

TEN YEARS OF
QUEST

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Editors

ABU SAYEED AYYUB

AMLAN DATTA



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Introduction

Quest is primarily a periodical of opinion, but it admits no colour bar in the realm of ideas. In the selection of articles we have always ranked fidelity to fact and subservience to logic above all other kinds of fidelity and subservience. Unfortunately, on both sides of the iron curtain and in our country which claims to be on neither side, there are many people who have a reversed scale of values. We have sought their views too and occasionally succeeded in obtaining them for our pages. In this very fact we have demonstrated our basic opposition to them. For they believe that only opinions of a certain colour can be expressed while others must be suppressed. They are more interested in the class origin and social motivation of opinions than in their truth or falsity; or rather, they define truth (at least in the sphere of humanities) not in terms of conformity to facts but in terms of serviceability to the interests of a specified class, party, or leader. We, on the other hand, are committed to the advocacy of two basic principles: (1) all suppression of ideas is morally wrong, and (2) truth emerges through open controversy. Our commitment to the ideal of freedom enjoins upon us hospitality to all views and attitudes, however different from ours, provided they are presented with reason and clarity.

In this country we are not so deeply stirred by the issue of

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cultural freedom as are the thinkers and writers of the west. This results from three main causes:

1 Our long tradition of authoritarianism, for though religious authoritarianism is not the same thing as political regimentation, the difference is small.

2. The fact that our lack of the bare necessities of life is so egregious that we are apt to regard freedom of culture as an expendable commodity.

3. In the last analysis we are not fully alive to the value of freedom of culture because our culture itself is not fully alive. *This is particularly true in the sphere of intellectual (as distinct from imaginative) production.* We have almost ceased to think, and, what is sadder still, we have lost the urge, perhaps even the capacity to think—except as exegesis. Our pride in the culture of ancient India is in exact proportion to its lack of vitality today.

This brings us to the role of *Quest*. The passionate Western anxiety for the preservation of cultural freedom cannot but transform itself for us in India into an eagerness for revitalizing our cultural life. We can be deeply concerned with the freedom of a living culture, not of a dead culture. The dead can take care of themselves for the simple reason that there is no fear of their becoming any deader. Not that our past culture is dead in the sense in which the past cultures of Egypt or Babylon are. What is unfortunate is that while our past culture lives and even grows (for most of our research work is devoted to the proliferation of our past), it is our present culture which shows little sign of life. It may sound immodest or overambitious to say so, none the less be it said that the editors of *Quest* fully intend this magazine to play a role—perhaps its most important role—in the cultural revitalization ('revival' has come to acquire all the wrong meanings) of our country.

We have been devoting much more space to discursive writing than to creative literature—for one obvious reason. *Quest* is an English language magazine, and English is not the mother tongue of 99 per cent Indians. Most, and we believe the best, of our

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creative writing is done in the major Indian languages. The genius of the language and other regional characteristics cannot but put their stamp on our creative literatures. Divergence here is natural, and must be expected to grow with the growth of the various literatures of India. In spite of this, if our cultural unity is to be preserved and promoted—as undoubtedly it must be—that can best be done in the sphere of thought. Those who hold dear the cultural unity of India should also hold dear the English language, for it is uniquely fitted to develop a common *Indian* (as distinct from Gujrati, Bengali, or Punjabi) literature of ideas. If a living intimate and continuous contact of active minds is to be maintained between the different regions of India, then English language periodicals like *Quest* are going to play an increasingly significant role.

While we welcome adventures in germinal ideas of permanent interest, we are not averse to those which are ephemeral if they are timely. But what we would like to promote most through the pages of *Quest* are timely thoughts—analytical, critical, and constructive—which are not for that reason ephemeral.

Our introduction so far has been in the nature of an anthology from previous editorials—which is not out of place in a volume like this. Coming to the anthology itself, it does not necessarily consist of the very best things that have appeared in *Quest* during the last ten years. We have tried to make it representative of the various sections that are to be normally found in an issue as well as of the various types of themes and opinions discussed. Contributions, however good, to the current affairs section which cannot but become dated after the lapse of a year or two had of course to be omitted. We were able to publish some extremely fine things by writers of international reputation through the courtesy of the Congress for Cultural Freedom. But as these were not exclusively for *Quest*, they have naturally been excluded from this anthology. One or two selected items could not be included due to technical difficulties. And we shall not be sur-

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prised if some writers feel aggrieved because their contributions have not found a place in this volume, though others no better have. We can only plead limitation of space, that is, of resources. Finally, it is quite possible that in some cases our taste or judgement has erred. There is no excuse for this except the eternal excuse of human fallibility.

We must in conclusion thank Mr Nissim Ezekiel for his expert assistance in the selection of the poetry section, and Mr David McCutcheon for his valuable and painstaking collaboration in the preparation of the rest of the anthology.

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ARTICLES

The Intellectual in Modern Asia

by PRABHAKAR PADHYE

THE dominant factor in the Asian—particularly the South East Asian—scene today is the defeat of colonialism. Foreign colonialism is on the defensive and the disappearance of its uneasy remnants is only a matter of time. Most of the people of the area have become free and are faced with the problems of political, economic and even psychological reconstruction.

The intellectuals and their class were responsible for this profound transformation and they are now called upon to lead in the task of reconstruction also. But unfortunately they seem to be spiritually ill-equipped to bear the responsibility.

The explanation of this paradox can be found in the Western education and training which they have received. It must be admitted that the education which the colonial powers provided to the people created the motive-pattern of the educated middle class which was fired by the ideals of freedom and which created the requisite leadership for these movements. These patriotic intellectuals were perhaps ideally suited for the negative task of driving out the colonial ruler. But the moment they were faced with the fact of independence and all the problems that came in its wake they found their Western education not the sure blessing that it was supposed to be.

To begin with, the philosophy that inspired this system of education was totally at variance with the philosophy and out-

look on life of the peoples of the region. The Eastern philosophies of life are based on a peculiar relationship towards Nature. "Progress" to the Asian people does not mean the "conquest of Nature", but rather the realization of a harmonious relationship of interdependence between Man and Nature. Their attitude towards Nature is not one of masterfulness, but of gratitude and reverence. They do not look upon Nature as something to be conquered and put to the material use of man but something to be tended, cultivated and befriended. The people of Asia look upon themselves as a part of Nature. Their aim is to realize a harmony between the human order and the natural order. The Asian art of life consists in living in harmony and understanding with one's fellow-beings and with Nature. Nature, here as elsewhere, creates wonder and awe, but these feelings lead to reverence rather than to fear, to love rather than to opposition.

The reason for this difference (which is one of the fundamental differences between ancient Religion and modern Science) is not hard to find. The Asian—South East Asian—philosophies of life were developed and fashioned when men were being rocked, so to say, in the cradle of Nature. Nature, it should be remembered is bountiful in this region and is very generous to man. Perhaps the opposite is true in the West. Western man has to face the rigours of Nature and has to master her for eking out a living. The cold climate of Europe and America has made their people vigorous and hardworking whereas the warm climate of Asia tends to make the people indolent and carefree, to develop an attitude of what the Thais would call *mai ben rai* (never mind).

Asian intellectuals today have been naturally influenced by the philosophies and attitudes that inspire the modern systems of education. One would, of course, expect them to resist this influence because of the long tradition of Asian culture of which they are inheritors. This culture should give them the necessary power of resistance because it is informed by philosophies of profound significance and is embellished by an art of life of rich and sensitive texture. But these philosophies have been languishing over hundreds of years and the art of life has been losing its living touch. What sustained the social fabric in spite of this deterioration was the religious ritual and the hold of social con-

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ventions. But modern rational education made nonsense of these conventions and rendered the ritual ridiculous.

The realities of the Asian situation are not such as to accommodate ultra-modern ideas even if they were to agree fundamentally with the ideals of Eastern culture. Democratic ideals, for instance, are ultimately in harmony with the broad conceptions of Eastern culture. When independence came to the countries of Asia—South East Asia—they uniformly adopted the pattern of democracy. The attempts to cut through this pattern were defeated. These countries adopted or prepared themselves to adopt democratic constitutions. But they soon discovered that the democratic experiment was not as easy of execution as they had supposed it to be. To begin with, in spite of the broad aims of their culture, democratic institutions were not natural to this region. For centuries, authoritarian rule had prevailed here. The colonial rulers were happy to continue the authoritarian system—and even encouraged local authoritarianism in order to buttress their own rule. It is true that with the spread of modern Western education, democratic ideas had also spread, but they had not seeped into the consciousness of the people, who in any case, were not educated and enlightened enough to work democratic institutions.

It should also be remembered that democratic constitutions were not adopted with the conviction with which, for instance, the American Bill of Rights was adopted. The American Constitution and, for that matter, the Soviet Constitution was inspired by a passionate belief in a set of ideas. The leaders of the independence movement in Asia were more interested in the fact of independence than in its nature, and if they adopted democratic constitutions it was mainly because they were accustomed to visualize their freedom in the image of the democratic countries of the West with which they were familiar; with the result that some of these constitutions read like a lawyer's rehash of the democratic constitutions of the West. But these Western constitutions were the product of a natural urge and a natural evolution. They could not adequately work in countries with different cultures and different problems.

More than in democracy these intellectuals were interested in the socio-economic development of the country. They were not

professional politicians who loved power for its own sake, and even such politicians soon realized that they could neglect the problems of the material existence of the people at their peril. Nature has been generous to the countries of Asia and for hundreds of years people have lived in comparative prosperity. True, there have been political upheavals, but they were restricted to the adventurous few and the people were left in peace to carry on their daily activities. But the Western imperialists with their modern techniques had systematically looted them and rendered them destitute. They had long been living at a subhuman level and the arousing of the spirit which independence brought made them acutely aware of their degradation.

