoples themselves, according to the concrete correlation of class forces and the degree of resistance from the exploiting classes to the socialist transformation of society.'

This formula is far vaguer than the one Castro had offered on January 16. At that time he had insisted that the majority of Latin American countries were ripe for immediate revolution on the Cuban model, and though he had accepted the abstract possibility of a 'peaceful transition,' he had skeptically pointed out that he was still waiting for the first such case.

The May 23 statement on this point

probably concealed as much as it revealed. It may have been deliberately drawn up to skirt the main issue, on which a disagreement still prevails, and to lend itself to different interpretations. More likely it represents a temporary compromise permitting the larger Communist Parties of South America, such as the Argentine and Chilean, to decide their own 'road to power' without Cuban interference, while giving Castro a smaller sphere of influence in and around the Caribbean, notably in the Dominican Republic and Venezuela. The continuing terrorist campaign by pro-Castro forces in Venezuela, openly inspired from Cuba, indicates that Castro has not yet given up his insurrectionary line where he has the local influence to make it effective.

Two months later, in his major speech on July 26, the tenth anniversary of the birth of his movement, Castro seemed to favour the latter interpretation. He returned to the thesis of last January that the Cuban revolution should be the model for many other Latin American countries and that the Cuban revolution had shown the feasibility of overthrowing regimes based on powerful professional armies with relatively small guerrilla groups. Yet, he carefully made an exception of some Latin American nations with more political and economic stability. He seemed to distinguish between those governments which had actively opposed his regime and those which had maintained an 'independent attitude'. He specifically mentioned Mexico, Brazil, Chile, Bolivia and Uruguay in the latter category and, therefore, more stable.

Thus, Castro did not return from Moscow with the intention of minding his own business in Cuba and repudiating violent revolutions on the Cuban model. But he has had to curb his more extreme expansionist ambitions in Latin America for the time being. His relationship to the traditional Communist parties of Latin America has not been completely stabilized. Yet, it is a grave mistake, I feel, to assume that every time Castro talks violently, he is a 'Maoist'

and every time he makes peaceful gestures he is following Khrushchev's line. Castro would lose much of his value to Khrushchev if he had come home from Moscow a completely changed man. It is precisely because Khrushchev has succeeded in forming a front from Togliatti to Castro in the world Communist movement that he has been encouraged to force a showdown with the Chinese internationally.

Whatever the arrangement proves to be, the Khrushchev-Castro understanding as a whole should caution against some of the current oversimplifications of the Soviet-Chinese dispute. The Chinese have tried to give the struggle an ideological justification by making it into one of 'Right' versus 'Left', as if the Soviets wanted peace at the price of revolution and they wanted revolution at the price of peace. The Russians have been visibly annoyed at this stratagem of putting them into a peace-at-any-price position, especially since the Chinese have merely been talking a good fight against the United States. In their own minds the Soviets surely see the issue quite differently, but for practical reasons they have been more inhibited than the Chinese about stating their position with complete candour.

For Khrushchev, Castro offered the most dramatic means of outflanking the Chinese. Castro has been the most outspoken exponent of the 'violent transition' to Communism in Latin America. By getting his backing, Khrushchev has inferentially made known that the Soviets reject the oversimplified choice between peaceful and violent transition, not because they are opposed to the latter in principle but because they believe that at this stage, both peaceful and violent tactics — and everything else in between — may be useful and necessary depending on local and international conditions. Many of the pro-Soviet Communist Parties would risk suppression if they committed themselves to a violent road to power. The Communist-led peace campaign could not appeal to pacifists and other non-Communists if the goal were explicitly stated as nothing

short of the Communist revolution. The Soviets habitually prefer a maximum of gain with a minimum of risk, and in their view the Chinese, for factional purposes, are needlessly advocating a minimum of gain with a maximum of risk.

To be sure Khrushchev did not need Castro's visit to advertise the fact that he was not squeamish about associating with advocates of violence in Latin America or elsewhere. After all, Soviet Russia has been paying the largest share of Castro's bills for almost three years. But Khrushchev's handling of the missiles crisis had given the Chinese a chance to label him as both an adventurer and a capitulationist. Castro had not made it easier for Khrushchev by expressing his own dissatisfaction with the way Khrushchev and Kennedy went about arranging the great letdown without him.

All the more welcome to Khrushchev, then, was Castro's explicit backing, even on the most delicate matter of the missiles crisis. In his June 4 speech, Castro avowed that his conversations with Khrushchev had convinced him that the Soviets 'had not vacillated in assuming the risks that they assumed with respect to our country.' No one else could have given Khrushchev such absolution at this moment to fight off the Chinese threat, and it was undoubtedly worth a pretty ruble or peso, whatever it may have cost.

Thus, Khrushchev played his Cuban card for all it was worth in the lengthy Soviet reply of July 14 to the Chinese. This statement was the first really hard-hitting and confident polemic from the Soviet side in the three-year war of words and nerves. It cited the Kennedy-Khrushchev agreement on Cuba last October as an effective demonstration of 'peaceful coexistence' that was at the same time 'a defeat of the forces of imperialism.' This we-can-have-our-cake-and-eat-it-too part of Khrushchev's case was not new, but for the first time he could boast of 'the assessment that the leaders of the Cuban revolution themselves give to the policy of the government of the Soviet Union, which they call a policy of

fraternal solidarity and genuine internationalism.'

Yet, as subsequent events showed, Castro has not been able or willing to give Khrushchev the kind of support against the Chinese that the Soviet leader has received from his European henchmen. Castro has backed Khrushchev on key issues, but he has done so with a peculiar furtiveness and inconclusiveness. At the end of June, a Soviet-Chinese split took place at the World Congress of Women in Moscow. The showdown came on the vote to ratify the programme. The Chinese, Albanian, Korean and Indonesian delegations voted against the programme. Four other delegations abstained. The Cuban delegation voted with the Soviet majority. But one would not know that this had happened from reading the Cuban press which blandly reported the congress as if no such struggle had taken place.

The test ban treaty also confronted Castro with the painful problem of choosing between the Soviet and Chinese positions. In a major speech on July 26, the anniversary of his movement, he came out in support of the treaty. He called it 'a victory of the world conscience for peace and a victory for the peace policy of the Soviet Union.' Rather prematurely, he assured his audience that 'naturally the whole world receives this news with satisfaction.' A few days later, the Chinese attacked the treaty as a 'fraud.' *Pravda* saw fit to publish the July 26th speech *in extenso*. The Chinese news report of the speech was much shorter and far more selective; one of the things it failed to mention was Castro's explicit support for the test ban treaty. The Chinese have systematically attacked, with one exception, all the Communist leaders and parties that have backed Khrushchev on this issue. The exception is Fidel Castro, whose dereliction was neither reported nor denounced in the Chinese press. And Castro, in return, has not criticized the Chinese in any way, as the other pro-Soviet Communist leaders have done; his tactic has been, in effect, to say that Khrushchev is right without saying

that Mao is wrong. Some question has also been raised why Cuba has not officially ratified the test ban treaty, though some of those who have raised this question have inexplicably ignored Castro's references to the treaty on July 26.

The evidence, as of the middle of September, seems to imply that Castro has not been able to stay out of the Sino-Soviet conflict and has not been willing to plunge into it. He certainly did not stay out by praising Khrushchev, who has become Mao's *bête noire*, so effusively on June 4 or by endorsing the test ban on July 26. But he had certainly been unwilling to plunge in to the extent of criticizing the Chinese in any way or even, as in the case of the women's congress, telling the Cuban people to what extent he had sided with the Soviets. There is reason to believe that some of those close to him, especially Guevara, who has never been as opportunistic as Castro himself, would prefer to take the risks of absolute neutrality or abstention from the internecine conflict. Castro told a Japanese delegation early in August that it had become necessary to open a discussion of the conflict in the Cuban party. Thus far, both the Soviets and the Chinese have permitted Castro far more leeway than anyone else in the Communist world because each side has been willing to pay and put up with a good deal not only to gain Castro's support but to deny it to the other. It is a grave mistake, however, to assume that every time Castro talks violently, he is a 'Maoist,' and every time he makes a peaceful gesture, he is following Khrushchev's line. Castro would lose much of his value to Khrushchev if he had come home from Moscow completely housebroken. It is precisely because Khrushchev has succeeded in forming a front from Togliatti and Tito to Castro in the world Communist movement that he has been encouraged to force a showdown with the Chinese internationally. In any event, Cuba's role in the Sino-Soviet conflict will depend as much on Nikita Khrushchev and Mao Tse-tung as on Fidel Castro.

Castro also came back from Moscow

professing to believe that Cuba now enjoys a 'situation of security' with respect to the United States, and he gave it as a reason why Cuba, could now devote most of its energy to economic development. Castro's confidence was probably not much shaken by President Kennedy's comment on July 17: 'The fact of the matter is, the Soviet troops are there. The fact of the matter is that Cuba does follow a satellite role and that's what we consider unacceptable to us. I would hope that the situation some day would change.'

'Hope', however, is not a policy. For some time now, President Kennedy seems to have treated the Cuban problem as something he might be able to solve 'some day' with the cooperation of Khrushchev. Yet it has always been hard to see — and it is now harder than ever — what the United States could offer Khrushchev to induce him to give up Castro, and it is equally hard to see what the United States could offer Castro at this late date to induce him to give up Khrushchev. The Kennedy administration is now paying the price for, among other things, its own contradictory Cuban policy. It subsidized Cuban exiles who lived only for the moment of a U.S. backed invasion even while it became increasingly persuaded that an invasion would create more and

worse problems than any it might solve. Such an utterly contradictory course could not fail to end in frustration, recriminations, and futility. For some time, the President sought to cover up the unpleasantness by substituting rhetoric for policy, but the rhetoric has become increasingly incongruous. The present position is one of impasse from which neither side quite knows how to extricate itself. But impasse is still a considerable improvement from Castro's point of view.

As matters now stand, the Soviets are more firmly in Cuba than ever before. Castro's trip was almost like old times: a local Communist leader went to Moscow and came back with a new line, new tasks, new slogans. There is always a tendency and a temptation, however, to take Castro's latest word or action and read it back into everything he has said or done. When he spoke like a democrat, some people thought that he was fundamentally democratic; when he said some things that seemed to echo Mao, others jumped to the conclusion that he had long been a Maoist; and now that he has become self-confessed soul mate of Nikita Khrushchev, he may be written off as always having been nothing more than a Soviet satellite. Yet consistency, stability and loyalty to an ideal beyond himself have never been part of Castro's make-up.

POETRY

THE LEADER

The streets overflowed: the traffic
came to a halt minutes before
the limousine came into view.
The town held its breath: children
whispered. A policeman dropped
his baton. A crowd strained at the leash.

Above, a crow flew in absolute
freedom. From the airport
to the city a people waited.
Paper flags were waved, slogans
chanted. He had changed the face
of the country (you laugh), yes,
with speeches and brave promises
and eternal vigilance and all that.
When he appeared waving
a hand he seemed tired and yawned.

R. PARTHASARATHY

FALSE TEETH

For many years now he has had his teeth
 in the English language—false teeth.
 His earliest poems were rhymed.
 Now rhymes are more fashionable in toothpaste ads.

Established poets told him
 Love poems have had their day.
 Besides it is decadent to love.
 (Love never dies, but lives, immortal Lord.)
 He too thought of love highly
 Till he was badly let down
 On the floor of a hotel.

He shared the loss of this thousand-year-old dream
 with a dumb waiter.
 And flung his metaphor Woman out of the window
 on a summer afternoon.
 And he had not found the rubies in lips, the Niagara
 in her hair.
 His heart that had travelled to this day blew up like a tyre.

It is easier to leave words alone than to like them.
 And so at twenty-five he retired from the field
 without having written a poem.

R. PARTHASARATHY

UNDERDOG IN THE RAIN

The bus wouldn't hold
One man more,
So, trudging home, cold
To the core.

Torn shorts and shirt
Soaking wet,
Spattered with tyre dirt,
To be worn yet.

Hungry, bent with care,
Prematurely grey,
Yet, absolute despair
Keeping at bay.

Waiting for the break
Around the bend:
The last sweepstake —
—Surely misery's end.

Just can't bid goodbye
To one little hope,
And give the lie to my
Optimistic horoscope.

DOROTHY SINHA

RELEASE

Thoughts by the emerald pool
Of the red-feathered bird in my cage:
When shall I break this concrete and girder cage,
Set free my bird,
Rest by the pool,
Think no more of the bird in the cage?

Our power we must draw from the storms,
Our thoughts from the seeping rocks.
We must climb by the thorn-covered way,
Leap the wedge of doubt,
Break the bones of the fist,
The fist that has clenched so long.

Called by the night to the pool
(The emerald now deep-blue)
I hear the wings flutter
Cramped by the girder cage....
Soon I shall break the bones,
Watch red wing's in the sky.

S. PADMANABH

SHORT STORY

Reconciliation

KA NAA SUBRAMANYAM

THERE was a time when our 1945 Club could boast of a large membership and ample finance, but now it seems to be in its decline. Even I, the enthusiastic Secretary of the Club am forced to acknowledge this. The reasons for this decline are many. Ours is a small town and it has its fair crop of Clubs. We, as a Club, offer nothing in the shape of indoor games or outdoor, as other Clubs of this kind do. In fact, we offer our members none of the amenities offered usually by Clubs of this kind.