The economies of these countries could not be built along the classic lines of free enterprise. Planning was long in the air. The reports of the quick build-up in Russia had been circulated and had touched large sectors of consciousness. Moreover, with the withdrawal of the foreign entrepreneur there were left no private agencies which could have handled the job with quick competence. Governments were faced with the necessity of assuming the responsibility—which meant planning. But democratic constitutions were not exactly suited to planned economic progress in these undeveloped countries in conditions of paucity of resources and knowledge. A good deal of thinking on coordinating planning with freedom has been done in Western countries. But even in those countries with favourable circumstances no satisfactory solution seems to have been found yet. The conception of Mixed Economy to which recourse is generally taken tends, particularly in backward countries, to work in favour of the conservative elements. The intellectual who has become quite impatient owing to his frustration, starts looking upon slow-moving democracy as an obstacle rather than a resolute ideal. His democratic training should have taught him that the dichotomy between bread and freedom raised in certain quarters is false; but they also know that people do not generally think of freedom so long as they are starving and therefore they start asserting this dichotomy in a way that wholly neglects democratic values.

That intellectuals with years of democratic education should be callous about democratic values is surprising, but entirely

understandable in the context. After all, a few years' study of democratic theory does not instil the values of democracy into the inner being of an individual. Values are imbibed by years of meaningful experience and emotional impact. In the West, democratic values have been finely woven into the life of the people and have processed their mental texture. It is not so in Asia. This is immensely truer about the values of science. The new Asian intellectual who is so well versed in science and who talks so eloquently about the scientific point of view may not be equally devoted to scientific values.

The Asian intellectual is frustrated because his youthful dreams have cruelly foundered on the rocks of Asian reality. He is woefully disappointed because he realizes that his knowledge and training, of which he is legitimately proud, are useless since the Asian situation does not offer much scope for them. He burns with an inner defeat because in spite of his technical training he does not find a suitable vocation and has to engage in trades like running a restaurant or a movie house which gives him a guilty feeling of engaging in an occupation which has but slight relevance to the well-being of the people. And finally his alienation from the people completely disenchants him. The failure to function creatively in society drives him to frustration and anger. This frustration assumes tortuous forms—and some of these intellectuals become professional detractors of their country's efforts and achievements. Mainly, they are cold to the task of reconstruction which their country has to undertake.

Psychologically there is a terrible void inside them. There is no faith and no conviction to sustain them. They suffer from a terrible feeling of alienation and disenchantment, which threatens to make permanent misanthropes of them. The hunger of the spirit threatens to make them permanently sick—sick in mind and sick in heart!

Some striking intellectual phenomena in Asia can be traced to this hunger of the spirit: for instance, the growth of revivalism in India and Pakistan. A mind defeated by contemporary problems tends to take refuge in the glories of the past and that is what is visibly happening in the Indo-Pak continent. The revivalist Islamic tendencies in Indonesia can also be traced to this. A recrudescence of several religious cults (with surprising-

ly primitive beliefs and practices) and the growing prestige of these cults even among the educated classes is another instance. Big gatherings and congresses of the devotees of such cults based on magic and spiritism have been held in recent times and have been attended and blessed by well-known scholars and leaders. Booksellers have reported a marked spurt in the sale of religious literature not primarily of the higher philosophical order.

For those who are unable to reconcile their rational beliefs with these cults has come a ready and satisfying substitute, which not only satisfies their inner cravings but also promises ready answers to all the practical problems that have baffled their minds. The substitute is Communism.

Communism, after all, is a religion which believes in reason and the earth. Its reason is dialectical and the earth is a place to build heaven upon. Dialectical materialism is a kind of religion which assures the triumph of the Cause, whatever the obstacles. It is a doctrine that proclaims Communism as the end-product of the historical process. It is a doctrine of Historical Necessity. It assures its followers that they are on the right side. It is therefore not only a faith, but a Triumphant Faith. It has all the essentials of a satisfying religion. It enables its followers not only to understand the historical process, but also to participate in it. It provides a definite place for every individual in the historical process. This participation not only bestows on him the glory of self-sacrifice but also the opportunity to realize human destiny.

Communism is a philosophy and a technique of political action and human development which satisfies many of the dominant urges of the intellectuals. Western-educated intellectuals have been influenced by the trine ideals of the French Revolution viz. Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. To these, the moderns have added the fourth ideal of planned economic development. The modern intellectuals starved of emotion and imagination have been able to see in the theory and practice of communism a triumph of these ideals, even though in actual fact these ideals have been thoroughly violated. For instance, their frustrated minds have accepted the so called economic liberation as a proper substitute for political liberty which, in any case, according to them is illusory. They are not disturbed by Stalin's dismissal

of equality as "a petty bourgeois ideal" because the hatred of the rich has provided an adequate psychological substitute. The phony nature of the Communist fraternity has been exposed by the treatment meted out to one-time comrades, but they are not worried because the bond of party loyalty has the force of the Islamic brotherhood of medieval times. And even if the Communist violations of these have sometimes been too blatant to bear, comfort has been found in the rapid strides of economic development in the Communist countries. The fact that these countries quickly build their economies is so important to them that they are willing to forget many things. That this economic development is lopsided, that it leans on heavy industry which can be quickly switched on to the needs of war, that it is based on the immoral practice of forced labour and that it has its own crises of over-bureaucratization does not bother them.

The very fact that economic life is planned and organized, that targets have been overfulfilled and that people have been made to devote their entire energies to the problems of living has an irresistible fascination for them. For their outlook on life is ultimately in conformity with that of communism which, after all, epitomizes the masterful attitude towards Nature which forms an integral part of their education. It has to be admitted that this attitude has greater relevance to the countries of Asia today when a long era of exploitation has largely undone the benefits of bountiful Nature. But it is not for this that the intellectuals care nothing for the beauties of Oriental philosophies, of integration of Man with Nature and of love between Man and Man.

The picture of a high-power, industrialized society appeals to their desperate desire for integration. The example of Russia inspires in them the confidence that they can find their secure and legitimate place in the structure of the planned society which the Communists will build. Of course there is integration in democratic societies also; but it is a spiritual kind of integration based on the integrity of every individual. In an economically precarious society this spiritual integration is continuously threatened. Naturally, our modern intellectuals tend to attach more importance to the integration of the Soviet type. But they forget that what they call integration in Soviet society is ulti-

mately pure conformity, against which the heart of every genuine intellectual must legitimately rebel. Intellectual growth is impossible in an atmosphere of total conformity and a mind which is not allowed the delights of independent thinking cannot flower to its full bloom. The Asian intellectuals who tend to ignore the difference between integration and conformity easily fall for the blandishments of Communist doctrine and practice.

Our alienated intellectual has been pining for this feeling of integration. He is intensely unhappy about his isolation from the people. Though outwardly he might like to flaunt his 'cultural' superiority, inwardly he is disturbed by a sense of inferiority. Communism gives him a good opportunity to get rid of this feeling. The Communist emphasis on modernization and planning places a special value on the talents of the intellectuals who can thus retain their sense of superiority and yet have the feeling of being integrated with the interests and destiny of the people. More than this, they can retain the flair of their white collars and yet go around as revolutionaries, at least as privileged servants of the supreme revolution of the times.

The dominant problem in Asia today is, of course, the economic problem. The Asian people are passionately yearning for economic development and material well-being. You cannot convince the intellectuals here by denying the achievements of Soviet Russia or by singing the praises of non-material values (although one must emphasize the importance of these values and must also point out that excessive pre-occupation with material development will distort the vision of our people and dehumanize our culture). But it would be possible to convince at least the honest and more considerate intellectuals that the ruthless Soviet methods of centralized high-power industrialization will not bring about the economic development of Asian countries (as they did in Russia) because the man-resources ratio is extremely adverse here whereas it is supremely favourable in Russia. It should be possible to convince the reasonable intellectuals that the ruthless Soviet methods of high-power industrialization might give us the steel frame of dictatorship but certainly cannot give us the necessary steel mills.

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It is true that extreme poverty and material degradation tend to make people indifferent to freedom; but it is not true that they cannot be roused to the dangers of dictatorship. People aspire to economic betterment, but they also aspire to a share in power. The urge for power is as real as the urge for material comfort. It may not be possible, in the undeveloped conditions of Asia, to bestow sizable material comforts on the people in the immediate future; but it will certainly be possible to satisfy their power urge. Conventional, centralized democracy may not be able to do this; but surely it would be possible to think of a variant of democracy which would decentralize power and bring its magnetic touch to large masses of people at various levels. Communist dictatorship, in the first place, does not respect the power urge of the people; and by its very nature it cannot decentralize power. If the Asian intellectuals are persuaded to see the possibility of endowing people with power their natural idealism would welcome it, and this itself would mean the beginning of a revolution in their outlook.

It can be easily demonstrated to the intellectuals that the satisfaction of the power urge of the people can be a means of economic development even as the satisfaction of their property instinct. That is why Communists go to the peasants and workers with the slogans of 'land to the peasants' and 'the factories to the workers'. It may not be easy to convince the peasants and workers of the duplicity of the Communists here—of the fact that victorious Communists would immediately take over the factories and later on the land and hand them over to bureaucrats who would manage them in the name of the people and grow fat and rich in the process. But the intellectuals can see the point and realize that control over the means of production can create the zest for living even as ownership does.