Our members are expected to meet every Saturday afternoon, sit round a large table, drink cup after cup of excellent coffee and talk. Our talk is usually as excellent as our coffee. Most of our members, as I have already hinted, have fallen away, but seven of us are fairly regular and rather religious about it. We consume pots and pots of coffee and talk far, far into the night.

First let me introduce the seven regulars.

First, of course, is our President. We meet in his gardenhouse, sit round his table and drink up his coffee. Whenever he has anything to say, we listen to him with pleasure. He is the merchant prince of our small town, the hero of many a legend and story. One legend in particular credits him with having struck our town some twentyfive years ago with something less than a rupee in his pocket — which rupee he has multiplied into a million or two today. His antecedents are intriguingly obscure, as a hero's antecedents should be. He himself hardly ever talks about his

early days, though one might infer many things from his most casual talk. He has neither family nor any kinsfolk living with him. He is a man well over sixty. His name is Ramanujam.

Next to our President, it is meet that I should mention our Vice-President. Unlike Ramanujam, he is a man who has struck roots in our place. He has been Chairman of the local Municipal Council for three terms, as his father before him, and *his* father before *him* had been. His name is Raghavan and he is a man of unusual abilities and talents. We call him the Civic Conscience. He rarely, if at all, contributes to the general conversation, but whenever he does, he is trenchant and invaluable.

Third place of importance in this introduction belongs by rights to our *mirasdar* — the agriculturist. He is a much-educated man, as he himself will tell you when you get acquainted with him; he holds many degrees from Indian as well as foreign Universities. He prefers almost always to talk in the Tamil language and draws his metaphors and illustrations from peasant life and custom, and is generally considered an eccentric and odd fellow. He has been to many places — to Holland as a Boy Scout, to Germany as a scholar, to Japan as an industrialist, to the United Kingdom as something attached to some Governmental mission, to the United States as a successful lecturer in things eastern and esoteric, and to the rest of the world as something of curious tourist. He had

nailed a top government job early but had tired of it after six months of doing nothing; he had resigned and settled down to the life of the cultivator, a tiller of the soil, as his father, grand-father, great-grandfather and others before them had been. His name is Ganapathi and he is easily the most talkative among us all. He has always something worthwhile to say; he is a delightful conversationalist. He is the youngest member of our Club being just a boyish fifty-three.

Fourth I shall name our Treasurer. Our Club really has no need of one. (We do not collect subscriptions and the only bills we incur are the coffee-bills which, anyhow, our President takes care of. But for form's sake we do have a Treasurer, lest any one ask us: what is the use of a club without a Treasurer?). He is the leader of the local Bar Association, Srinivasan by name. He has retired from active practice now but occasionally attends the law courts to the annoyance of many juniors. A man born with the golden spoon in his mouth, gossip says that he has often pawned that spoon only to redeem it every time. He is a treasure-house of stories — stories that cannot be repeated in mixed company. He is a man of vast common sense; one can always rely on him to say the right things at the right times.

Our College Professor should, I think, come next on this list. He is a Professor of Philosophy who is by way of being that much rarer thing, a philosopher himself. He is appropriately enough named Satyan —literally 'the truthful one'. He draws a large pension from the State Government after thirty years of meritorious and patient and much remembered lecturing to dull students; but not content to rest on past laurels, he has accepted an Honorary Professorship in the local College and compels his colleagues to accept him seriously. He is respected and admired and always listened to with pleasure and profit.

Sixth in this galaxy should be named the Postmaster. He is a self-educated man. He has seen service in most places in India and in quite a number of places abroad.

He has seen War at uncomfortably close quarters, having served in both the wars of the twentieth century as a volunteer. In the Kaiser's War, he had volunteered to serve in Mesopotamia and stopped an enemy bullet. It had found temporary lodging in his belly and had been removed when he was unconscious. It was one of the major regrets of his life that he was not able to keep the bullet which had found a lodging in his belly as a souvenir. He is a vedantin; he manages to explain everything to himself as well as to others as *maya*, illusion, false to the core, and attributing all things to Brahma, he carefully dissociates himself from all but the barest minimum of worldly activities, though he will discuss and establish the illusory quality of every act of ours. His name is Mani and he is fifty-nine years of age, though officially he is not yet fifty-five being ready to retire only next year.

And last is myself, the Secretary of the club and seventy years old. I am active for my age and can outwalk and outtalk most of my fellow members. I call myself an author but spend my time writing for the periodical press of two continents and three languages. I can talk entertainingly about my own past even if about nothing else.

All seven of us can say with Edmund Burke that we have read the book of life a long time and other books a little.

Perhaps I have dwelt lovingly, lingeringly, on these introductions a little too long. Perhaps, I have managed to do very little of justice to our members. Be that as it may, I am rather proud of this Club of ours and take its Saturday evening meetings and talk a little too seriously. I have tried to break myself of this habit but this decade and a half, since the Club came into existence, I have not succeeded in being absent from the Club even for a single evening. The same can be said with justice of the other regulars also.

As Secretary of the Club, it is my pleasant duty to contact newcomers to our town with a view to enrolling them as members

if they are worthy of it. And it is a duty which I discharge quite conscientiously.

Newcomers are as a rule rare, but our small town has a rather well-equipped hospital run by the local Government. Our late Surgeon had been a somewhat uninteresting human specimen who had refused to take any interest in our Club or its activities. But he had been transferred recently and a new Surgeon had been appointed in his place. By all the accounts that I could get of the new man, he was a bit of a mystery. He was, by his reputation, quite a big man for our small town. According to some he was a bachelor; others said that he had loved and lost and so had elected to remain single. Still others were of opinion that he had been married, had even raised a family but having lost them at a single stroke of fortune or fate had preferred to remain without further burdens.

A few days after his arrival, I went to look him up. I found him a greying and lovable person, just old enough to interest even a man of my age. He had the eyes of a child, the laugh of a girl of fifteen, the voice of a musician, the manners of an aristocrat, the air of one who had always lived well, the gestures of an absent-minded professor and the inexhaustible fund of good humour that a conversationalist of any ability needs. I told him about our Club and he was immediately interested and readily consented to become a member and to give us his time of a Saturday evening, for any number of Saturdays as long as he remained posted in that town.

I was not happy, however, over the way our President Ramanujam took the news. When I told him that our new Surgeon would be attending that Saturday, I fancied that Ramanujam was none too pleased.

'A Surgeon, you say?' he asked. 'In my time I have known a few Surgeons. I believe that none of them are worthwhile. What did you say the name of this specimen was?'

'Raman' I said. 'You will like this specimen once you meet him.'

I fancied that Ramanujam was not impressed. I could see his frown deepening. I

thought a lot about it and by Saturday evening, before we met, I had elaborated a theory about Ramanujam and our new member. I was waiting rather anxiously to verify it.

We, the seven regulars, met by five and by five thirty the Surgeon drove up. I had, I remembered, mentioned the name of our Surgeon to our President and though he had registered no comment, I was sure that they were known to each other previously. Introducing them to each other, I was sure that my theory was correct. The Surgeon was hardly able to suppress a start of recognition, but he did not let on or behave as if anything was wrong. By the time the introductions were over, he had recovered his poise. I noticed that Ramanujam set the pace for the talk — the Surgeon was willing to take the cue from him. I was sure now that the two had met quite sometime back; something untoward had happened. Neither of them cared to be reminded about it or was willing to talk about it. Something had happened to separate them; they had not met each other for a long time; they had not cared to meet. But now that they had met almost by accident, they seemed willing to forget what had been and to start afresh. It was all wild guess-work on my part — I love a romantic theory like this with all my soul and I was sure that I was not very far off the mark!

The constraint, if any, between them wore off in no time, as I have already said, and our session was soon in full swing with our famous coffee and our talk was scarcely less brilliant than usual. The Surgeon was a good conversationalist, there was no denying that; and he was talking with a purpose, I fancied. He steered the conversation round to love.

The *mirasdar* was emphatic that love, at least love as it is understood by the Westerner, is impossible for us Indians. Starting on that note, the great love stories of the West and the East were then brought under discussion and the finer differences between their attitudes were exaggerated into resounding points of view, to be eloquently developed even as one was talk-

ing. Ramanujam was sitting studiously silent, sipping his coffee, but listening with close attention. The Philosopher and the Postmaster and Srinivasan made up for his silence by talking endlessly. The improvisations were brilliant, even if not always convincing. Hero and Leander, Rama and Sita, Romeo and Juliet, Savitri and Satyavan, Helen and Paris, Nala and Damayanti, Antony and Cleopatra, Laila and Majnu, Abelard and Heloise, Krishna and Radha—all came under discussion.

The upshot of it all was that our new member the Surgeon said at last: 'I think that only a few of the great lovers get celebrated. It is only a matter of luck. Other lovers, if not more worthy of celebration at least equally so in song and story, languish in the limbo of human forgetfulness.'

Ramanujam looked up a little startled, as if he wanted to add something to the Surgeon's words, but though he hemmed and hawed, he did not break his silence, while Srinivasan to whom the point was quite clear after it had once been pointed out, said emphatically: 'There are more lovers among us than poets.'

'To *do* is really more easy than to *sing*!' said the Postmaster.

'The world however does not think so' said our Philosopher.

The Surgeon said: 'I know of my own personal knowledge of two lovers, lovers of not so long ago, lovers no whit inferior in any way to fabled Laila and Majnu. It is a tale of love that happened before my own eyes.' Saying this the Surgeon looked at our President, Ramanujam, as if asking his permission to tell that story. I caught myself wondering what was coming.

Every one of us was for a story. 'A story from the lips of a master-raconteur will be welcome' I said.

The Surgeon demurred to my master-raconteur. He had no such claims. 'If the story has any merit at all it will be because it affected me deeply. I am no more a master story-teller than you are a master-surgeon. It is only now after having said so much and whetted your curiosity that I am beginning to be afraid that I have

taken on myself something that might well be beyond my powers. I am not at all sure that I shall be able to tell it as it will have to be told.'

Ramanujam spoke rather heartily for the first time that evening. 'I am sure that story-telling is a disproportionately praised art anyhow. If a story is interesting anybody can tell it anyhow he wishes and get away with it and acquire the credit for a master story-teller. Every one can tell at least one story in his life well—very well indeed—as no one else can say it.'

'Would that all the story-tellers of the world stopped with the one story that they are capable of telling' laughed the Postmaster. 'Unfortunately they go on to tell other stories to our regret.'

'If our President would only promise to help me out over the more difficult parts of the story, I shall be glad to begin' said our new member looking up earnestly at our President.

Ramanujam said: 'God knows that it will be no pleasure to me, but I shall do my best to supplement my friend's story.'

I was watching our new member's face all the while. I could see his lips twitch as if under the impact of a great emotion. I looked again a second later and found him normal.

The Surgeon began his tale:

"My Laila and my Majnu were born distant relatives. They were neighbours as well. He was only twelve when he became aware of his great love for her. And it was only five or six years later, that is, when she was herself eleven or twelve that she learnt to reciprocate his love. But when she did, she loved him with all her being.

One family, the family of the girl, was rich; the other family, the family of the boy, was poor, very poor. The father of the girl was a Gazetted Officer, high in the service of the State, while the father of the boy was a menial servant, low in the service of the local municipality. It was, on the face of it, impossible that they should meet as equals. The officer's family was for ever roaming the length and breadth of India on duty and for pleasure; whereas

the other family was forced to cower where it could, eat what it managed to get, live as best it might and fight every hour for mere existence.

The incompatibility was real, but the lovers gave it no thought. Let us be poetic and call the girl Vasumati. What shall we call the boy?

The question was not particularly addressed to any one, but our President took it upon himself to reply to it and to continue the tale with a smile on his face that was, on the face of it, forced and unreal. But the Surgeon's face showed gratitude and pleasure and he kept quiet.

'Let us call him Krishna,' said Ramanujam. 'The Divine Lover's name is as good as any other. Krishna and Vasumati were attending the same school but were in different classes. They used to accompany each other to and from school. They were usually to be found together all the hours of the day that they could call their own.'

But let it be understood clearly that there was nothing wrong in their closeness. Krishna was pure as crystal and Vasumati was purer still if that were possible. There was emphatically nothing wrong till the elders started it. It was, in fact, Vasumati's mother that started the trouble. She said in effect to her daughter one day: 'Why do you associate with that vagabond Krishna? He is miles beneath us — you a grown-up, eligible, marriageable girl should not associate with him or his likes on equal terms. He is not fit to associate with such as you.' Vasumati might have sweetly asked 'Who says so?' And her mother would have replied with emphasis: 'I say it.' And there the argument had to stop.

Her mother did not want an argument about it, that was obvious, and Vasumati was a sweet and obedient child. She vowed to herself, seeing the passion into which her mother had worked herself up, that she would never more meet Krishna. And when she vowed it, she meant it. But it was impossible. Krishna would not let her alone and she did not have the heart to hurt him. When she told him her vow the hurt

in his eyes hurt her indeed. They could scarcely live apart. And they took it for granted that Vasumati's mother was right; they were doing something wrong.'

Ramanujam paused in his narration, and immediately, as if he had been waiting for him to pause, the Surgeon took up the tale:

'Vasumati's mother was a hard woman, an ambitious woman, the type of woman whom we usually associate with Gazetted Officers and their snobbishness. Her husband was clay in her hands and mud and worse in her mouth. After the warning given to her, Vasumati's life was one hell — a life of long drawn out torture.'

Vasumati was an only daughter whose slightest wish had been law till then to her parents; every wish of hers had been granted. Her mother, in trying to do good to her at this juncture, did her untold harm, all in the name of loving kindness. A frank and fearless child, Vasumati became secretive, sad, listless, and obstinate under persecution. She was spied upon and every time she met her innocent lover clandestinely, she was scolded and beaten mercilessly all in the name of doing her good. Till finally Vasumati's father succeeded in getting himself transferred to a far distant place.

Oh! the pangs of separation of the young lovers — who could describe them adequately. Words fail me even now so long afterwards. You can imagine it only when you become aware of subsequent happenings.'

The Surgeon grew silent as if expecting Ramanujam to take up the tale. And take up the tale Ramanujam did.

'When this separation took place Vasumati was fifteen and Krishna was perhaps nineteen or twenty. Between them they wept oceans of tears; they swore mountains of oaths. They swore that they would thenceforward live only for each other, and they called on the sun, the moon and the stars to take pity on their plight. They together defied fate and God to do their worst — they would not change. Krishna would have run away with the girl, he was

bold enough and old enough now to do it but she would not consent lest he was found out and punished for it. From her new home, Vasumati wrote to him. Three letters from her reached him in quick succession. What sweet letters they were! They filled him with high hope, heaven-reaching dreams. Then there were no more letters from her. Poor fool! he did not know that her letters were intercepted at the very source. He wrote to her almost every day and did not even guess that his letters did not reach her at all. Krishna's father was a peon in Municipal service. Krishna was his only son. He was the hope and the mainstay of the family. Krishna's mother had saddled him with this son and departed this life quite early. He had been both mother and father to the boy and had watched him grow up, go through school. He reasoned with him, he jested with him, he scolded him in good round terms about his love for Vasumati but all to no purpose. What people admire in poems and on the stage, they find inconvenient, irritating, unimportant in life. Such constancy as Krishna's would have been admirable in a poem; but flesh and blood heroes of poems are difficult to live with. The world makes them martyrs.

Krishna's father thought that with the going away of Vasumati everything was going to be fine. Absence would do away with the fancy of the boy; he would outgrow his so-called love he thought. But no. Before his very eyes, his only son was wasting away for love of Vasumati. He dared not ask the hand of the girl in marriage for his son. He knew the breed of Gazetted Officers and their wives. What was more he knew the mother of Vasumati! But for the sake of his son, he decided to eat humble-pie.

Our President paused and the story was carried forward by the Surgeon in the following words:

'Oh! how Vasumati's mother raged and how her unfeeling father laughed at the proposal. Krishna's father stood it all for the sake of his son, but it did not work out. Vasumati pleaded on bended knees with

her parents, but all her pleadings fell on deaf ears.

Krishna's father had to return home to his municipal job but his son would not leave the place where his beloved was. He stayed on, hoping for occasional glimpses of the face of her whom he loved, of her who was really beyond his reach now.

Vasumati was now kept in the closest seclusion. She was not allowed to get even a sight of her lover.

Despair was gnawing at the hearts of the lovers now. Krishna was no better than a madman and Vasumati too had changed a lot; she was no longer the charming slim maiden she had once been; she had wasted beyond recognition. She had resigned herself to death and to be done with it all.

And again Vasumati's father was transferred. This time even she did not know where they were going; it was kept a secret. The parents saw to it that the ardent lover got no inkling of their departure or their destination. They left town one night leaving no trace for Krishna to follow.'

The Surgeon paused here a moment, overcome with emotion. Ramanujam continued the tale for him:

'The day after Vasumati had left the place and it was decreed that he could not even breathe the air she breathed, Krishna lost his senses. The people of the town beheld the sight of a man going mad for love before their eyes and they could do nothing about it, even though they voiced their sympathies for the lover and his beloved in many ways. Krishna's father was informed of it in due course, lamented the sad fate of his son and forcibly removed him home. Those who had till then thought of love as an extravagance and an invention of the poets and the fanciful, sat up and took notice of how love in the raw was sapping the mind and body of a healthy young man. Back home, Krishna fell sick, took to his bed and stayed in his bed too weak to move about.

We had always thought of our President as one above the common run in the matter of emotions but we were treated now to the

spectacle of his breaking down. He was very near weeping as he told the tale. He sipped his coffee and tried to hide his tears in the coffee cup which he held with none-too-steady a hand. Our newcomer continued the tale:

'Vasumati's parents had, in the meanwhile, decided that the only way out of all this tangle was to find a suitable bridegroom and marry her off. They cast their net for a groom of their own class, one who was eligible from their point of view for their daughter. They had some difficulty finding a suitable match but when they had found him, they rushed things through. At this stage, Vasumati had exhausted all that she had to say. She could say nothing for herself. Her eyes had gone dry with weeping. She was dumb with despair. She was, as it were, in a perpetual stupor. And on the wedding day, it was a Friday, she allowed herself to be decked as a bride without uttering a word of protest. She was docile beyond expectation and even her parents felt that it was a change for the better.

At eight in the morning, which was the hour fixed by the Brahmins....'

The Surgeon too broke down and had unashamed tears in his eyes. And we were treated to the spectacle of the steady hand that held the operation knife shaking as it lifted up a cup of coffee. He cleared his throat often. Ramanujam woke up with a start from his reverie as if he had been asleep and reluctantly continued the tale.

My turn, is it? All right.

Yes. It was a Friday. It was eight in the morning when Krishna who had been asleep, sat up suddenly exclaiming, 'She calls! She calls!' He was suddenly very violent and we could not keep him in

his bed, try how we would. He jumped out of bed, ran out of the sick-chamber, out of the house.

We gave chase. But he ran straight and fell into the disused well that is in front of the Mariamman temple crying: 'Vasu, Vasu, Wait. Here I come. Here I am.'

When they finally fished him out of the well, he was quite dead."

And the Surgeon too finished his share of the tale in a rush:

'The bridegroom was waiting. The *nadaswaram* was pouring out its melodious music. But they searched for Vasumati high and low. She was nowhere to be found. They fished her at noon out of the disused well in front of the Mariamman temple in the town in which her parents were living then. She was looking like a bride, dressed like one, with a smile of contentment on her lips.'

The Surgeon looked up at our President as if he expected him to add something. And Ramanujam said: 'Our children are dead but we are alive to tell the tale.'

We, the listeners, had no comments to offer. It was difficult to speak at the moment. And the coffee was delicious.

'Excepting for the coming of my friend here today I have been striving hard to forget the past and all that has been.'

The Surgeon said: 'After all these long years seeing that it has pleased God to bring us together again unexpectedly, I think we should be reconciled—we, the parents of the lovers.'

He held out his hand and Ramanujam took it. We were silent with a ruminative silence that stretched far into the night.

(Translated from the Tamil
by Mr. S. Rajee)

One Night and After

M. M. M. MAHROOF

JAMIS turned over on his side uneasily. It was a very warm night and the beads of perspiration were heavy on his back. As he turned he knew he was moving in the slush of wet sweat and dirt that was his mat. His wife reached out her hand and pushed his back with her fingers.

'Shush', she said, 'you will be crushing the child. Keep still, please.'

Jamis mentally saw her place her index finger to her mouth as she was saying the words. He could not see her do this. As the night was very dark. It must still be early, he thought. He edged himself a little to his left, trying to find out a place on his mat which was not wet with sweat. There was: a narrow, long strip of mat on his far left. The mat was old now; its cloth covering had lost its freshness. He fell asleep, almost immediately.

It was some time later when his wife woke him. It was, as always, a timid gesture on her part. A pointing of the two fingers of her right hand and a soft touching him in the small of the back. When he did not immediately awaken, she made the same motion again a few minutes later. And till he awakened, she would go on doing so.

Jamis got up from the mat, stretched himself and went to wash his face.

'Where's the tooth-powder? You are keeping it in a different place every day,' Jamis asked.

'Oh, I remember', Jamis' wife said, apologetically, 'You'd already finished it yesterday. And the few grains left, the child spoilt. I had to spend a lot of time trying to clean the mess he made.' The child she referred to was the second son of Jamis, a boy of five, who lay sleeping in the far end of the room. She began to search for the pestle with which to crush

the charcoal to powder, for Jamis' tooth-powder was crushed charcoal. She managed to find the pestle after some time, unearthing it from a pile of newspapers. The newspapers served at times as emergency fuel for the clay stove that was placed against one wall of the room. Jamis' wife took the little wooden platform on which she sat while cooking and taking some burnt charcoal from the base of the stove, proceeded to crush it.

'If you start shaving now, it'll be ready. The tooth-powder, I mean,' she said.

'Did you ever hear of any one shaving before cleaning his teeth! Put first things first woman', Jamis said, 'I need hot water for shaving, too.' He fingered his two days-old beard.

Jamis' wife stopped suddenly. 'Oh, the child has begun to cry' and she began to cry herself, starting up to take a girl of two from an end of her mat on which, upon a mattress of old clothes, she was lying.

'Doesn't matter. I'll take care of her,' Jamis said. It was far easier to soothe the baby than get the tooth-powder himself.

The child had begun to cry; at first, it was wheezing. Jamis thought it was like the wheezing of the asthmatic old man two doors to his left. Or perhaps, it was the noise of the suction of the Municipality sump cleaner, cleaning the drains, some twenty yards from the tenement house in which Jamis lived. After a time, it was clear this was not so. For the crying of the child was rasping, insistent.

'Yes. The child might be looked after,' Jamis' wife said, for she had not moved from her pestle and continued to grind the charcoal all the while. Though they had been married for some sixteen years, she was careful to use the impersonal

construction and not his name. She would rather have bitten off her tongue than pronounce his name. It was a convention, thought Jamis, without sense or content. For Jamis always helped his wife in the housework, that is when he was free from work at the factory, that is between the hours of six in the morning and six in the evening. Jamis' wife went to work, as well. Jamis thought he did more housework than she.

Jamis took the child in his hands. A girl. A little less or more than two years. He couldn't say. There was the birth certificate, it was true. But he had never bothered to get it. Any money he had, he would spend on beedis and beef; they gave him more immediate satisfaction.

The child was crying. Jamis took it in his hands. There was a reason for its crying. It had passed water on the clean sheet on which Jamis' wife had laid it. Jamis' wife would have to wring it and dry the sheet in the sun. There was no time to wash it. They never had time enough, Jamis' wife and Jamis. Jamis' wife or Jamis.

Jamis looked at the child. He looked at it with some care. There was a little scar—was it a mole—on its right cheek. A hair was growing on it. It was bad enough for his child to be a girl. It was worse for it to have a disfigurement on its face. And now it was passing water on its mat. This was bad. Very bad.

Jamis turned to his wife.

'Time you got a cane' he said, half laughingly.

'For whom,' she asked him.

'Why, for this precious daughter of yours. Look, it has ruined the clean sheet you put on yesterday.'

'It'll grow out of that. It's only two. My queen is only two.'

'The tooth-powder is ready,' Jamis' wife said, and she stood up and took the baby in her arms. She undid the loose cloth round its hips. Touched it with a dash of water and then went to get the talcum powder. It was a little, warped, chipped cylinder standing on the top of the

second-hand what-not Jamis had bought some years ago. The talcum powder was very precious for Jamis and his wife. It was used on two occasions only. To staunch the shaving cuts on Jamis' face, and after washing that little daughter of his. Oh, and Jamis was nearly forgetting: his wife 'powdered' her face whenever she went to the cinema or made formal calls on her friends and relatives. It was the only other 'cosmetic' she used. The main one was the betel leaves chewed. They lent a spot of red to a glistening dark face.

She inclined her head a little towards Jamis.

The poor child, the poor child! My god, just imagine such a thing!

'Well, what's the matter with it. As it is I'm late,' Jamis said, peevishly.

'There's a bed-bug on its naked flesh! On its back,' she told him, holding out a bed-bug between the nails of two fingers. She put the bed-bug on the floor, crushed it with the index finger of her right hand and bringing this finger to her nose, sniffed it. It was her usual method after killing a bed-bug. This never failed to give her satisfaction.

There were shouts in front of Jamis' tenement house. Jamis thrust aside the slats covering his door and peered out. There were some thirty people standing in the passage-way between the tenements. All of them his neighbours. Men and women and a few children. All with heavy pails in their hands. Pails full of water. Some of these were not really pails or buckets; that is, they were not buckets, galvanised iron ones bought at the shops. They were little or big tins; round or squat or rectangular or square. They had contained, long ago, milk powder or some tinned food or other. A handyman among the neighbours had fixed wires or clips and converted them into pails and buckets.

The door of the lavatory in front of the tenements, a little to the right of the tenement bathroom, was shut. One person was inside and the main question now was: who was to succeed to the present occupant of the lavatory? This problem

did not arise in the case of the children. They did it all over the tenement land. And when Jamis came out of his house in the morning, there would be little bits of excreta floating in the drain of his house. And when he came from work, these would be darker and firmer. He would skirt the passage-way as warily as possible. But, still, he would have to wipe his feet on the coir mat, lying on the threshold of his house. The 'Welcome' sign painted on the top of the mat had completely worn out as a result.

Two people were shouting in the passage-way.

'You've no right to spill all the water in my bucket. And deliberately too.'

'But I intend to go in first.'

'But I came and got my water before you did.'