The intellectuals with their heightened imagination and broadened vision should be able to see that the touch of power can galvanize the broad masses of the people, rouse their energies and fill them with the conviction that they are the masters of their own destiny, that they are participating in a revolution that would shape the destiny of their own selves and that of their fellow-beings. The intellectuals should be able to realize not only the need but also the importance of enfranchising the

people (as Bevan said) not only at the ballot box but also in the fields and factories. A decentralization of this kind would release the forces of a unique democratic dynamo and put the instruments of social, political and economic action into the hands of those who would be affected by it. This would mean a tremendous confidence in the ability of the people and co-operation in their activities. This would give our intellectuals a relationship with them which would be more dynamic, more meaningful and more indicative of the unity between the intellectuals and the people than the mechanical integration made possible by a bureaucratic role in the vast centralized plan of the Soviet pattern. This would make the intellectuals really comrades and not masters of the people. Such a relationship would obviously be emotionally more satisfying and more significant.

More than this dynamic relationship between the intellectual and the people it would mean galvanizing the manifold life of the community. It would mean a full-blooded cultural efflorescence which would inspire the life of the people with the magic of creative delight. It would revive the culture of the masses and provide them with the elements of joy which they have been woefully lacking for many years. The culture of a nation always springs from the people. It can never be imposed from above. It is a living example of decentralization in the most delicate and vibrant aspect of human life. Any attempt to encage it in a centralized plan is bound to make it lifeless and mechanical. A system of organization which evokes the participation of the people at all levels of life would naturally lead to the expression of folk-culture which is a vital factor in the national culture of all countries, particularly those of South East Asia. Such an awakening of the manifold life is bound to lead to the resurrection of the philosophies of the East which visualize a grand harmony based, to quote Dr Supomo, president of the University of Indonesia, on "the unity between God and Man, unity between Man and other creatures, and unity between the material world and the spiritual world"—in short, harmony between Man and Nature. Such a consummation will provide the elements of Faith (in the most scientific sense of the term), starved of which our intellectuals have become walking skeletons of frustration and faithlessness!

A philosophy that embraces these elements of decentralized reconstruction of life alone will have the power to defeat the appeal of doctrines like communism and to release our intellectuals from the lure of their kiss of death. Wherever philosophies of this type have arisen communism has been put on the defensive—intellectually at least. I do not mean to say that any particular doctrine like Revolutionary Gandhism or Radical Humanism or Decentralized Socialism or Buddhist Socialism has all the elements of such a philosophy, but they have shown remarkable power to combat totalitarian doctrines. I do not also mean to say that they have embraced whole societies of men or that they have finally triumphed over totalitarianism. But they will, however, before they achieve this success have to be revitalized (as Gandhism is being revitalized by *Bhoodan* and *Jeevandan*) in actual practice. They will have to be integrated. They will have to be strengthened. Here is a grand sublime quest for thinkers and philosophers.

India's Lost Generation— The Predicament of Youth

by V. V. JOHN

FORMING one's impressions at long range from books and magazines, one would imagine that the youth of England now belong to one of two categories, namely, those who are angry, and those who are bored. Often the two categories overlap, for the Welfare State seems to induce in the young alternate reactions of anger and ennui. The chief feature of youth's predicament over there is perhaps that the element of adventure has passed from life. As one of the less angry young men said over the radio a little while ago, "We force ourselves to concentrate on taking the next bend safely, where our fathers were eagerly pointing to the millenium at the road's end". And, I suppose, one cannot even express one's exasperation with any spirit, when the gnashing of teeth has to be done with artificial dentures provided free under the National Health Scheme.

In the radio talk, from which I quoted above, the speaker referred to "the disappointment and bitterness that accompany the new levelling of living standards, especially in those of us who were benefitting from an efficient mechanism of social mobility. These are the people who were climbing a ladder that has suddenly been tilted to the horizontal, who thirsted for nectar at the fountain of Tom Quad only to find when they got it

that it was the same, plain, ordinary water which almost everyone else was drinking. Even those of us who are on the same rung as our fathers were, and do not expect to climb any higher, have been affected by the levelling of the ladder, which has brought others up to our shoulders and swollen the proportion of our total age-group that vies for leadership and influence. We all know moments when we look back in anger, when we nurse our frustration in a lather of detergents in our servantless kitchenettes, hard up against the realities of collective love-in-a-cottage."

A young Indian who watches all this modish agony cannot help feeling envious. It is more than likely that he would whisper to himself, "I wish I had half his complaint." Even in England, those who are old enough to remember the Distressed Areas of the 'thirties, and the long lines of the unemployed, are not likely to have the same disdain for the amenities of the Welfare State as these latter-day Lucky Jims who do not know their luck. Anyone who lived any part of his adult life during those pre-War years would know that the search for employment lacks some of the thrills of a search for adventure.

The cynicism of youth—which has close affinities with the present malaise—is not a new phenomenon in the West. Bertrand Russell wrote an essay on it in 1929, and contrasted it with the earnestness of youth in countries like India and China. "In India," wrote Russell, "the fundamental belief of the earnest young is in the wickedness of England: from this premiss, as from the existence of Descartes, it is possible to deduce a whole philosophy." Detailing the simple and naive reactions of Indian youth to British ways and institutions so far as they impinged on India, Russell went on to observe: "In this way the Anglo-Indians save the intelligent youth of India from the blight of cynicism."

I remember reading this as an under-graduate and feeling annoyed at the glib simplification. For it was evident that the philosopher did not consider "the intelligent youth of India" to be very intelligent. As in so many of Russell's bright observations, however, there was a useful half-truth in the statement. For, during the years of the national movement for freedom, youth was inspired, however partially, by a purpose other than

that of merely getting on in the world. Even the self-seekers and the careerists liked to openly admire those who made sacrifices in the fight against alien domination. All shared vicariously in this heroism.

Unrest among students was one of the prices that the country, quite needlessly, paid for freedom. To preaching that students should not take part in politics the reaction among students was one of defiance. It was argued that, after all, England called upon students in time of national emergency, as for instance, to fight in the World War, and to man trains and buses during the General Strike. In India, the freedom movement was such a national emergency, and it was not to be confused with the humdrum politics of vote-catching. While there was truth in this, it was not the whole truth. For, most strikes and other disturbances in colleges and schools were not inspired by any irrepressible urge for national freedom. At their best, they were an expression of the youthful love of excitement and an outlet for the high spirits for which the educational institutions themselves found no use. At their worst, the disturbances were a conspiracy of the indolent and the incompetent against the more capable students; for strikes and stoppages of work helped to level the good student with the bad. Surely, not even the dullest student could have had the illusion that he could help to break up the British Empire by refusing to learn his lessons. But, by making a row, he could prevent his class-mates from learning their lessons either.

There is an interesting passage in Wavell's biography of Allenby, in which he refers to the use to which students were put during political upheavals in Egypt. "Egyptian popular leaders," wrote Wavell, "used the student classes as a political weapon. They could easily be excited by a little heady oratory and naturally found street demonstrations more amusing than the dull routine of education. School strikes became a regular game and were proclaimed on the slightest occasion; should a British Cabinet Minister in London make a speech which displeased the students, they left their desks and paraded the streets in noisy demonstrations; anniversaries of certain events since 1918 also provided excuses to neglect work in favour of noise. Over

a period of years both learning and discipline were almost unknown to a large proportion of Egypt's schoolboys."

A somewhat similar account could be given of the behaviour of students in many parts of India in the thirties and the forties. It had usually nothing to do with the presence of the British in India. Matters came to such a pass that in one of the universities the students cut classes and created a civic commotion because the cinema houses in the city had discontinued cut-rates for students. In another university, the men students struck work because the authorities had decided to build a wall round the women students' hostel. Writing in August 1947, the veteran educationist and historian, Jadunath Sarkar, lamented the fact that in the preceding academic year, owing to strikes and other disturbances, colleges in Calcutta had only eighty normal working days. He recalled with grim foreboding the indiscipline that had finally destroyed the ancient university of Nalanda and had brought about the decline of Buddhism in the land of its origin.

That unrest among students had developed a pattern of its own, unconnected with the national movement for freedom, has been established by the experience of educational institutions since 1947. In recent years, students have walked out of examination halls because question papers were difficult. They usually destroy some furniture on these occasions to indicate the vigour of their feelings. In 1948, in Bihar, the work of all colleges came to a standstill because the students refused to take any college examinations for testing their fitness to be sent up for university examinations. In the same state, a great upheaval took place two years ago owing to a quarrel between students and a bus conductor over bus fares. The students alleged that the conductor had behaved rudely. Granting that this was true, there surely were other ways of dealing with him than by university men taking the law into their own hands. It perhaps never occurred to the agitated youth involved that if the bus conductor had had the advantages and privileges that university students have, he would perhaps not have been a bus conductor. It certainly did not occur to them that it was the duty of university men to set him an example of good behaviour, instead of trying to make an example of him. In the event, the trouble

did not settle down until the police intervened and several persons were killed.

More recently the work of most colleges and schools in Rajasthan came to a standstill because of the students' protest against an increase in tuition fees. It was arguable whether the increased expenditure on higher education should wholly be a charge on general revenues or whether a part of it should come from the parents of the students. But such arguments on the merits of the question took place only on the fringes; the larger area of conflict was taken up by noise, bad temper and anarchy. One should have thought that it was a question for grown-ups to wrangle about. But parents now have a strange willingness to let their offspring do all the fighting with authority. And by the time the affair was settled, scores of people had been admitted to hospitals for the treatment of injuries, and a considerable quantity of public property damaged. It was interesting that at the close of this dismal affair, a responsible public man publicly hoped that there would never again be any occasion for such 'misunderstandings' between students and the authorities. To refer to abusive slogans, defiance of authority, brickbats and arson and general mayhem as a 'misunderstanding' is the sort of wonder-working euphemism on which the politician thrives.