'Today makes no difference. I've been going before you five or ten years now. Everybody knows my job is important and starts very early.'

A woman, in the distance, looked out of the slats of her house. 'Hey, you! Stop shouting! You're waking up my baby.'

A second later, the shouts continued. This time womens' voices.

'My uncle goes to work; your husband doesn't!' one voice screamed.

'A fine office he goes to, that uncle of yours!' The second voice was heavy with sarcasm.

'We all know what your husband does. Nothing all day! That's what he does. Just because the caretaker of this tenement is your relative...'

Jamis drew his head back. The sounds and shouts and gathering in the passage-way took place every day. Unchanging like a ritual. In fact, it was a ritual but the purposes were mundane.

'Get me some hot water,' Jamis told his wife. 'I'll shave now and go to the lavatory later.'

'There's no firewood. We must borrow some. But it's not right to borrow anything first thing in the morning,' his wife murmured. 'I'll try and boil some water with the papers.'

'All right,' Jamis said, 'but try to keep the smoke down.'

Sure enough, smoke was soon there. It billowed out from the papers and soon his eyes were watering. He stood it as long as he could.

'Let me have the water now. It'll do,' Jamis said.

'But it's only luke-warm,' his wife said, testing it with her thumb.

'Never mind. I'll make do,' Jamis replied.

Firewood was the best way of making a fire. Always. The papers stopped burning after some time. There were waves of smoke one after another. His wife lit the papers again. The papers burned afresh. Then once more the fire went out and the smoke started belching out again.

Jamis looked at the clock over his head. The clock was battered, having fallen down many times; but it kept time, rough time. There was only time for him to shave and go to work.

'Don't make tea. There's no time,' he told his wife.

'No,' she murmured with relief, for it was time for her to go to work herself. Breaking up tea leaves. Sitting on the floor all day.

Jamis' wife was busy tying a piece of string to one foot of his baby-daughter. The end of the string was tied to the arm of the only big chair they had. The baby-daughter would play till Jamis and his wife came back. If it cried, there was no harm done. They only closed the door. Tightly. Not locked. The other people in the tenement would open it and let themselves in and soothe the baby.

When Jamis arrived at the factory, there was peace all around. The watcher met him. He pushed aside the old sou'wester he wore and scratched his head. 'Nobody told you? No work for you today. The goods haven't arrived.'

'Oh, is that so,' Jamis said. He was not so worried at losing his pay for one day. But he had thought of going to the lavatory at the factory, when he had left home. Now he had to go back to the tenement and take his place in the queue.

B O O K S

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE V. S. SRINIVASA SASTRI by P. Kodanda Rao (*Asia Publishing House, 464 pp. Rs. 28*)

SSRINIVASA SASTRI and Kodanda Rao came together in one of the great associations of this century. When you saw the two together in the nineteen-twenties, you could have said straight off that Kodanda Rao would write Sastri's biography; you would have been even surer in later years when, their work taking them apart, you saw Kodanda Rao by himself. And now that Kodanda Rao has done it, there is a sense of completion, a rounding off, which somehow was wanting before. Sastri was a hard task-master—he imposed a longer period of testing on Kodanda Rao before he admitted him into the Servants of India Society than members ordinarily passed through and a severer test because he kept him under personal observation as it were. But the disciple was uncomplaining, devoted and attentive even if he showed himself at times critical.

The life of Sastri is an interesting focal point for the study of British-Indian relations in the first half of this century. The value of Kodanda Rao's political biography lies in the author's technique of letting Sastri speak for himself. Sastri was a Commonwealth Statesman who won recognition throughout the Commonwealth by reason of his persistent faith in the Commonwealth and in India's role in it, in particular. No action or pronouncement at Delhi or London by British politicians, nothing that the Gandhian Congress did, affected his belief. He was equally convinced that Mahatma Gandhi would in time lead the Congress back to the policies necessary to achieve this end, or break

with the Congress. His withdrawal from active politics in India was caused not by any loss of faith but by a feeling that in the obtaining atmosphere only harm could result from public expression of another point of view. He was extremely sceptical in the forties of all attempts to form a national government without the Congress, as his repeated warnings to both the British and to Indian leaders show.

The surprising affinity that existed between Sastri and Mahatma Gandhi, is well brought out in this book. Kodanda Rao maintains that Gokhale, Founder and First Member of the Servants of India Society, intended Gandhi to succeed him, in as much as he ever considered the matter. But Gokhale expressed no such preference to the members and on his death Sastri was elected while Gandhi was persuaded to withdraw his application for membership. Gandhi, however, always referred to Gokhale as his Master and innumerable instances exist of the high esteem in which Gokhale's successor and Gokhale's disciple held one another. Gandhi expressed his disapproval of Congress disturbances, wrote sharply of the students who were disorderly at Annamalai University and staunchly supported Sastri during his agentship in South Africa. For his part, Sastri would brook no criticism of Gandhi even from his closest associates. Sastri's affection for Gandhi is particularly manifest at the last three meetings between the two when ill-health and weakness had broken down the reserve of the shy and reticent Sastri.

Sastri's contribution to politics lay mainly in the Commonwealth countries; in India itself, he allowed events to crowd

him out. This emerges from the very first when he overestimated Gandhi's influence, misjudged his politics and, with the Moderates generally, gave up the fight for the Congress before even battle had been joined. Even in the limited circle of the Liberals, Sastri's influence failed to make itself felt. In the still narrower groove of the Servants of India Society, he did not assert himself. On the other hand, at the Round Table Conference in London, he rose to his full height in asking both the British Prime Minister and Mahatma Gandhi to create conditions favourable to the development of India as an equal member of the Commonwealth.

Kodanda Rao throws considerable light on Sastri as a man. As we read about his preferences and his prejudices, these strikingly evocative pages bring vividly to life the personality of Sastri. The liveliest chapters are those relating to Sastri's work in Africa, in Malaya and in Commonwealth conferences. Here Kodanda Rao writes his personal experience into the account.

S. NATARAJAN

Behind The Times

MARXISM, GANDHISM, STALINISM by C. G. Shah (Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 360 pp. Rs. 25)

THIS book is a collection of essays and lectures which Mr. Shah published and delivered over a period of thirty years. The author, who is now in his late sixties, has spent his entire life in the cause of spreading the marxist ideology. Having embraced communism in the twenties, Mr. Shah strongly reacted against the Stalinist apparatus of terror, the Soviet interference in the affairs of the Eastern European countries, particularly Hungary, the Chinese annexation of Tibet, etc. Nevertheless, the manifold practice of Marxism has not shaken his faith. For him it still continues to explain the world that we live in and is the only key to the attainment of justice in it.

The section on Marxism lacks a critical

approach. Basic tenets of Marxism are merely reproduced, though in simple language, without going deeper into their philosophical implications. The following is a case in point: 'only that ideology and programme of social reconstruction is finally *selected* by history, by the masses who make history which reflect the objective truth i.e. the historical necessity'. Apart from attributing god-like powers to history in true Hegelian fashion, even an orthodox Marxist might have explained how masses make history, what is meant by objective truth and historical necessity, but not Mr. Shah. He takes it for granted that his readers know what he is talking about. Like a true believer he merely quotes an authority in order to reinforce his argument without caring to comment on it.

His treatment of Stalinism and parliamentary reformism is a piece of poor journalism. We are told that Stalin could build an apparatus of terror because of the presence of a vast bureaucratic machinery, the low cultural level of the Russians and the encirclement of the Soviet Union by non-Communist countries. But nowhere does he relate the Stalinist phenomenon to the type of political system which obtains in the Soviet Union. What else, in fact, can be expected in a society which stifles all criticism and frank expression of opinion? Even Mr. Khrushchev, the growing symbol of liberalisation, does sometimes come out even to this day with the most idiotic comments on recent poetry and paintings in the Soviet Union which is enough to terrorise anyone into conformism excepting perhaps the very bravest. Whatever has been achieved by way of liberalisation in the Soviet Union is in fact due to the growing appreciation by the Russians of the free life outside the communist camp. It is a tide which the greatest of the bureaucrats and tyrants will not be able to stem for long.

Mr. Shah does not believe that parliamentary democracy plays any part in safeguarding individual freedom. He, as a matter of fact, rejects it completely. As he

says, 'bourgeois democracy with its parliaments and elections is the most formidable safety-valve devised by the bourgeoisie to divert the class struggle into harmless channels, to decoy the toiling masses into an eternal chase after the mirage of parliamentary capture of power.' (p. 129).

On Gandhi, Mr. Shah's views have changed considerably over a period of thirty years. Earlier he criticised Gandhi's highly controversial anti-modern views as contained in the latter's *'Hind Swaraj'*. Gandhi's anti-modernism made Mr. Shah conclude that 'Gandhism is the *last flash*, the most concentrated expression of the steadily declining religio-mystical "culture" and feudal petit-bourgeois socio-economic philosophy of Ancient India' (p. 279). Subsequently, when Gandhi was assassinated, Mr. Shah discovered an element of humanism in him and stopped calling him 'the supreme expression of the consciousness of the Indian bourgeois' (p. 288), and began to see his contribution to the Indian people as such. He now maintained that 'the Indian people, under his leadership, became heroic', (p. 291) and that Gandhi was 'the highest expression of nationalism' (p. 292). The author is no doubt aware of the changes in his views on Gandhi, but nowhere does he cast off his Marxist blinkers in order to get a more realistic view of Gandhi's encounter with the west and the more natural urge to go in search of purely Indian roots in the face of an overwhelming superiority of the west.

Even as a non-communist Marxist, Mr. Shah refuses to reconsider the theory of Marxism in the light of its practice. Contemporary revelations, observations, and commentaries, coming from thinkers sympathetic to Marxism as a social philosophy and a perspective on the world that we have outgrown, have no value for him. To continue to claim, as Mr. Shah does, that unqualified Marxism still explains the world and can still become the basis of an ideal society is merely to be hopelessly out of touch with a world that is changing very rapidly.

A. H. SOMJEE

Imperial Grab

BRITISH RELATIONS WITH SIND 1799-1843:
AN ANATOMY OF IMPERIALISM by Robert
A. Huttenback (University of California Press,
190 pp. 32s.)

SEAT of an amazing pre-historic civilisation; later, the richest Satrapy of the Achæmaenian Empire; scene of some of the most daring exploits of Alexander the Great and gateway for the entry of Islam into India, Sind has played a rather inconspicuous role in the drama of more recent Indian history. Circumstances, however, again thrust it into prominence during the half century ending with its annexation to British India in 1843. The book under review is a carefully documented guide through the maze of diplomacy and intrigue which led to the devouring of the 'dumba' (fat-tailed sheep) by the wolf, and the latter's self-justification that followed. It is a story which no self-respecting Britisher could contemplate with pride.

In 1783, the relatively unimportant Baluchi clan of Talpurs had displaced the Kalhora rulers of Sind. The Kalhoras were not Baluchis as stated on page VIII of this book, but, in the words of Lambrick (*Sir Charles Napier and Sind*), 'a Levitical family with many disciples among the Baluchis'. The Talpurs administered Sind as a family estate. Their patriarchal, irresponsible system of rule could not possibly long survive in the ruthless struggle for existence in the period of colonial and imperialist grab. Not only did branches of the Talpurs operate from three centres in Sind, but at two of the centres several individuals of the ruling branch ruled jointly, each with ill-defined autonomy. Further, semi-independent tribal chieftains held sway in large portions of Sind.

Nor were external affairs more promising for the viability of the Talpur regime: Nadir Shah's treaty with the Kalhoras had made Sind tributary to Kabul, and the suzerainty was enforced when feasible; the Talpurs coveted Cutch, which the British protected; the Jodhpur ruler actively

supported the claim to Sind of the Kalhora pretender and the Sikhs had their eye on at least the northern portions of Sind.

British policy was consistent only in the furtherance of trade and the acquisition of wealth by the least expensive means possible. Those in England were against expansion of territory; Calcutta intrigued, vacillated and waited for opportunity. Those on the spot, largely left to their own devices by reason of the vacillation and slow communications, did more or less as they chose and faced their superiors with the *fait accompli*. The annexation of Sind is an instance of this chaotic state of things. Sir Charles Napier conquered Sind almost before Calcutta had made up its mind and in spite of the wishes of London, and his action was first condoned, then justified.

The book covers much the same ground as Lambrick's *Sir Charles Napier and Sind* but the story is told at a different level, and addressed to a different audience. Lambrick writes with a consummate knowledge of life and conditions in Sind, its history and traditions, while the present work is more exclusively academic and archival. *British Relations* starts with the French threat to British India through Sind (1799-1809) when Napoleon made the impossible look possible. It describes the controversy over Cutch (1814-34), the ruthless establishment of British preponderance in Sind (1834-38), the Afghan Crisis (1834-41) and the shameful period of Ellenborough and Napier leading up to the actual annexation in 1843. The tale unfolds itself with the inevitability of a tragedy with Napier in the role of villain.

Of the Britons who played any notable part, Outram and Metcalfe alone show any decency or sense of fair play. Napier himself was in India, in his own words, 'only to barter a great lack of sovereigns in this country (England) for a lac of rupees in that (India)'. He was an unscrupulous megalomaniac, with an overbearing personality, gifted with an undoubted military skill, and he led the wavering and ill-informed Ellenborough by the nose. As to the morality of the conquest of Sind, he

had no illusions. He himself says: 'We have no right to seize Scinde, yet we shall do so, and a very advantageous, useful, humane piece of rascality it will be'. The apocryphal telegram from him to London on the defeat of the Amirs is 'non verb', but certainly 'ben trovato' — 'Peccavi, I have sinned' (Sind). It is, indeed, a shabby story clearly detailed here, of events leading up to a future for Sind which the most unbridled imagination could not have foreseen.

The book is admirable, but one regrets that a clearer picture is not presented of the Sindhi actors in the drama, also that more use is not made of the writings of Sindhi historians, notably Mirza Kalich Beg whose *History of Sind* incorporates 'Fatehnama' and *Frerinaana*.

A few misprints have been noted, e.g. in line 17, page VIII, the date of the Mogul conquest of Sind should be 1592, not 1529, while in the last line of p. 92, 'hold' should be 'old'. The map of 'Upper and Lower Sind' shows Fundara, Beria and Larkhana for Kandiaro, Bhiria and Larkana.

Chapter 6 and Conclusion are interesting and instructive and rouse regrets and speculations as to what 'might have been'.

HAMID A. ALI

The Other Community

A MODERN APPROACH TO ISLAM by A. A. A. Fyzee (Asia Publishing House, 113 pp. Rs. 16)

IS Islam relevant any longer? Its votaries stress its message of fraternity and equality and its emphasis on social justice. Its critics while conceding all these aver that the creed is, in the main, incompatible with modernity. It would be a mistake to imagine that the dialogue is solely between the ins and the outs. Within the ranks of Islam itself the debate rages. In this, a collection of four learned and stimulating essays Mr. Fyzee's theme is 'that the creed of Islam as it exists today needs reinterpretation.' Is it possible for instance for the Modern Muslim to live with Muslim law?

'In Islam law is not distinct from religion. The two streams flow in a single channel and are indistinguishable'. But the social conditions have varied and with them has arisen the need to reform the law. If religion be the bedrock of the law, how is reform possible?

Mr. Fyzee would simply separate the two? He formulates 'a five stage study': 'What was the condition of society in relation to a particular legal doctrine prior to Islam? What was the rule of law laid down by the Prophet? What was the result of such legislation? Today, after fourteen centuries, how is the rule interpreted in the diverse countries in which Islam subsists? Can we not, always keeping the spirit of Islam before us, mould the rules of law so that healthy reforms can be carried out?'. Few will disagree with this very sensible and very necessary questionnaire. The questions will need to be asked if Islamic society is to be revitalised.

So far so good. It is when he goes further that one begins to question the author's solution. He sees the growth of laws in the modern state and since they are outside the ambit of *Sharia* wonders whether the *Sharia* itself may not altogether be discarded.

It is the writer's conviction that gradually all individual and personal laws, based upon ancient principles governing the social life of the community, will either be abolished or so modified as to bring them within a general scheme of laws applicable to all persons, regardless of religious differences. This movement is already strong in subjects like industrial legislation, the various branches of the governmental process, and also in personal law, such as that pertaining to civil marriage and divorce. Such gradual modifications, even of the rules of *Sharia* do not destroy the essential truth of the faith of Islam.

This belief leads him confidently to urge that 'The separation of civil law from the moral or religious law can no longer be delayed in Islam'.

Now, is this at all possible, desirable, or

even necessary? Is there not room for reform *within* the law itself? Mr. Fyzee is a man in a hurry. Distressed by the pitiable state of the Muslims ('we discern political weakness, economic instability, spiritual bankruptcy') he is anxious to reinterpret the faith so that the root cause of it all, spiritual bankruptcy is removed. From reform of the law he proceeds to a 'reinterpretation' of the faith and, once again, we are asked to fill in a questionnaire apropos the Quranic directives. 'What was the rule or custom before Islam? How did the Prophet try to reform it? What were the results of such reform? How were the rules applied and interpreted in the various schools of law in the succeeding centuries? What is the present state of the personal law? How does it fall short of the highest norms fixed by modern juristic thinking? How the reform?' Who can possibly quarrel with this? As with law so with religion, Mr. Fyzee makes a clean sweep. 'And what does Islam do, so far as religious doctrine is concerned?' He angrily asks and answers 'It closes the Gate of Interpretation'. Mr. Fyzee will open the gate — for himself. He will select from among the rules and damn the *Ulemas*. 'It must be asserted firmly, no matter what the *Ulemas* say, that he who sincerely affirms that he is a Muslim is a Muslim; no one has the right to question his beliefs and no one has the right to ex-communicate him'. Further 'I give to every Muslim and indeed to every man, the right to fashion his own faith'.

Thus is the whole problem solved. The law separated from religion, and religion interpreted individually. It rather reminds me of Mr. Shaw's famous retort to a heckler 'We are both Marxists. I in the Marxian way, you in your own'. Acceptance of an individual's faith is *good law even in Islam*. But here we find with it a denial of some of the very fundamentals of Islam. 'Observers have noted the paramount position of the community in Islam' Prof. Wilfred Cantwell Smith writes. Islam deals with man in society. This, indeed, has been among its outstanding features. There

is room for dissent but not for a complete departure for one who wishes to be within the ranks. It is too late to cavil at this. The Supreme Court of India has upheld the right of a community to excommunicate a member on the ground that he does not subscribe to its fundamentals.' To this is owed its social cohesion. What after all is Islam without the *Millet*? It is not difficult to see why Mr. Fyzee would make the faith solely a matter of varying individual belief. He is afraid that its collective identity would conflict with the present set-up and the trend towards secularity.

Mr. K. M. Pannikar shows far greater understanding of the Muslim world when in his book 'The Foundation of New India', he pleads for an 'adjustment between the two, the acceptance by the Hindus of the Muslims as an integral part of Indian life, organized separately, possessing a culture of their own and constituting an important part of the Indian nation, though a minority: and equally the acceptance by the Muslims that in the new India the Hindus constitute not merely a majority but the dominant society and culture'.

Mr. Fyzee's solution would end Islam as a social force. The writ of habeas corpus he would issue to release Islam from a tyrannical government would release an altogether different Islam. Yet, granted the need for cohesion and discipline, the question remains: Does Islam indeed close the Gate of Interpretation? Is the *Sharia* immune to change? What good the discipline if it subserves sheer irrelevance?

Mr. Fyzee is by no means the first to address himself to the question. Before him the poet-philosopher Iqbal did so and came to a contrary opinion in his lecture entitled 'The Principle of Islam.'

'The claim of the present generation of Muslim liberals to re-interpret the foundational legal principles, in the light of their own experience and the altered conditions of modern life is, in my opinion, perfectly justified. The teaching of the Quran that life is a process of progressive creation

necessitates that each generation, guided but unhampered by the work of its predecessors, should be permitted to solve its own problems'.

He ascribes the present stagnation to 'the intense conservation of the Muslims of India'. Nowhere does he complain that Islam has bolted the Gate of Interpretation. Mr. Fyzee himself says 'The correct interpretation appears to be that some verses (of the Quran) are directly, whilst others must be interpreted suitably before they can be applied'. Does this shut the Gate of Interpretation? Unfortunately, one is not sure what it is that Mr. Fyzee is really angry with, the creed or its current practice. 'Throughout the Arab East, during Ramadan, the night is treated as if it were meant for feasting etc.' is an example of this confused thinking. But that is not to deny the ossification of Islamic law and institutions. Iqbal uses the same metaphor, not for Islam but for one of its most fruitful principles. 'The closing of the door of *Ijtihad* is pure fiction suggested partly by the crystallization of legal thought in Islam, and partly by the intellectual laziness which, especially in the period of spiritual decadence turns great thinkers into idols. If some of the later doctors have upheld this fiction, modern Islam is not bound by this voluntary surrender of intellectual independence.' This independence must be regained now in order that Islam may move its followers to the quest of Truth as it did before with such conspicuous success.

A. G. NOORANI

How Much Religion?

INDIA AS A SECULAR STATE, by Donald Eugene Smith, (Princeton University Press, Indian Edition by Oxford University Press, 500 pp. Rs. 30)

THE establishment of a secular, democratic constitution in India symbolises the silent but revolutionary transformation which is coming over Indian society. The concepts of secularism and democracy are

both somewhat foreign to the Indian political tradition. On the one hand both the structure of society and its operating ideals have been authoritarian; on the other hand life in all its forms has been regulated to the minutest details by religion. With the establishment of British rule began the process of secularization and democratization which has run into our present time and although the process began over two hundred years ago, only the surface of Indian life has been touched. The story of this great change and the tensions it has given rise to constitutes the exciting theme of Donald Eugene Smith's book.

In a lucid historical introduction Professor Smith describes the outlines of British policy towards religion. The British rulers were cautious enough not to make any frontal attack on native sentiment. In fact in the early nineteenth century the East India Company took upon itself the positive role of supporting native religious institutions. Indeed there is nothing more remarkable than the way in which the Company's administration took over the patronage of Hindu and Muslim religious institutions, thus continuing the example set by some of the great Hindu and Muslim rulers in the country. But this policy of the Company invited a storm of angry criticism from missionaries who accused the Company of having willingly become the 'dry nurse to Vishnu' and the 'church warden of Jaganath.' The agitation was strong enough to compel the Court of Directors to issue a despatch in 1833 which marked a change in policy.

The new policy of neutrality was negative and based on a fear of inciting local revolt. The mutiny of 1857 served to substantiate the worst fears of the British rulers. The task of reforming Hindu society was shelved for over three decades. At the end of the nineteenth century when Hindu social reformers were consumed by a burning desire to eradicate some of the obnoxious practices of popular Hinduism, the British officials were driven to adopt a position of extreme caution. This is well

brought out in the attitude of the bureaucracy to the Age of Consent Bill. To be fair to the officials it must be stated that the attitude of the extremists and of Tilak in particular was largely responsible for the reluctance of the Government to support the reformers. Professor Smith rightly points out that the outlook of the extremists was far from secular but one wishes he had gone into greater details about the social reform movement of the late nineteenth century.

Professor Smith emphasizes that the British policy of neutrality provided a direct antecedent to the secular State in India and that this policy was reinforced by an egalitarian legal system, secular education and by the best traditions of a modern bureaucracy. He mentions two other elements in the secularism of India today: (1) The long tradition of religious tolerance which enabled the most diverse creeds to coexist peacefully. (2) The emphasis of the Indian National Congress which defined its objectives from the very outset in the secular idiom of the west and denied the relevance of Hindu-Muslim differences to questions of national policy. The author concludes that the setting up of a secular State has been 'the result of attitudes, policies and forces which had taken shape over hundreds of years; thousands of years if one considers the tradition of religious tolerance.' It seems to the reviewer that this attractive view of Hindu religious tolerance is based on a very selective interpretation of Indian history. It is possible to substantiate the opposite thesis by pointing to fierce schisms in the history of the early Jaina church or to the actions of several fanatical Hindu rulers.

The actual working of the secular State presents several contradictions. Partly this is due to the attempt by a secular State to reform Indian society but since the State may not interfere with the religious practices of the Muslims or of any other religious minority in the country without being accused of undermining its professed secularism, in practice this only means an

interference with the institutions of Hinduism.

The articles in the Constitution providing for equality of opportunity has brought into existence what has been called 'protective discrimination' in the interests of those sections of the community which need support. Professor Smith discusses the implications of this policy of protective discrimination in a chapter called 'Caste and the Secular State'. The conflict between protective discrimination and the principle of equality of opportunity was brought out forcefully in *Keshava Iyengar v. State of Mysore* (1956) in which the High Court of Mysore upheld the appointment by the State of ten candidates to employment in the public services of whom seven were nominated from backward classes and only three were recruited on qualification. Commenting on this case in an article on *The Secular State in India and the U.S.* in the *Journal of the Indian Law Institute* (Jan-Mar. 1960) Professor C. H. Alexandrowicz made the following observations which underline the conclusions of Professor Smith:

'It may seem deplorable that qualification was not allowed to have more influence on the selection of the candidates but the Court being constitutionally authorised to discriminate in favour of backward classes, pronounced itself in favour of far-reaching support to members of these classes — no doubt in order to introduce fresh blood into the civil service. Whatever the merits or demerits of this decision, it marks extensive State intervention in defiance of religious or caste tradition and it may be asked whether it is compatible with the tenets of the secular State which is not supposed to discriminate on grounds of religion (caste)'.

Professor Smith emphasizes that the introduction of the electoral system has given caste associations a new lease of life — a conclusion which receives support from several other students of Indian politics. The Indian political parties have been convinced of the importance of 'coming to terms' with caste groupings and they have

exploited caste factors for political ends. It is ironical that the Congress which in its heyday stoutly defended secularism should today like all other parties exploit caste. Professor Smith writes: 'By and large, the Congress Party has been as guilty as any other in playing this kind of politics, despite frequent resolutions condemning the evils of casteism and calling for the emotional integration of the nation.' (p. 327)

Secularism and democracy are responsible for generating some of the worst tensions in the present period of transition from tradition to modernity. It is difficult to assess the strength or weakness of the opposing forces and one has sympathy for the predicament of the author in forecasting future trends. There is room he says, for a cautious optimism but warns us that it would be foolish to assume that secularism has taken roots. The author rightly stresses the link between the secular State and the attempt to create a democratic political system:

'The secular state is important to the future of Indian democracy itself. It stands or falls as a basic and inseparable component of the modern liberal democratic state. The secular state is thus a fundamental aspect of India's democratic experiment, an experiment which might conceivably break down as much by establishing Hinduism as the state religion as by eliminating freedom of the press.' (Preface, p. viii)

Professor Smith has made an important contribution to the study of contemporary India and he has ventured into a field left comparatively untilled. He has skilfully used the materials scattered in various government documents, in newspapers and in Supreme Court decisions. The books he has consulted are secondary in character. But the documentation which has been processed into the book has been used imaginatively with the result that at times even the footnotes can be interesting. Thus in a footnote on pp. 147-48 the author tells us that Mr. Sanjiva Reddy reproduced a number of sentences from Radhakrishnan's foreword to S. Abid

Hussain's *The National Culture of India* in the course of his Presidential address to the Indian National Congress at Bhavnagar in January 1961 without any reference to the eminent writer!