The same gingerly quality is always to be seen in the manner in which public men refer to any wrongdoing by the young. They do preach perfervid sermons on the subject of indiscipline, but these sermons come during the quieter intervals between one disturbance and another, and never when trouble is actually rampant. What they prefer is to win the acclamations of students with the solemn cliché: "You are the hope of the country"! If they were honest, they would more often say, instead: "You are very nearly the despair of the country!"

Meanwhile during periods of trouble, the teachers withdraw into their shells of facile cynicism, and too willingly surrender their natural leadership of students. Whatever one may say of the unscrupulous interference of a certain type of politician, the students will not succumb to his blandishments on any large scale, if they felt that by doing so and cutting classes they would be missing something really precious. Two factors have made it seem a matter of indifference whether students attend to their

studies or not. One is that the nature of the studies is half-hearted, and the other is that at the end of the studies waits unemployment or unsuitable employment.

The nature of the studies in colleges was described by one of the more waggish professors who said: "We pursue learning all right, but always at a safe distance, taking good care not to overtake her." The examinations, which set the pace for studies in college, have become so stereotyped, and in many cases such an unmeaning test of ability, that the average student does not have to devote any considerable part of his abilities or energy to passing them. (Many fail, but that proves nothing; for by now, passing and failing, like hanging and wiving, go by destiny.) As for the pursuit of learning for its own high sake, such an idea does not easily get past the cynicism of the teachers and the indolence of the students.

It has been argued that since there aren't jobs waiting for all, the very fewness of employment opportunities could be expected to induce in the students a spirit of emulation and hard work. If the fittest alone survive in the search for good jobs, would not everyone want to be at the top of the form? This, again, is a plausible half-truth. In actual experience, however, it will be found that the theory works only if the number of good jobs have a reasonable relation to the number of competent people that the colleges can train up. If, on the contrary, one job is to be tried for by a hundred graduates, the result is not competitive emulation, but discouragement and despair. And besides, it is not unknown that the best jobs do not always go to the best qualified.

In this predicament of youth, induced by an education that does not educate, and by the strange phenomenon of a backward country that cannot find a proper use for its trained personnel, there is an opening for the propagation of desperate evangels. The Communists are said to have won the allegiance of a large number of students in certain regions. I have a suspicion that this allegiance will at the moment be found to be tenuous. The intellectual temper of our seats of learning is such that discussion hardly gets beyond mere verbalism; and loyalties are formed, not out of intellectual conviction, but out of resentment, envy and such other reactions to temporary vicissitudes.

The climate is indeed favourable to the spread of communism. But so far, its triumphs have been of uncertain durability. As a teacher, I have had some students who were known to be Communists, but I have also seen them turn in a very short while into placid government servants, more bothered about their next promotion than about the world revolution. The danger is not one of communism winning any straight battle for the mind of youth, but of moving in to fill a vacuum created by misery and despair. If free institutions cannot free us from want and hunger, why not give the other way a chance?

One of the functions of higher education in a democracy is to train leaders for the community. In terms of active politics, our colleges and universities have more or less ceased to perform this function. In twenty years of college teaching, I have had only one instance of a capable student taking to politics as a career. The others among my students who went into politics did so because they could not find anything else to do, or having become lawyers, had failed miserably in the profession. I do not suppose my experience is unique. The fault, this time, is not the fault of colleges and universities, but of economic conditions and of certain features of contemporary politics. Who among the young products of our universities can afford to go into politics? There was a time, during the national movement for freedom, when fine young men renounced all their chances of advancement and followed the lead of Gandhi. That spirit has not been handed down to the present generation, for the spirit was killed by these erstwhile 'political sufferers' themselves, who, since 1947, have been insisting on their virtue being rewarded in the shape of ministerships and jobbery of various kinds.

What has been happening to the Congress Party has a tremendous effect on the morale of India's youth. Twenty years ago, it would have been impossible to imagine that the white khaddar clothes and the white cap of the Congressmen would ever be other than symbols of austere and single-minded dedication. Today, the Congress, having ceased to be a national movement, does not even have the qualities of a real party. It is internally torn by faction fights; only the love of power and the fear of Nehru's displeasure keep the disparate elements together. The youth of India have been watching this unedifying spectacle for

quite a while. They are also intrigued by the strange love affair that goes on intermittently between Nehru and communism. The Chou-Khrushchev-Nehru camaraderie and Nehru's envious admiration of China's economic achievements produce a greater impression on the young than his protestations of adherence to democratic ways, and his tepid disapproval of totalitarian atrocities. Meanwhile, the Communist technique in India is to attack Nehru's Party, but to extol him personally. Only recently, when Central Government employees threatened to strike and the people were feeling that the proposed action was rash, Hiren Mukherji spoke in the Lok Sabha, commending the spirit of Nehru's broadcast speech to the nation on the subject, but added: "One wonders what the Prime Minister is doing in the company he keeps!" This wooing may not deceive Nehru, but it does deceive a lot of other people in the country. It is part of a sinister attempt to deprive the Congress Party of the credit for its leader's achievements; and the attempt has not been unsuccessful.

When one considers India's many problems and the ambitious plans that are being made to solve them, one should expect this fact to inspire youth with enthusiasm and ardour. To the extent that the Five Year Plans provide more jobs, youth is interested in the Plans. The young who get good jobs are pleased, and the others are angry and sullen. One looks in vain for any pride in being partakers, in however small a role, of a great adventure. Or, in more unpleasant terms, real patriotism seems to be withering away in the exigencies of individual privations or of individual self-seeking. That this should be so is due to a number of reasons. One is that youth is being launched upon life with inadequate equipment, both intellectual and moral. Secondly, there is too much and too premature talk of the Welfare State which is at the moment but a distant prospect. (In England, the reality of the Welfare State seems to have become a bore; in India, the prospect of it is working like an opiate.) And thirdly, the grown-ups are setting such a bad example.

Indian and Greek Epic

by ROBERT ANTOINE

ONE who undertakes a comparative study between two cultures is usually guided by a half-conscious bias which can assume either of the two following forms. He may so handle the material at his disposal as to concentrate almost exclusively on the similarities, real or apparent, of the terms of the comparison. Or his mind may react more spontaneously to the differences and unconsciously exaggerate them.

The first attitude—which we could conveniently call “cultural syncretism”—is often the characteristic of a generous, yet, shallow mind. Generous, because it is anxious to bring about harmony and unity and naturally refrains from extolling one culture at the expense of another. Shallow, because, in order to achieve its ideal of harmony, it rests satisfied with a superficial view of things and avoids the labour of deeper analysis for fear of seeing its conclusions challenged.

The second attitude—to which we give the name of “cultural chauvinism”—is that of a mind whose natural sharpness is placed at the service of a partisan spirit. It seeks to establish the superiority and uniqueness of one culture and, in pursuing its end, exercises its ingenuity either to undermine any attempt at comparison or to prove that all similarities are the result of dependence or plagiarism.

Is it at all possible to combine the syncretist's generosity and

the partisan's acuity while avoiding the former's simplicity and the latter's parochialism? A perfectly unbiased mind, if it could at all exist, would probably remain inactive, for the human mind never acts as a passive mirror, but rather as an actively selective organ. Facts, and especially human facts, never speak for themselves. They are made to say what the human observer prompts them to express.

Should we, therefore, give up all comparative studies on the plea that perfect impartiality is impossible? I do not think so. It is enough to know, and to guard oneself against, the dangers which such studies entail. If we keep in mind that, within the general pattern according to which human societies arise and evolve, there remains ample room for individuality and originality, we can safely undertake the fascinating task of comparing cultures.

The General Pattern of Heroic Society

All the great heroic traditions owe their existence to tribal culture. The basis on which tribal society rests is the principle of kinship and its social unit is the family group. Whereas the higher culture of the territorial state is founded on the idea of individual citizenship and gives rise to urban civilization, the tribal organization ignores national feeling and finds its social expression in feudalism. Feudalism is essentially an exchange of services between defenceless peasants and the military lord. In return for the protection which the lord gives them, the peasants offer him their land and promise to man his armies. When, to the economic necessity of finding a protector, is added the element of personal devotion to the leader, the cult of the hero is born.

On the other hand, epic poetry is usually retrospective. It develops at a time when tribal society enters into contact with a higher civilization and tends to project in the past certain elements of urban culture which give to the old capitals an anachronistic aspect of modernity. It is this marginal character of epic poetry which explains how tribal heroes can gradually be transformed into national heroes.

It is interesting to note how epic poetry, in three different

historical contexts, blossomed at an intermediary period, a kind of "Middle Ages" between two urban civilizations. In India, after the disappearance of the Indus civilization and before the rise of the Mauryas; in Greece, after the decline of Aegean culture and before the emergence of Athenian dominance; in Europe, after the fall of the Roman Empire and of the short-lived Carolingian renaissance and before the urban civilization of the 14th century.

1. *The aristocrats at war.* Heroic society is an aristocratic society. In the Greek Epic, the heroes are called the "*aristoi*", i.e. the best among men. Stereotyped adjectives are used, referring probably to some well-known quality of some ancestor, and the name of the father or a patronymic "*taddhitanta*" continually reminds us that nobility is hereditary. The feuds which result in bloody battles have never the character of national wars in which the common people play the prominent part. In fact, the common people do not appear at all except as a necessary background against which the valour and prowess of the heroes stand out in greater splendour. Most of the fights are single fights, extraordinary duels witnessed by a crowd of spellbound soldiers and retainers.