India as a Secular State contains a wealth of information; portions of the book are of course needlessly amplified and one feels that the historical introduction could have been shortened. In spite of these obvious shortcomings the volume is an important contribution to the study of modern India.

S. P. AIYAR

The Great Outsider

DR. AMBEDKAR, LIFE AND MISSION. by Dhananjay Keer (Popular Prakshan, 522 pp. Rs. 20)

WHEN a man acquires eminence in public life it is inevitable that he should lose his identity in a cocoon of legend that spins around him; he soon becomes something supra-human—an institution. It is the kindly practice of society, after such a man has passed away, to commemorate the 'institution' in a number of fat volumes brimming with every detail of his life and career and punctuated at appropriate intervals with eulogies and compliments. Yet, in spite of convention, one looks to the biographer to extricate this poor man from the mass of legends—to pick out the essence of his character from the welter of information.

Mr. Keer, however, takes the conventional stand in what the dust-jacket describes as the 'full length authoritative biography of Dr. Ambedkar'. Every credit must be given for the tremendous amount of research and industry that must have gone into the making of this exhaustive work. In a way it is the last word in the matter of incidents in the life and work of Dr. Ambedkar. Mr. Keer's direct and careful narrative leaves very little unsaid. What perhaps eluded this intrepid research worker was the conflict in the



HINDUS of the Himalayas

GERALD D. BERREMAN

This is an important book because it contains the first ethnographic treatment of the people of the lower Himalayas, the most densely populated and accessible part of the Himalayas. It is also the first attempt to see these people in the context of modern India rather than as quaint remnants from the past. The lower Himalayas of North India are the home of five million Paharis and this book describes the historical and physical setting of Pahari life. Rs 25

INDIA as a Secular State

DONALD EUGENE SMITH

The author explores the origin of the concept of secularization as it is found both in Indian culture and in the example of the West. He emphasizes the important role of secularization in India's total democratic experiment and points out that the degree of its realization will undoubtedly affect the eventual character of democracy in India. Princeton Rs 30

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS



fascinating personality of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar,—the man who might have been a different person—a different institution even, had the times been different.

It may be argued that a political biography can afford to steer clear of the psychological ramifications in a man's character. But even here one looks for some depth in the picture of a living struggle. The least one can demand is an interpretation that is objective and critical. Has Mr. Keer attempted to give this?

The story of Dr. Ambedkar's clash with Gandhiji is given in sweeping statements, extolling Ambedkar's great singleness of purpose and bickering at the 'stagecraft and statecraft' and other atrocious faults of the Mahatma. Mr. Keer does not ponder over questions like—why was it that Ambedkar, a man of great sincerity and ideals was not drawn to the greater cause of the nation? Why did his sympathies remain confined within the narrow circle of a certain class of society? Why did he not transcend the limits? At a time when the nationalist movement absorbed every thinking Indian, why did Dr. Ambedkar remain an outsider, refusing to identify himself with the whole nation?

The man had tremendous potentialities and yet the hurt and mortifications that he suffered as an untouchable had affected him deeply—had twisted something in him for ever. Ambedkar stood for the Untouchables. Gandhi stood for the nation. Ambedkar's blindness to Gandhiji's greater ideal can be understood better perhaps, than the chronicler's strange refusal to study it. That it was Gandhiji's most cherished desire to preserve the unity of Hinduism and also of India as a whole, is at least one plausible interpretation of his attitude to the problem of untouchability. This does not seem to occur to the writer.

In spite of several compliments to Ambedkar's erudition and his Doctor's Degree, Mr. Keer does not convey Ambedkar's true intellectual stature. Here was a man who was not merely a scholar and an academician but one who might have been, but for the accident of the

times, a thinker. The keen intellect and clear reasoning were not all. Here was an almost philosophic mind harnessed by circumstances to the affairs of the world. But circumstances cannot be explained away lightly. It is amazing that a man who rose so high could not rise a little higher. The man who was not content with merely abolishing untouchability, who revolted against the very institution of *Varnashram* still believed in the written word and set himself up as the Modern Manu—to codify and formulate a new set of rigid rules. Call it naiveness, call it a literal bent of mind—it still remains a limitation.

The tragedy of Ambedkar's life is its unresolved inner conflicts—the rebel with the conformist, the intellectual with the humanitarian, the politician with the idealist. In his attempt to paint a flawless hero, Mr. Keer misses the very essence of the drama.

'To Mahatma Gandhi religion was politics whereas to Babasaheb Ambedkar true religion was the foundation of society and was essential to life and progress of society', declares Mr. Keer. Does it amount to the almost Voltaire-like pragmatism, 'if God did not exist we would have to invent him.'? Did Mr. Keer really want to show that to Ambedkar religion was a social convenience? Surely not; and yet Ambedkar was once strongly inclined towards Sikhism as an alternative to Untouchability. He gave it up in the face of the problem of reserved seats and joint electorates for the Depressed Classes in the new constitution, and also as his differences with the Sikh leaders widened. His later inclination and final conversion to Buddhism has a different tone altogether. Here perhaps was genuine conviction rather than opportunism. Yet the conflict cannot be denied. Why is the biographer silent about it?

There is something impersonal in Ambedkar's love of the masses, the lowliest of humanity. His sincerity cannot be disputed. His sacrifices for the sake of his fellow beings is obvious. And yet his humanitarianism had a touch of intellect-

ual aristocracy. Gandhiji had the capacity for a human and personal approach to the vast mass of his followers. Ambedkar the saviour of Untouchables remained aloof and a little unapproachable in his personal life. Was it an innate reserve? Was it a failure to identify himself completely with his followers? Mr. Keer does not touch the question.

It is the tragedy of many great leaders that their service to humanity costs them the personal luxury of intellectual culture. But this loss is usually compensated by the richer experience of a living touch with life. Perhaps Nehru the great political leader could have been one of the leading philosophers of our age had India spared him the time. Yet what Nehru gained makes us forget his loss. This was not so of Ambedkar. This lonely man sacrificed the demands of his intellect for the cause of the untouchables. Did he gain broader horizons—larger sympathies? What he did for the uplift of the Untouchables could not have been done by any other man in any other way—but it was he who paid dearly for this. It is this great price that Mr. Keer has failed to take into account.

Mr. Keer is so content with his hero-worshipping attitude that he fails to see the poignant tragedy of the life—the events and incidents all rushing towards the catastrophe—the stunting of a giant by the force of circumstances and the inner forces in the very soul of the man. The unblemished hero of the long panegyric could have been a true tragic hero instead of a flawless and implausible paragon of perfection.

SIMLA MALLIK

Playwright's Predicament

THE DOLDRUMMERS, THE DUMB DANCER, AND OM: three plays by Asif Currimbhoy (Soraya Publishers, Bombay, 222 pp. Rs 7.50)

THE Indian playwright writing in English is so rare that it is easy to attribute too much importance, and merit, to the few that there are. Neither of Mr. Currimbhoy's previously published plays —

The Tourist Mecca and *The Clock*, issued together two years ago in Bombay — nor any of the three very diverse works in this new batch, could be described as distinguished. But this new collection does reveal a playwright who has thought about his craft, and who has a lively imagination. At times he writes promisingly. He should go on making plays. His predicament (he can fairly lay claim to one) is unenviable: there is virtually no western theatre in India, and no audience for the sort of play a playwright ought to want to write.

A lot of fuss is made, on the quite deplorable exterior of this book, of the first play inside, the *Doldrummers*, which was banned for a time by those benign guardians of Maharashtra's morals, the State government's Board of Censors. In a case like this the immaturity of censorship is particularly well revealed, because the play in fact deals with commonplace ideas in a far from provocative or arresting way; its impact, when it is compared with the type of western contemporary beat drama that it apes, is slight. There are occasional patches of disgust at the rottenness and anti-climax of post-1947 India, but for the play to come over effectively as a demonstration against modern Indian urban society — if this indeed were ever Mr. Currimbhoy's intention — it would need to be a play about Indians. Rita and Liza, the two tarts, and their friends Tony and Joe, may well exist up the seedy end of Juhu, but they are to be found in a hundred other cities of the 'civilized' world too, and their struggle to come to terms with the inadequacies of their human condition is an old story, and not a very interesting one. An array of quips in American, weary would-be clevernesses about what love really boils down to, a swig of gin, a spit in the eye, a slap in the face, an accidental child (by the wrong father) — these are the kinds of ingredients which make this play so thoroughly *déjà vu* and unoriginal. It is a pity Mr. Currimbhoy tries to write in this tired idiom.

This isn't to say that the *Doldrummers*

has no poignant moments, or that it wouldn't get across to a live audience. There is pathos in Rita's progress; we have seen her persuaded not to be squeamish about whoring, and in a scene when she overhears two schoolboys talking as they hesitate on her doorstep and run away at the approach of the postman we know that Currimbhoy has a discernible sense of theatre and can write well.

We are tempted to read on, and we hit upon what proves to be the most interesting play of the three: a piece with gusto, and the diversion of bloodshed. It is a study of a girl in charge of a mental asylum who, infatuated by one of her patients, seeks to cure him by shock therapy — by getting him to re-live the harrowing experience which unbalanced him. He was a Kathakali trainee, so mishandled by his guru that he cut out his own tongue in his quest for perfection. The therapy takes the form of making him enact, as Bhima, the dance sequence of Duryodhana's slaughter from the Mahabharata. A dry run-through fails to do the trick; and Prema, the superintendent, learning from a spasm of her patient's lunacy that she is identified in his mind with Draupadi, decides in the end that it is worth while carving open a rival lover to obtain some real blood and some warm guts to jolt the dancer back to sanity.

Finally, *Om*. This is tentative and experimental, and must, I think, be seen to be believed. Mr. Currimbhoy is under no illusions; his elaborate footnotes disarm the critic who only reads the play (if he has the patience). The subject is, evidently, a symbolization of the spiritual development, in Hindu terms, of man over the past four thousand years. This, the author tells us, excuses the characters from the need to speak in a normal language, and they certainly make good use of this licence. It also calls for shadow-plays, underwater effects, off-stage noises, and other such distractions. Mr. Currimbhoy clearly knows how to enjoy himself.

STEWART MELLUISH

Type Cast

TWILIGHT IN DJAKARTA by Mochtar Lubis
Translated from the Indonesian by Claire Holt
(Hutchinson 253 pp. 21s.)

THIS is the first volume in a new series 'New Voices in Translation' to be issued by Hutchinson in association with the Congress for Cultural Freedom. Mochtar Lubis, the author of this novel, has been detained in prison without trial since 1961, so that the publication of this book represents in itself, an effort for 'cultural freedom.'

This effort is strengthened by the substance of this novel with a purpose, for it depicts the political and social life of Djakarta: the corruption in public life, the self-seeking politicians, the greed for money, the disregard for any standards of public or private morality. The characters are types: Husin Lunbara, the party boss; Raden Kaslan the big financier who supports the party and is supported by it; Surpono the playboy, choosing the easy way to wealth and women; Dabha, who uses her beauty to supplement the meagre income of an honest husband; Achmad the communist, who knows with certainty the way he wants to go; Pranoto the earnest but ineffective liberal; and so on.

Mochtar Lubis has woven the lives of these people with skill into a total picture revealing a rot eating so deeply into society that it is difficult to know where and how it can be combated. Unfortunately, much of the picture woven by Lubis is an accurate representation, not only of the situation in Indonesia, but in a host of other newly independent countries as well.

The title of the novel must remind Indian writers of Ahmed Ali's *Twilight in Delhi*, and the great difference between these two novels — one depicting the twilight of a gracious age, the other the twilight of the brave hopes of a fight for independence — is a good indication of the changes that have come about in our world in these past twenty years.

Since Ahmed Ali, there have been many

novels about India in English, by Indians as well as others. One major problem for them is the rendering of dialogue in English, trying to retain some of its colloquial and idiomatic colour. This has been done with varying degrees of success: Mrs. Jhabvala's Indian-English of the middle classes; Mulk Raj Anand's virile renderings of Hindustani expressions; R. K. Narayan's quaint and special flavourings; and a general sprinkling of common Hindustani words and expressions, either foot-noted or explained in a glossary. We have got used to these devices, and, no doubt because the Hindustani is familiar to us, they convey the effect they are meant to.