The origin of the great battles is, in all cases, the personal offence of a hero's honour. And it is generally a woman who supplies the occasion. In the *Iliad*, it is self-evident. The Greek tribes, personified in their leaders, agree to avenge the honour of Menelaus whose wanton wife has eloped with the Trojan Paris. There is not the slightest hint of a national campaign and the leadership of Agamemnon has no other reason than the necessity of a concerted attack. Again, it is the wounded pride of Achilles which proves fatal to the Greek armies and brings the Trojans within an ace of victory. The young lady whom Achilles had received as a prize for his bravery is arbitrarily taken away from him by Agamemnon. Finally, if Achilles decides to enter the fray, it is not out of a sense of solidarity with the routed Greeks, but of the purely personal desire to avenge his friend's death. National feeling, if it exists at all in the *Iliad*, is to be found among the Trojans. For them, everything is at stake, as it will be for the Greeks at the time of Marathon and Salamis. Yet, in spite of the simple solution of returning to her

lawful husband the woman who is the cause of their extreme misfortune, they choose to fight because the Greeks have challenged them. It is a question of *panache* and it overrides the security of the city.

The tragedy of the *Ramayana* begins with the foolish claim of a vain woman, Kaikeyi. King Dasaratha who knows her claim to be unreasonable considers himself bound by the sacred duty of keeping his word. The welfare of his subjects and their undisguised disapproval count for nothing before his misconceived obligation towards Bharata's mother. And thus Rama, Sita and Lakshmana leave for the forest. Bharata is the only one whose attitude must have made sense to the more enlightened. But his efforts are all in vain. The capture of Sita by Ravana, constitutes a lesser national problem than Helen's elopement, for the people of Ayodhya have nothing to do in rescuing her. It is a personal injury to Rama who, instead of calling on his own people to fight with him, for their beloved princess, gets involved in the family dispute of a monkey tribe and gains the allegiance of the winning side. After Ravana's defeat and the recovery of Sita, it may be argued that Rama gives up the arbitrary rule of a feudal lord and rates very high the feelings and opinions of his subjects. The fire ordeal and the second banishment of Sita are undeniable proofs of his new policy. Yet, one wonders if that new policy heralds the dawn of a new era. It is so much in keeping with Rama's submissiveness at the time of his banishment. Rightly has Rama been given as the ideal of the "santa" hero and one aspect of his love for peace seems to be that trouble should be avoided at any cost: neither his right to the throne, nor his absolute conviction that Sita is innocent can arouse in him the passion necessary to resist the trouble-makers.

The destinies of the Pandavas and the Kauravas are decided in a game of dice. This is typical of a feudal setting where the rulers dispose of their kingdoms as they would of their private fortunes. The overbearing pride of the winners and the spiteful humiliation of the losers reaches its climax in the Draupadi incident. It is around the ill-used Draupadi that the personal antagonism of the feudal lords crystallizes. The terrible imprecation of Bhima against Duhsasana: "I shall split his breast and

drink his blood",¹ is the real declaration of war and the long exile will be unable to delete its memory. Its gruesome realization can easily bear comparison with the savage profanation of Hector's body at the hands of Achilles.

After the exile, when the Pandavas delegate Krishna to Duryodhana in order to reach a compromise, it is Draupadi, with her untied hair as a perpetual reminder of her humiliation, who passionately opposes all kinds of peaceful settlement. The way in which Krishna conducts the interview with the leader of the Kauravas is strongly influenced by the bellicose attitude of Pancali.

2. *The aristocrats in peace time.* Success in war being at the same time the condition of survival and the highest glory to which the heroes aspire, it is quite natural to see the young aristocrats apply themselves enthusiastically to their military training. Under the wise guidance of Drona, the young Pandavas and Kauravas vie with one another in the display of their skill, while the elders and a crowd of simple admirers look on with immense delight. Their loud acclamations fill the air.²

In the *Ramayana*, young Rama receives his training from Visvamitra. The expedition against the demons is not just a game but is meant to give Rama an idea of the evil forces with which he will have to grapple in his maturity. Homer has not depicted the early training of his heroes. Old Phoenix, however, gives us a glimpse of Achilles' education. Pleading with the sulking hero, Phoenix tells him: "My noble Lord Achilles, if you really think of sailing home and are so obsessed by anger that you refuse to save the gallant ships from going up in flames, what is to become of me without you, my dear child? How could I possibly stay there alone? Did not the old charioteer Peleus make me your guardian when he sent you off from Phthia to join Agamemnon? You were a mere lad, with no experience of the hazards of war, nor of debate, where people make their mark. It was to teach you all these things, to make a speaker of you, and a man of action, that he sent me with you; and I could not bring myself to let you go, dear child, and to stay behind, not if God himself undertook to strip me of my years

¹ *Mahabharata*, Sabhaparva, 90. 57.

² *Mahabharata*, Adi-parva, 144. 39.

and turn me into the sturdy youngster I was when I first left Hellas, the land of lovely women."³

Skill and strength are the necessary qualities of warriors. But these qualities have also a social importance which cannot be ignored. They are rated so high that a king is ready to give his daughter in marriage to the strongest, irrespective of the caste to which he belongs.

Dhrstadyumna, brother of Draupadi solemnly declares: "Be he a brahmin or a king or a merchant or a sudra, he who will string this excellent bow will get my sister in marriage."⁴

Sita is won by Rama because he alone can bend the bow. Draupadi is won by Arjuna for the same reason. Arjuna, to avoid detection, had come in the guise of a brahmin. The amusing scene describing the misgivings of the brahmins as one of them rises to perform a feat which the well-trained princes were unable to accomplish, makes us guess the pride and joy they felt when Arjuna defeated the kings at their own game. At the end of the Odyssey, Ulysses, having reached Ithaca after his long peregrinations, finds his palace occupied by the suitors. Penelope, prompted by Athena, decides to put them to the test: "Listen, my lords, you have fastened on this house in the long absence of its master, as the scene of your perpetual feasts, and you could offer no better pretext for your conduct than your wish to win my hand in marriage. That being the prize, come forward now, my gallant lords; for I challenge you to try your skill on the great bow of King Ulysses. And whichever man among you proves the handiest at stringing the bow and shoots an arrow through everyone of these twelve axes, with that man I will go, bidding goodbye to this house which welcomed me as a bride." The suitors fail. No doubt, they are grieved at the loss of Penelope, but, as Eurymachus puts it, "what does grieve me more is the thought that our failure with his bow proves us such weaklings compared with the godlike Ulysses. The disgrace will stick to our names for ever." Like Arjuna, Ulysses appears unrecognized and humbly asks to be allowed to test the strength of his hands. The suitors are annoyed: "We don't want the common folk to be saying things like this, 'A poor lot, these;

³ *Iliad*, transl. by E. V. Rieu (Penguin Classics) Book IX, p. 172.

⁴ *Mahabharata*, Adi-parva, 203. 19-20.

not up to the fine gentleman whose wife they want to marry! They can't string his bow. But in comes some casual tramp, strings the bow with the greatest ease and shoots through all the marks! That is the kind of thing they will say; and our reputation might suffer." ⁵ We live here in the same world and breathe the same atmosphere as in Drupada's palace and Janaka's capital.

3. *The aristocrats facing the mystery of life.* Life in the Epic age was essentially active. Games, gambling, conquests and military campaigns kept the heroes occupied, while the recital by bards of the glorious deeds of their ancestors gave an ever new lustre to the flame of chivalry. Before the compilation of the main epic narratives as we have them today, there must have existed a great number of independent lays celebrating different families or dynasties. The *Mahabharata* contains a great wealth of such stories quoted as examples to the heroes. The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, though less rich than the *Mahabharata*, use the same device and the Greek tragedy testifies to the existence of numerous epic cycles not incorporated in the works of Homer. The teaching which appealed to the knights of old was a concrete teaching which left out abstruse speculations. It may be reasonably surmised that the Arjuna and the Krishna of the Bhagavadgita belong to a later age when speculation had taken precedence over action.

In fact, a life of action has its own problems. Man realizes that his plans are often thwarted and that he is not the sovereign master of his destiny. There are mysterious forces at work which must be reckoned with. Above all, the great mystery of death is ever present in the precarious life of warriors. The heroic mentality acknowledges the presence of the mystery, is deeply impressed by it, but does not attempt to give it an abstract solution.

In the face of the mystery of life with its passions, its failures, its cruelty, the hero, while feeling responsible for his actions, knows that the divine power ordains and guides everything. To our rationalistic minds, his position may seem to be illogical: either one is a fatalist and denies human freedom and responsibility, or one believes in freedom and denies the supreme power

⁵ *Odyssey*, transl. by E. V. Rieu (Penguin Classics), Book XXI, pp. 317-318, 324.

of fate. But our argument would not disturb the hero's belief. It is reality which interests him and reality is complex. The human and divine worlds are not juxtaposed, they intermingle so intimately that to consider one apart from the other destroys the very texture of reality. It is the divine world which gives to human existence its third dimension and makes of it a living and full-blooded tragedy. Who would be so devoid of sensitivity as to affirm that the epic heroes are mere marionettes activated by the mechanical device of a hidden magician?

Naturalism which has cut off human life from its mysterious roots and claims to explain everything by an analysis of superficial psychology would have made our heroes smile. They knew better and the modern tendency to re-affirm the mystery is much closer to the heroic mentality than the so-called realism of the last century. It is not without significance that depth psychology borrows from the Epic some of its most important symbolism. The inner mystery it tries to penetrate may not be without connection with the transcendent mystery which the heroes of old acknowledged with awe and trembling.