The translator of *Twilight in Djakarta* has faced the same problem but in a more acute form. There have been relatively few Indonesian novels in English; the Indonesians do not intersperse their conversation with English words, and above all, the Indonesian idiom is strange to us. The translator herself has pointed out the difficulty of 'finding some convincing equivalent to the colourful and phonetically idiosyncratic Djakarta dialect spoken by the uneducated city workers' and the 'impossibility of rendering its full local flavour'. It is perhaps impossible for someone ignorant of this dialect to judge how far the translation has succeeded, but since the novel will be read mainly by people who do not know it, the attempt seems laboured and ineffective. It is sometimes almost incomprehensible ('me not bitter if he, who wants to pass, would be the number of Pak President and his name also would be Pak President's 'Y's only proper to give way — lives he not in the place') and sometimes sounds like Americanese ('How 'bout diving a betja, isn't it kind of better than this sort of work?')

One other small point. When Indonesian words are used the explanation is given in footnotes. I find footnotes in a novel disturbing: for instance pages 18 and 19, facing each other, have four lines of footnotes each. I feel that a glossary at the end of the book would be better: it would also be easier for those who have forgotten the

meaning of a term by the time they get to it the second time.

AAMIR ALI

Cry Anyway

CRY, THE PEACOCK by Anita Desai. (Peter Owen, 188 pp. 18s.)

FOR her first novel, Mrs. Desai has chosen a well-worn theme—that of Fate, its mystery, the brooding terror it creates in those conscious of it.

Young and sensitive Maya, (the narrator of the story), beset by an overwhelming desire to love and be loved is married to Gautama, an older, 'gaunt, sarcastically silent intellectual', who has little time for her and who cannot understand her. The gulf between them widens with the death of Maya's dog which brings back to her mind a childhood prophecy of disaster. Now, more than ever before, Maya longs to bridge the gap between them, to communicate with her husband, 'to unfold' before him and to draw him into her world of 'sounds, senses, movements, odours, colours, tunes'. But their two worlds are not destined to meet. She seems to be forever climbing 'a mountain from the top of which could be seen the entire world, unfolded like a map, with sun-silked trees and milk-mild rivers and jewelled townships amidst fields of grain and valleys and tracts, all fruitful, all fore-scent while he, because he did not care for walks, or views, was tired from reading too much, remained behind in the dusty, enclosed cup of the small plain below.' This quotation, incidentally, is a fair sample of the author's flowery style.

Gautama treats her as one would a fanciful child: 'Life is a fairy tale to you still. What have you learnt of the realities? The realities of common human existence, not love and romance, but living and dying and working.' For a while, under Gautama's tutelage, the conviction grows upon her that her world of the senses is 'fatal', whilst the 'solid' down-to-earth world that is her husband's is real. And.

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if this is so, it is she who must perish since the prophecy said that one of the partners would die from 'unnatural causes' within a few years of their marriage. Maya's feverish mind wonders whether, to escape disaster, she should school herself to be like Gautama, train herself to remain untouched by the world around her. But how can she, who longs 'to drink with life as with wine', force herself into what seems a deadening cage of sensible behaviour to her? The summer heat grows more and more suffocating, echoing the hysteria that is mounting in her brain. It is the climatic dust storm at the end that goads her to her final decision.

The narrative is told in a mixture of realism and fantasy, through interior monologue, snatcher of dialogue and flights of description. It is greatly weakened by the self-conscious affectations of phrase which betray a painful amateurishness in the writing. For instance, in her father's garden, Maya plays 'battledore . . . and . . . shuttlecock, using the small bright oranges as shuttlecocks that shoot, bird-like, through the air and are broken, egg-like, on the grass...' The novel is cluttered up with similar images which are neither original, nor effective. 'The luscious water' oozed out of the bath tap, 'the curtain fell in tragic folds', 'the sun hung pendant from the topmost branches of the trees'.

Most of the characters in the novel remain shadowy bundles of qualities, puppets with little volition of their own: Pom is 'plump, pink, pretty' and little else, Gautama's Sikh friend, 'a prosperous, buoyant, witless fool'; Maya's father, an indulgent silver-haired man with 'beautiful manicured hands', who can speak in gentle, cultured tones on books, gardens and art; Gautama is generally wooden, obtuse and unconvincing. The really notable feature of the novel is the portrayal of Maya—the vulnerable creature who is brutally brought to the horror and reality of being hypersensitive. Maya, who, as a child 'enjoyed princess-like a sumptuous fare of fantasies of the Arabian

Nights, the glories and bravado of Indian mythology' has never quite grown up. Terrified by her loneliness, desperately striving to find someone who wishes to share with her her conception of life as 'one brief episode into which all experience, all success, all virtue must be crammed', Maya is sometimes endearing. It is she who sustains this somewhat improbable story and affords it a measure of life.

NAYANA DAFTARY

SHORTER REVIEWS

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

By LAEEQ FUTEHALLY

CONTEMPORARY HINDI SHORT STORIES

selected and translated by Jai Ratan (Writers Workshop, 103 pp. Rs. 4.50)

WE ARE, at last, learning to face the bitter truth that contemporary Indian writing, whether in English or in our own languages, has not yet produced anything to which we can apply world standards. Many foreign publishers and editors have been fired with the idea of publishing translations from creative writing done in the Indian languages. The explanation for the fact that no such book has actually appeared is very simple. Our writing did not come up to their minimum requirements.

This small volume of contemporary Hindi short stories underlines this position rather than refutes it. The selection is made from stories of a certain length and from work produced after 1947. Granting these limitations it still has to be admitted that not one of these stories would be likely to find a place in an English or American magazine, even a non-literary one. Our old habits of easy sentimentality and paper-doll characterisation continue to be the strongest features of the short story even though, superficially, many of the pieces have a 'modern' form, being stories of 'atmosphere' and 'mood'.

The vast amount of translation work which has been undertaken since the last war has clearly established one fact about the translation of creative writing. As with a quarrel, it takes two

to make a good translation. Mr. Jai Ratan has done the work single-handed and he is not displeased with his own effort. 'We...believe that we have been able to do some justice to the contemporary Hindi short story', he says. The reader will not be able to share this complacency. Mr. Jai Ratan does not have the necessary command over the English language to make the reader forget the medium, which in a sense should be the real aim of the translator. Attention is continuously distracted from the thread of the narrative by the awkwardness of the English rendering. And here I am not complaining of ordinary Indian English, but of wrong phrases which no literate person has any business to use in speech, let alone in print. 'Please reach them home' is used to mean 'please see them home', 'curiosity for him' is used instead of 'curiosity about him', 'thin like stricks' instead of 'thin as sticks' and so on, page after page. It is impossible to take seriously a story presented in such sorry language; and what little chance the original writer had of creating some sense of conviction seems to be deliberately destroyed by the translator in every line.

AN EXPERIMENT IN EDUCATION by Sybil Marshall (Cambridge University Press, 222 pp. 25s.)

A BOOK ABOUT the work of a primary school teacher need not necessarily be dull, of course. Still, one seldom expects to sit up half the night, unable to put down a book on such a subject.

Mrs. Marshall's school consisted of 28 children between 4 and 11 years old. She was supposed to teach all the subjects to all of them, although her own special interest lay in art. The first few lessons were not promising. 'Day after day they would produce microscopic tanks, armoured cars, ships or aeroplanes, of most primitive design, all stranded in a desert of white paper.' A few years later these same children were producing paintings which were exhibited in the U.S.A., which won prizes at London and which have since been used as slides in lectures at training colleges.

Mrs. Marshall herself does not claim to be a first-rate artist. Her remarkable results were due to her vivid, almost reckless imagination and to a personality which could create a sense of feverish enthusiasm in her pupils. Every morning, she says, the children and teacher could hardly bear to wait for school to open so that they might plunge into the important work of the day. It is this same feeling of breathless enthusiasm which rushes the reader along with her, unable to close the book.

Sybil Marshall evolved a system of basing the term's activity on some one work of art. One term for instance, the theme was *The Canterbury Tales* and geography, history as well as composition and art were studied in the context, as it were, of Chaucer and his Tales. The last and most audacious theme was Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. The children learnt to analyse a symphony; each movement gave them a *leit motif* on which to base their work, in the different aspects of nature which the symphony describes. And it also seems true, as Mrs. Marshall claims, that the children were literally inspired by the music to write and paint at a level which they had never before achieved.

The material circumstances of Mrs. Marshall's job were not unlike the circumstances in which a village school teacher in India works. There was the same lack of equipment and resources, the same type of conservative distrust from the community in the beginning. On the problem of facing and overcoming these handicaps, Mrs. Marshall has much practical advice which ought to put new heart and courage into each one of our own school teachers.

MADAME AMBASSADOR: THE LIFE OF VIJAYA LAKSHMI PANDIT by Anne Guthrie (Macmillan & Co. 172 pp. 16s.)

THE DOMESTIC and family life of the Nehrus has been described, several times and different levels by members of the Nehru family themselves. Any new book which aimed at tramping over the same ground must recognize that it would be competing with works which, whatever else, can claim authenticity. A superficial account of Mrs. Pandit's life at second-hand would be worth reading (even for a non-Indian public) only if it could claim either literary merit or shrewd analysis. This book has neither.

The author's special gift as a writer is to make the banal sound even more banal. 'When Nan went (to the temple) with her mother, she loved the sound of the temple bells. If the wind blew or there was a soft breeze they tinkled in a pleasing fashion' or again 'For old and young alikeit was a delight to see the Nehru daughter, Swarup Kumari. She was always in and out, on the verandah or in the library or wherever family and guests might gather'. One might have thought that there was enough inci-

A New Look At Communism

*Papers read at the seminar convened by
The Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom
at Bombay on August 30 – September 1, 1963*

CONTRIBUTORS

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Philip Spratt, and R. Srinivasan

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dent in Mrs. Pandit's life to make this kind of acute detailing unnecessary in a short book of 172 pages.

In writing about the triumphs of her adult life the author again prefers to catch the trees and miss the wood. Mrs. Pandit is generally, one cannot help feeling, admired for the wrong reasons. 'She...flew to San Francisco and, to the delight of the photographers, was garlanded in true Indian fashion. The next morning her picture was in all the San Francisco papers.' And again, 'Graciously the Queen Mother presented the

degree...For a moment the great crowded hall was hushed as the two women, each a Queen in her own right 'as someone described them, stood for a few seconds smiling at each other. To many it was an unforgettable sight.' Mrs. Pandit's real greatness is somehow insulted and made smaller by the innumerable references to her 'graciousness' her small figure, pastel sari and grey hair. The obvious public for this book is, of course the woman's magazine reader. It should have been serialized in a woman's magazine, preferably in a country where people do not know too much about India.

Our Reviewers

S. NATARAJAN, a well-known journalist and writer, he is now working for the Council of Economic Education.

A. H. SOMJEE, Head of the Dept. of Politics, Baroda University. Recently spent a year as a lecturer at the London School of Economics.

HAMID A. ALI, I.C.S. (retd.) lives at Mussoorie. Spent a major part of his service life in Sind, where he was known as an authority on its history and culture.

STEWART MELLUISH has been in India for about five years, as head of the Oxford University Press in Madras.

AAMIR ALI works for the Institute of Labour Relations, Geneva.

A. G. NOORANI is a Bombay barrister; he is also a legal commentator for *The Indian Express*.

S. P. AIYAR is the Edwin-Montagu lecturer in Political Science in the University of Bombay. He is at present editing a book on *The Foundations of Indian Democracy*.

NAYANA DAFTARY has recently returned to Bombay after taking her master's degree at Washington State University and doing a short spell of literary research at Girton College, Cambridge.

SIMA MALLIK studied journalism at Nagpur University. She will shortly join the *Times of India* as a trainee.

CORRESPONDENCE

Dear Sir,

I found the article by H. R. Pasricha very distressing. QUEST should invite political discussion on principles, not statements like 'A large majority of the leadership is made up of men who were incapable of earning a decent livelihood in the open market.' Now, some individuals may have talent only for political organization, and so may not shine in other work, just as some other individuals do well as physicians and yet make mediocre political beings. Amateurs are not good enough in medicine, nor in politics. If professionals are to give good service, they have to be paid decently. If the formally allowed salaries are ridiculously inadequate, it is necessary to arrange prerequisites. I doubt very much that our ruling class has been taking more than it fairly deserves for the services.

Statements at such a low level obscure the real dilemma that our elite is just as unenlightened as our masses. It is true that in the eagerness for relief from poverty we have come close to killing the goose that lays the eggs. That is, we have been neglecting that minority of the population who alone have the talent, the background, and

the opportunity to compete at the international level. The illiterate peasant may be allowed to choose the rulers, but not to rule, not to dress up in the costumes of generals, professors, engineers, administrators or corporation directors, and play at life. Yet we have come uncomfortably close to that.

But it is also true that our elite businessmen, generals, professors etc. are not really very much more fit to rule, that too many of them derive their station not from individual competence, but from biological accidents like lineage, caste or seniority. Too few of them are better fitted than the pretentious peasants to run corporations or armies or universities. Restriction of franchise will thus merely worsen the situation.

I do not also see the analogy to the Weimar Republic. We have no bitter memory of a Versailles treaty, or of a ruinous financial collapse. We might have it in the future, if either the Pakistanis or the Chinese succeed in imposing upon us a similarly humiliating peace.

Yours faithfully,
PUNYA SLOKA RAY

The University of Chicago
September 5, 1963

OUR CONTRIBUTORS

CLIFFORD GEERTZ is a professor in the Department of Anthropology, University of Chicago. His paper was contributed to an International seminar on "Cultural Motivations to Progress and the Three Great World Religions in South-East Asia" sponsored jointly by the University of the Philippines and the Congress for Cultural Freedom.