Death, the lurking and inevitable menace, is a constant reminder of life's precarious stability. Sadly recalling the forebodings of defeat in a long and beautiful threnody, old King Dhritarashtra, in a crescendo of despair punctuated by the recurring refrain "tada nasamse vijayaya Sanjaya" (तदा नाशसे विजयाय संजय) concludes by expressing his desire to leave this fruitless existence: "O Sanjaya, since life is such my desire is to die without delay, for I do not see the slightest advantage in keeping alive." *

In true epic fashion, Sanjaya replies by quoting the examples of hundreds of kings and warriors, far superior to the Kaurava princes, who have lived, fought and died. Their death takes nothing away from their fame and valour, and life is worth living as long as fate does not snatch it away. Sanjaya does not speculate about future life or rebirth: he states the mystery of life and death and accepts it as a matter of fact: "There is no reason to lament over what is to be. Who can, through

* *Mahabharata*, Adi-parva, 1. 245.

endeavour, change the course of fate? Time is the root of everything, of life and death, of happiness and adversity."⁷

In the *Iliad*, the scene between Hector and Andromache has the same message to convey. Andromache is frightened by the bellicose enthusiasm of her husband: "Hector, you are possessed. This bravery of yours will be your end. You do not think of your little boy and of your unhappy wife, whom you will make a widow soon. Some day the Achaeans are bound to kill you in a massed attack. And when I lose you I might as well be dead. There will be no comfort left, when you have met your doom—nothing but grief." Hector is not indifferent to his wife's appeal. He loves his son and his wife dearly. Yet, he is a warrior and fate calls him to battle. "My dear, I beg you not to be too much distressed. No one is going to send me down to Hades before my proper time. But Fate is a thing that no man born of woman, coward or hero, can escape. Go home now, and attend to your own work, the loom and the spindle, and see that the maid-servants go on with theirs. War is men's business; and this war is the business of every man in Ilium, myself above all."⁸

Indian and Greek Perspectives

Although much more might be said about the similarity between the Indian and the Greek Epic, we must now turn our attention to what makes them different. For they are different. There is an atmosphere, a spiritual climate proper to the Indian Epic, as there is an outlook and a perspective which characterize the Homeric world. Why is it, for instance, that not a single Greek hero decides, after a life full of activity, to end his days in the peaceful retirement of the forest? Or how is it that the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* have been and still are religious books from which millions draw spiritual comfort and guidance, whereas the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, which have shaped the Greek temperament, have never been sacred books?

The mystery of death is ever present in the life of epic heroes. But the Indian temperament, so well depicted in the boy Naciketa of the *Kathakopanisad*, seeks to penetrate the mystery

⁷ *Ibid.*, 271-272.

⁸ *Iliad*, Book VI, pp. 128, 129.

which the Greek temperament is rather inclined to accept. Hence, a fundamental difference between the two outlooks. The more deeply the Indian soul meditates and reflects on the transitoriness of life, the less importance it gives to purely human achievement. The more forcibly death appears as inevitable to the Greek hero, the more urgent also the necessity to live fully the short time which destiny allots to man. The similarity which we have pointed out in the first part of this essay, is the similarity of a spontaneous and prospective tendency which precedes all metaphysical reflection. The Greek Epic remains all through spontaneous and prospective. The Indian Epic shows a gradual evolution towards a more reflexive and meditative attitude. In Greece, epic poetry and the metaphysical quest have remained two separate achievements. In India, both have met and blended, and that blending has conferred on the epic itself a character of its own. It has been the work of long centuries, especially for the *Mahabharata*. Each generation had its contribution to make, and the whole work was not written under the guidance of a logical mind anxious to safeguard the logical consistency of the various portions, but under the inspiration of the vital unity of a living people whose growth and development are reflected in its numerous verses as the changing landscape in the waters of a powerful river. What we are looking for in our study of the epic is not an abstract system which could be neatly summarized in a few clear and definite propositions, but human and concrete attitudes which reveal not the vision of a few philosophers but the temperament of living peoples. Our aim is not to pass a verdict or to decide that one temperament is better than the other, but to vibrate in unison with both temperaments since both are able to reveal to us hidden depths of the human soul.

1. *The Indian and the Greek temperament as revealed in the composition of the Epic.* When we read the Greek Epic, we are forced to concentrate on the story and on the heroes. Without preamble, the *Iliad* begins with the narrative of Achilles' wrath. In spite of lengthy speeches and inconsistencies in the narrative, the story of the Achaeans' gradual discomfiture proceeds apace, and we are never allowed to forget the central theme. The sulking Achilles remains ever present, and we are anxiously waiting for the relenting of his stubborn resentment. The death of Pat-

roclus arouses Achilles from his inaction and the doom of Ilium is sealed. The *Odyssey* is perhaps the first novel ever written. Ulysses drifting on the high seas; among unspeakable dangers, pursued by the vindictiveness of the god Poseidon, relates his adventures and finally reaches his dear Ithaca, while his son Telemachus, unable to solve the difficulties which he faces at home, undertakes a long and vain quest for his father. Both finally meet at Ithaca and defeat the suitors.

The *Mahabharata* has been called "a vast repository of Hindu traditional lore, philosophy and legend." Its bulk is eight times as great as that of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* put together. It would be ridiculous to look for a well-focussed narrative without digressions. It is not meant to be a simple story, and its greatness lies in the fact that, around the main story which occupies about one fifth of the whole work, the folklore, the wisdom and the religious aspirations of long centuries have clustered into an immense florilegium of Indian life. The *Adi-parva* after announcing the great tale, keeps us waiting for sixty chapters (i.e. over 2000 verses) before beginning the story of the Pandavas and Kauravas. Then, like a majestic river, the story follows its slow development, with many interruptions. The *Sabha-parva* with its 2500 verses brings us to the exile of the Pandavas. The *Vana-parva* is a real store-house of legends and beautiful tales and spreads over more than 17000 verses. It is a real forest of myths, legends and instructions of all kinds. The *Virata-parva* is like a short interlude of more than 2000 verses. After the failure of a peaceful solution and the preparation of the armies (*Udyoga-parva* with nearly 8000 verses), Sanjaya's account of the great battle begins. The *Bhisma-parva* (close to 6000 verses) ends with the pathetic sight of Bhisma dying on a bed of arrows. The *Drona-parva* (about 9500 verses) relates the fall of Jayadratha and the end of Drona. Bhima's revenge over Duhsasana and Karna's death at the hands of Arjuna are related in the *Karna-parva* (about 5000 verses). After a long interruption devoted to the relation of Balarama's pilgrimage to the Sarasvati, the battle comes to an end by the unfair victory of Bhima over Duryodhana. That is the *Salva-parva* (about 4000 verses). The remaining Kauravas attack the Pandavas at night and massacre their armies. The five brothers and Krishna escape death (*Saup-*

tika-parva with 800 verses). In the Stri-parva (800 verses), the Kaurava ladies, headed by Gandhari, visit the battlefield. The story is ended. But the great poem goes on with the Santi-parva (14000 verses) and the Anusasana-parva (8000 verses) embodying the teachings of Bhishma. They are the richest portions of the *Mahabharata* as a treasure-house of Indian tradition: artha-sastra, dharma-sastra, civil law, strategy, popular wisdom, cosmogony, theology, yoga, psychology, all the branches of knowledge are represented in that immense discourse which must have taken centuries to be written. The story is resumed with Yudisthira's Asvamedha. Dhritrashtra, accompanied by Gandhari, Kunti and Vidura, retires to the forest and is granted a vision of the deceased warriors. After the death of Balarama and Krishna, the Pandavas renounce the world.

Although the *Ramayana* is much more similar to the Greek Epic than the *Mahabharata*, there are elements in its composition which differentiate it sharply from Homer's poems. Like Homer, Valmiki is a historical poet who has composed a great epic of startling literary qualities. There is even a great similarity between the general theme of the poems: the great war brought about by the abduction of a princess, the siege of the abductor's capital, the victory of the lawful husband and the return of the princess to her conjugal home. There is little doubt that the origin of the *Ramayana*, like that of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, is to be found in the heroic traditions of warring tribes. Yet, like the *Mahabharata*, although to a lesser extent, the *Ramayana* incorporates an imposing collection of interpolated legends and myths which have no direct connection with the central theme. More explicitly than in the *Mahabharata*, the hero of the *Ramayana* has become a divine incarnation, and the human interest of the story, without being destroyed, is sublimated into a divine episode.

2. *Humanism Greek and Indian.* From a purely literary point of view, we might be tempted to conclude that the Greek Epic avoids many of the defects of the Indian Epic by a greater fidelity to the objective it has in view. Yet, we may wonder if the lengthy digressions of the Indian Epic and the tendency to divinize its heroes have nothing else to reveal than bad literary workmanship. Is there not a fundamental difference between the Greek

and the Indian conception of humanism? "Conception" is perhaps the wrong word, for we are not comparing two systems of philosophy, but two literary testimonies. It would be better, perhaps, to speak of two tendencies, two innate visions which try to find an expression without ever succeeding in reducing it to a clear-cut system. Have you ever heard the same story told by two persons of different temperaments? An extrovert will tell the story with passion, but a passion for the story itself, and he will leave out his personal reflections and subjective impressions, because he obscurely knows that the story can speak for itself. An introvert will allow his mind to wander and try to find in the incidents of the story props for his personal considerations regarding life and destiny. His passion is more interior, and the story itself will gradually lose something of its importance, without, however, disappearing completely. The thread of the narrative will be loose yet continuous. Am I far off the mark when I qualify the Greek Epic temperament as extrovert, and the Indian as introvert?