RASHBEHARI DAS was a professor at the Indian Institute of Philosophy, Amalner, for 23 years and Head of the Dept. of Philosophy, Saugor University, for 2½ years before joining the University of Calcutta from which he has just retired. He was the General President of the Indian Philosophy Congress in 1956 and is the author of many books and papers.

DAVID McCUTCHEON, who came from England to teach English Literature at Visva-bharati University, Santiniketan, in 1957, is now a lecturer in the Dept. of Comparative Literature at Jadavpur University, Calcutta.

D. G. NADKARNI writes short stories and criticism in Marathi. He works as Assistant Editor in a Bombay daily.

M. GOPALAKRISHNA ADIGA has published 5 volumes of verse and 2 novels in the Kannada language.

KASTUR CHAND LALWANI was lecturer at Calcutta University (1947-49) and Delhi Polytechnic (1951-54) and since then has been attached to the Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur. Author of *Industrial Efficiency in India*; *Indian Planning, its History, Politics & Psychology*.

K. K. SINHA, author of *Towards a Pluralist Society*, edits the *Indian Journal of Power and River Valley Development*.

THEODORE DRAPER, sociologist and journalist, research associate at Harvard and Columbia Universities, is the author of *American Communism and Soviet Russia*, and *Castro's Revolution: Myths and Realities*.

R. PARTHASARATHI teaches English Literature at Mithbai College of arts and the Chauhan Institute of Science, Bombay. His poems have appeared in the *Review of English Literature* (Leeds) and the *Times Literary Supplement*.

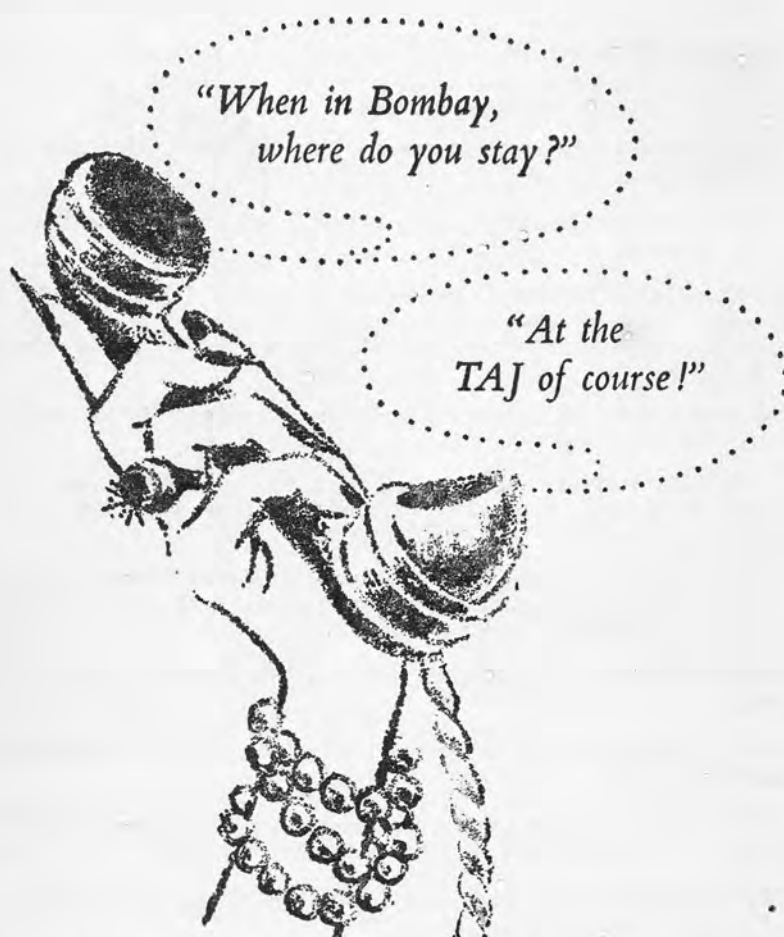
DOROTHY SINHA is new to *Quest* but "has been contributing poems regularly to the *Caravan*."

KA NAA SUBRAMANYAM, the eminent Tamil novelist and short story writer, is a frequent contributor to *Quest*.

M. M. M. MAHROOF holds a degree in Economic, of the University of Ceylon, and is working at present on a comprehensive study of the Muslims of Ceylon.

CHETAN KARNANI, who contributed to our Arts Section in the Monsoon issue, teaches English in the University of Rajasthan.

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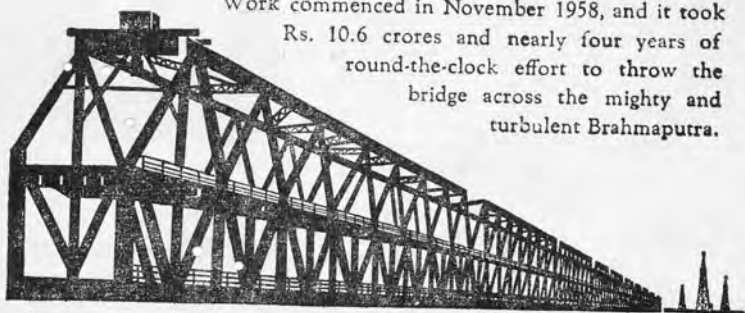


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THE BRIDGE OVER THE BRAHMAPUTRA

By day and by night, with deafening roar and rattle, goods and passenger trains hurtle across the new Brahmaputra Bridge, connecting Amingaon and Pandu. When on 7th June 1963, Prime Minister Nehru formally opened the Saraighat Bridge, wholly Indian in design and execution, it marked the culmination of a plan first thought of in 1910.

Work commenced in November 1958, and it took Rs. 10.6 crores and nearly four years of round-the-clock effort to throw the bridge across the mighty and turbulent Brahmaputra.



When the first goods train travelled over the bridge on 31st October 1962, it heralded a new era in the fast-developing economy of north-eastern India. For the first time, an all-rail-cum-road link was established between the tea gardens and the oilfields of Assam and the rest of the country.

No less than 4.2 million cubic feet of concrete, 40,000 tons of cement and 14,000 tons of steel were used to build the 10-span, two-tier bridge with a roadway on top and rail tracks below. Of about 11,000 tons of vital mild and high tensile steel required to build the girders of the bridge, about 60 per cent came from the steel works at Jamshedpur. This is yet another example of Tata Steel in the service of the nation.

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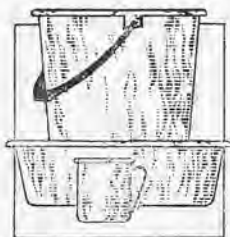
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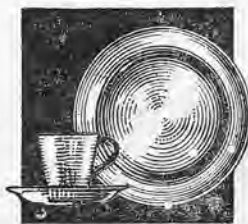
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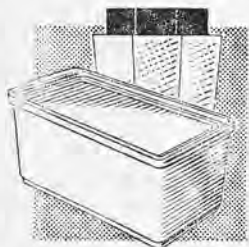
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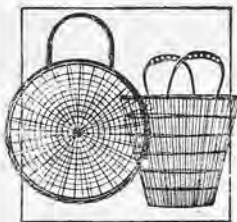
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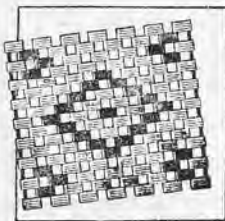
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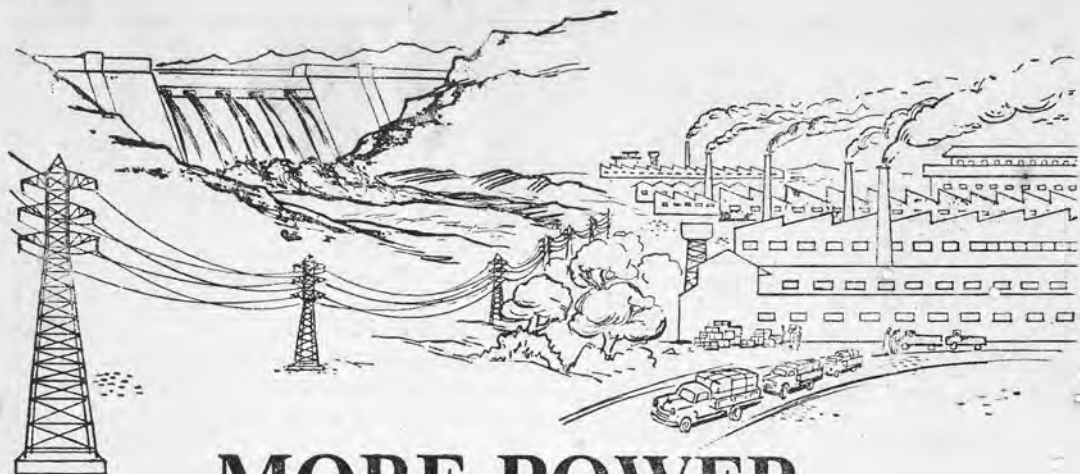
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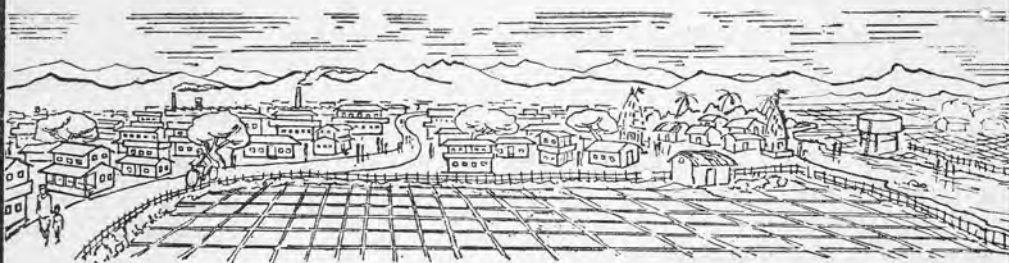
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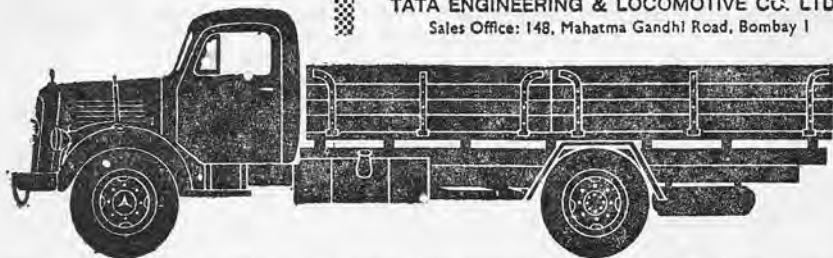
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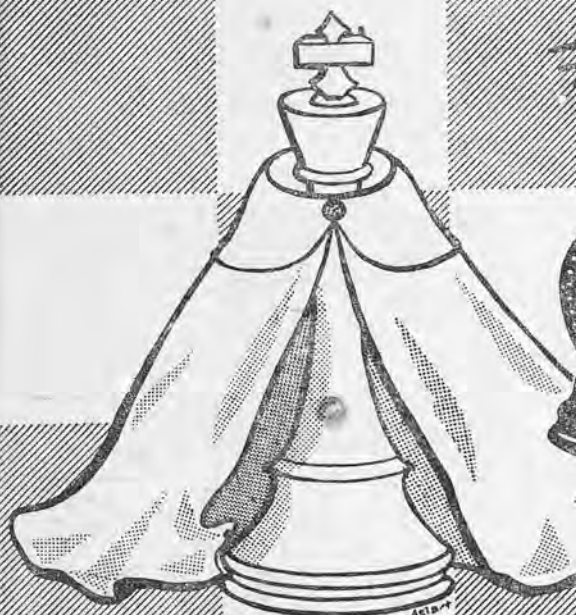
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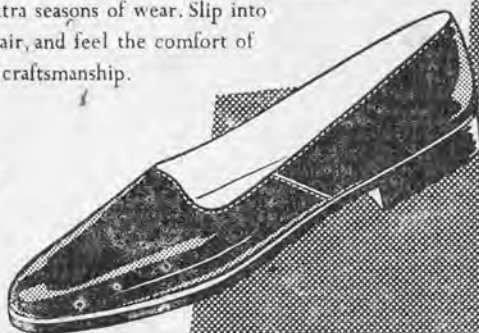
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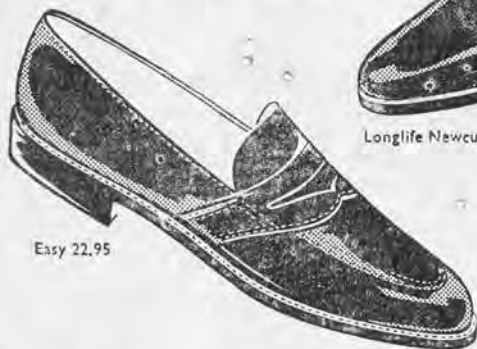
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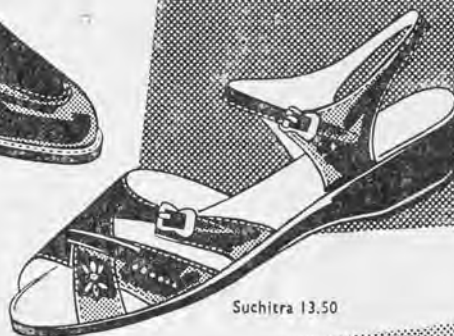
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