(a) *The extrovert humanism of Greece.* Spengler's remark that the soul of European antiquity is "pure present" is certainly very true of the Greek Epic. We have already remarked on the hero's attitude towards death and what follows. It is a mystery which he recoils from investigating and which he accepts without question. Similarly, the mystery of human suffering and human wickedness is solved summarily. "Are not the gods responsible for that, weaving catastrophe into the pattern of events to make a song for future generations?" That is how King Alcinous consoles Ulysses for the loss of many of his dear friends. What the king is interested in is the story which Ulysses has to tell: "Explain to us what secret sorrow makes you weep as you listen to the tragic story of the Argives and the fall of Troy." *

What matters for the Greek hero is to make the most of the time allotted to him. Too much speculation is of no avail; it will not postpone the fatal day foreseen by the gods. To fight, to enjoy the pleasures of love and of congenial company, to make a name for himself, "to listen to a minstrel, while the tables are laden with bread and meat, and a steward carries

* *Odyssey*, Book VIII, p. 138.

round the wine and fills the cups," that is life, and the rest does not count. The transitoriness of human existence never prompts the Greek hero to give up the world and to retire to the forest. Death is the great retirement and it will come in its appointed time.

There are no demons in the Greek Epic. The Cyclops himself is just a savage of immense physical strength who does not represent in any way the dark power which resists the ruling of the gods. Both evil and good in human behaviour have a divine origin. They remain human and we witness in them that strange blending of fatalism and responsibility which are the two facets of all human activities. Listen to Helen after her return to her husband's palace. She is fully conscious of her sin when she declares: "The Achaeans boldly declared war and took the field against Troy for my sake, shameless creature that I was." Yet, she also knows that it was not her independent doing: "Aphrodite blinded me when she lured me to Troy from my own dear country and made me forsake my daughter, my bridal chamber, and a husband who had all one could wish in the way of brains and good looks."¹⁰

But the gods themselves are so very close to man. Except for the blind submission which they command regarding their arbitrary decisions and partialities, they behave exactly like the heroes of the poem, more recklessly even, for they have nobody to fear. Those humanized gods of the Homeric pantheon will remain "a fit inspiration for an athletic contest, a statue, or an ode, but (they are) of little use to the philosopher, and entirely unsympathetic to the simple everyday sorrows of mankind."¹¹ Although they rule everything, they never rob the heroes of their humanity. Their quarrels are reflected in the conflicts that oppose man to man, they positively help their protégés and are personally engaged in the battles of men. But the human warriors do not rise above their human status. We may compare, in this connection, the decisive fight between Achilles and Hector, and the final struggle between Rama and Ravana. We are in two different worlds, the Greek world in which man would be what he is without divine interference, the Indian world in which

¹⁰ *Odyssey*, Book IV, pp. 68, 71.

¹¹ A. R. Burn, *Minoans, Philistines and Greeks*, p. 256.

man, a mere instrument raised to a divine efficiency, breaks his human limits. The Greek heroes are so human that they make one forget the divine operation which sustains them. The Indian gods are so prominent that they blur the human outlines of the heroes.

(b) *The introvert humanism of India.* This last remark of mine should not lead one to conclude that I have failed to respond to the deep human appeal of innumerable passages of the Indian Epic. I shall try to explain my meaning by a concrete example. I, who am not a Vedantin, have great friends who are Vedantins. In our usual human relations I fully appreciate their humane qualities. But I know that, deep down in their soul, they have a vision which is incompatible with that human distinction between 'I' and 'THOU' which is the very foundation of friendship. And that makes me feel uneasy. My attitude towards the Indian Epic is something of that kind. I love Rama and Sita. Yudhishthira arouses my admiration. The Stri-parva brings tears to my eyes. Arjuna's grief at the news of his son's death moves me deeply. As long as I forget the pattern to which they belong I feel one with them. But there is a pattern. Before trying to describe it, let us first understand how the Indian Epic completes and deepens the Greek vision of life.

The simple fact that the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* are accepted, even today, as the divine answer to the religious aspirations of millions is a clear indication of the depth of their message. They have given an answer to the eternal questions of the 'why', the 'whence' and the 'whither' of human existence. The epic story has become an occasion to reflect on the instability of things mundane and to seek for stability. The great heroes who survive the heroic struggle for power realize that power is an empty shell which must be discarded. Evil is a reality which is at work in the world, and the demons are bent on checking the divine control of the universe. They represent a terrible force, both external and internal to man, against which it is the duty of all, according to each one's situation, to fight. Human destiny is not to find its fulfilment in this world. Wisdom more than bravery has the key to the mystery of life. The heroes are continually invited to make the decisive struggle an internal struggle towards final emancipation, while the external struggle

is nothing but a passing phase of the world of appearances. With the Indian Epic, we enter into a vast pattern in which human life, human emotions, human values are assumed and transformed.

In the *Ramayana*, that pattern is outlined in the first book which is certainly a later addition revealing to a nicety the Indian temperament. The gods are much troubled by the demon Ravana who cannot be destroyed except by a man. But, in order to kill him, one would need divine power. Hence, Visnu agrees to be born as a man. The divine struggle weaves itself into a human fabric. Dasaratha begets four sons. Rama is the full incarnation of Visnu, his three brothers are partial incarnations. We may forget about that divine prelude when we read the story of the exile, of the siege of Lanka and of Ravana's defeat. But what we discuss here is not whether or not the addition of the first book fulfils its purpose, but the fact that the first book has been added. In the perspective of that first book, the whole human story of Rama and Sita, the abduction of Sita by Ravana, and the battle between Rama and Ravana, become a kind of camouflage of the real story. A camouflage, as we have pointed out, which is not always successful, since the heroes often lose their human dimensions.

For the *Mahabharata*, the pattern is much more complex. Towards the end, we come to know that all the heroes are divine incarnations. But let us consider one instance, the Bhagavadgita. There is Arjuna, deeply moved at the prospect that he has to fight against his relatives and his gurus. Krishna encourages him to do his duty as a worthy Ksatriya, and that remains within the boundaries of a Greek epic. But when Krishna teaches Arjuna about the eternity of the Self and the illusion of the bodily individuality, the whole struggle, viewed from that perspective, vanishes into something unreal. The whole thing is a big puppet show in which the actors are moved by supernatural agencies.

The Indian pattern, as distinguished from the Greek outlook, is characterized by the fact that there is no strict division between the divine, the demonic and the human. The Law of Rebirth allows the spirit to move across the three worlds in its pilgrimage towards liberation. How many demons do we not see released from their bondage once the heroes, under divine guidance, act

as the unconscious instruments of a superior power? That fluidity of the Indian universe dissolves, as it were, all that is specifically divine, demonic or human, into an immense current of mysterious and predetermined events which follow their course under the appearance of spontaneity.

Appearance or reality? That is the question which the confrontation of the Greek and the Indian Epic brings to our minds, but which it does not solve. Both the Indian and the Greek heroes have a keen perception of "that void, that nothingness at the bottom of things," but are inclined to react differently to it. While the Greek hero feels that human existence is a gift which must be enjoyed, the Indian hero tends to see in it a bondage from which one should escape. The greatest passages of both epics are those where the gift-aspect and the bondage-aspect are blended into that energizing humility which is man's closest realization of what he is.

“Determination” in Social Sciences

by DAYA KRISHNA

THE phenomena studied in any of the social sciences are not primary, fundamental or universal phenomena. By “primary,” “fundamental” and “universal” we only mean those phenomena which, at least as far as our experience goes, do not seem to require any other type of phenomena for their existence. The phenomena studied by the science of physics seem to possess such a character. The social phenomena, on the other hand, are embedded in a larger framework of biological and physical phenomena without which they cannot be supposed to exist. They can disappear, just as once they did not exist, without affecting the biological or the physical framework within which they existed.

The framework sets merely the limits within which the phenomena can exist. Within the limits, however, there is a fair play of indeterminacy because of the occurrence of causal factors which cannot be understood in terms of the factors relating to the framework alone. It is due to this that we speak of the *relative autonomy* of phenomena within a particular field—*relative*, because their existence is ultimately permitted by factors within the framework and *autonomous*, because their *specificity* cannot be understood in terms of the factors within the framework at all. Each science, therefore, claims a relative autonomy for the subject matter of its study and rightly so—for, though there can be a real danger of being blind to the horizons that

lie around the margin of one's subject, it would be an equal mistake to fix one's eyes on the horizon and forget the specificity of the immediate "what" of one's subject.

The fact that certain types of phenomena are embedded in a larger framework of other types of phenomena, gives to the statements made with respect to the former a peculiar character. They always have a margin of indeterminacy about them, a possibility that they would not come true as we expect them to be. Such a possibility does not follow merely from the fact that they are empirical statements but because, however correct and warranted they may be, the factors within the framework may change in such a way as to jeopardize the very existence of the phenomena themselves. The indeterminacy following from such a situation increases directly with the number of frameworks that the phenomena presuppose.

Within such a margin of indeterminacy, however, there is a fair amount of immanent causality within the field of the phenomena themselves. There is, thus, what we may call a transcendent and an immanent determination of those realms of phenomena which depend for their existence on other realms. The transcendent factors, however, do not make the phenomena intelligible except in the extreme generality of their existence. They are, therefore, mostly irrelevant for the *specific* understanding of the emergent phenomena. Unless, therefore, we believe that all the facts of biological and sociological character can be understood in terms of the categories of the physical sciences alone, we shall have to grant the fact of immanent causality within the field of such phenomena.

Social scientists, in general, have argued vigorously for the autonomy of their field of study and have mostly looked askance at the attempts that have tended to show the social phenomena to be entirely determined by non-sociological factors. In their own turn, however, they have been extremely antagonistic to the idea that there may be other phenomena which stand in the *same* relation to sociological phenomena as these do themselves to biological and physical phenomena. Sociologists, like most other scientists, seem to think that all that occurs in the field of human affairs is completely determined by factors which pertain to their own field of study. They are extremely averse

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to the admission of immanent causality within the field of supra-sociological phenomena.

There seems, however, no reason to believe that the emergence of autonomous realms with their immanent causality ceases at the sociological level. It would be as much a piece of blindness on the part of sociologists to deny this as it would be in the case of those biologists or physicists who would deny autonomy and immanent causality to social phenomena. The mistake in the case of the latter is clearly visible to every sociologist, yet he immediately seems to develop a psychic scotoma when he himself commits it.

The supra-sociological phenomena are indeed dependent on sociological phenomena for their very existence, but this should in no way lead to the conclusion drawn by most sociologists that they are "determined" by them. If the logic of the argument were true in such a case, then we would inevitably be pushed further to the conclusion that the real determinants of any phenomenon are physical and not biological or sociological or supra-sociological in nature. The sociological phenomena, in fact, *permit* the existence of supra-sociological phenomena but do not determine them, in any way, in their specific nature.

The large number of studies that have delineated the "determination" of cultural phenomena by sociological factors are vitiated, therefore, at their very core by this central fallacy. Marxist thinking, for example, which has had such a large influence in the spread of this tendency, shares it to a pre-eminent degree. It refuses to grant the immanent causality that it admits with respect to a certain sector of social phenomena, to other sectors. The multiple patterns of culture that have been woven by man since Pleistocene times are hardly understandable in terms of the forms and relations of production in which he is engaged.

Marx wrote, "In the social production of their livelihood men enter into definite relations that are necessary and independent of their wills; these relations of production correspond to a definite stage in the development of their material forces of production. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real basis on which is reared a legal and political superstructure and to which cor-

respond definite forms of social consciousness . . . with the change in the economic foundation the immense superstructure in its entirety is more or less rapidly transformed.”¹

This is a fair presentation of the Marxist thesis and yet, if closely examined, it reveals deep fissures at the key-points of its argument. The first part of the contention is true but is by no means confined to the so-called “production of their livelihood” only. In fact, it is true of every activity of man and follows from his being born into a pre-existent social structure which has a *pattern* for all of his activities whether they be concerned with the earning of livelihood, the finding of a mate, the giving of a feast, the building of a house, the singing of a song, the dancing of a dance or anything else. Even such a thing as the ornamental pattern on a piece of pottery or the shape of a stone chisel is peculiar to a particular people and forms the basis of far-reaching conclusions with respect to the spread of the people and their culture in modern studies on pre-history. The emphasis, therefore should be on *social* rather than on economic in the above quotation. The “necessary and independent” relations into which men have to enter whether they will it or not is again not confined merely to economic activity but is a feature of all activity in general. The chain of causality is so multi-dimensional and stretches into such an unending future that even when one wills the immediate *consequences* of one's action, one cannot but enter into relations that are “necessary and independent” of one's will. It, further, is not merely a feature of man's conscious activity but, in fact, follows from the very nature of his existence or, rather, *from the very fact of existence*, whether of his or that of anything else.

The second contention of the Marxist thesis is that “those relations of production *correspond* to a definite stage in the development of their *material* forces of production.” The word “correspond” suggests “fortuitous coincidence” rather than “strict causation”. But those who are aware of Marxist thinking would know that it means the latter rather than the former. As for the “material forces of production” they must be *distinct* from the “relations of production”—for, otherwise, there would

¹ Quoted by V. Gordon Childe in *History*, p. 71.

be hardly any sense in the latter corresponding to the former. The phrase, then, can perhaps only mean the technological basis of production.² If so, the contention would mean that there is, at least, a one-one *correlation*, even if not strict causation between the technological base and the social relations of production.

If such be the contention, then it seems hardly to be in accord with the facts as historically known. In the primal period of humanity i.e. before man turned from a food-gathering animal into a food-producing one, it would be difficult to infer the correlate social relations of production from a stone or bone implement or the existence of some bow or other instrument which was used for hunting. As for the post-primal times, the social relations obtaining in different agricultural and trading communities have been different without involving any difference in the technologies they used. Gordon Childe in his recent study on 'Social Evolution' has brought out this point quite clearly. Discussing the question whether any uniformity or parallelism is exhibited in the transition of various cultures from barbarism to civilization he comes to the definite conclusion that "the intervening steps in development do not exhibit even abstract parallelism."³ If we were to judge from the technological evidence to the social relations of production obtaining in present-day Russia or America we would be sadly mistaken, for we would infer them to be identical.

The third correlation made in the quotation is between the social relations of production and the politico-legal structure of a society. In a later part of the quotation which we have not reproduced, religion, artistic and philosophic activities are put on a par with the legal and the political and considered in the same light. The term "relations of production" apart from the politico-legal structure of a society seems extremely ambiguous and indeterminate in character. But whatever be meant by the term, it can hardly make us infer the sib or clan organization, the laws of matrilineal or patrilineal descent, the existence of

² Marxists generally include besides technology, skill and organization of production such as division of labour under the term "material forces of production". But the latter are not independent factors. They are merely features that follow from the specific nature of the technology itself.

³ *Social Evolution*, p. 161.

polygyny, polyandry or monogamy, the relative powers of the chief or the priest or the council of elders, the area of endogamy or exogamy, etc. in a society. As for Religion, Art and Philosophy, we would quote Prof. Childe's conclusion: "The final result—civilization—was concretely very different in each case."⁴

The fallacy of thinking that there are no supra-sociological realms which enjoy a relative autonomy with respect to other phenomena is, however, not confined to Marx only. All those persons who try to understand these in terms of some single factor of geography, race or psychology commit the same fallacy—even if they include among themselves names as great as that of Freud himself. The absurdities to which one may be led by ignoring the principle of relative autonomy are well exemplified by a recent work on the social history of Art. Arnold Hauser, for example, has tried to explain the character of the German Philosophy of the Enlightenment by the fact that "the middle-class intelligentsia . . . was excluded from the Government of the country and was without influence."⁵ Even the most elementary student of the subject knows that Kant's thinking has deeper relations to the British empiricists and the continental rationalists than to the political situation prevailing in his country. As for the post-Kantian thought in Germany, it occurs in the context of Kant's philosophy which is more important for it than any of the politico-economic conditions with which thinkers of a certain type seem to be obsessed.

The relative autonomy of supra-sociological realms is implicitly denied by a set of thinkers who are, in spirit, almost completely different from those who seek for a causal factor that may be regarded as "determining" these phenomena. The unity pervading the different activities of man is sought to be explained not in terms of some causal factor but rather in terms of the mentality, Geist or spirit which expresses itself in them. The deep difference drawn in German thinking between *Naturwissenschaften* and *Geisteswissenschaften* may be considered as, to a certain extent, responsible for this. But it certainly is not the only route through which the conclusion is reached. Professor MacIver's view presented in his *Social Causation* that it is "the

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 161. Italics mine.

⁵ Arnold Hauser, *The Social History of Art*, Vol. II, p. 606.

dynamic assessment" of a total situation by a human mind that is the chief causal factor in understanding social phenomena may lead, for example, in a certain sense to the same situation. The unity here would be derived from the mentality in which the "dynamic assessment" occurs.

Sorokin's overwhelming data in his *Social and Cultural Dynamics* suggests that the contention is not without some element of truth in it. But just as the different activities of a person form relatively autonomous fields without any necessity of a unity underlying them, so there may also be relatively autonomous supra-sociological fields without any over-arching unity between them. A perfectly integrated society like a perfectly integrated individual is only a methodological norm valid for certain purposes but positively dangerous when treated as actually existent. Sorokin himself has critically examined the notion of "integration" so loosely employed by many anthropologists and sociologists and has even raised the question as to how much integration there is between the theoretic articulation achieved in the different arts and sciences and the actual life of the people. His analysis and data both seem to point to the conclusion that while there is a strong tendency towards integration in the articulated structure, it is seldom achieved completely and even when rarely achieved, as perhaps in the early Middle Ages, it persists only for a very short time. As for the integration between "theory" and "practice", it is weaker still.

The supra-sociological fields for whose relative autonomy we have been arguing as against their "determination" by social phenomena do not, however, seem to be the last term in the series of those types of occurments which are embedded in a larger field or phenomena. It seems fairly clear that the specificity of any development, say, in physics is intelligible only in the context of the science of physics and not in terms of the socio-economic politico-jural or the philosophico-esthetic situation of the times. But the possible line of development, though conditioned by the situation prevailing in any particular field at any moment, is never closed as to alternative possibilities. The ultimate locus of autonomy, therefore, seems to lie in the individual. But it is the most *precarious* as it presupposes so many realms that permit it to exist. A bullet may kill a Gandhi or the tuber-

cular bacilli, a Keats. The politico-jural institutions may condemn a Socrates or crucify some Jesus. A proletarian dictatorship may not allow you to write or speak and an Orwellian nightmare may not even permit you to think. At a larger remove, the hydrogen-helium Cycle in the sun may (or rather "must") create such heat as to destroy all life and thus the very foundation of all sociological, supra-sociological and individual phenomena. Yet, however large the number of frameworks which the individual presupposes, he seems to enjoy a spontaneity and indeterminacy that can only be said to be "permitted" and not "determined" by the presupposed frameworks.

The use of the concept of "determination" to describe the relation that holds between two realms of phenomena one of which is embedded in the other but does not coincide with it is, it is suggested, an "abuse" of the term. The relation between the wider and the narrower realm is better described by the word "permitting", or any other word that conveys the same sense. The only other alternative to this position seems to be the belief that all phenomena are ultimately determined in their specificity by physical phenomena, and that it is only our ignorance that does not see them as intelligible in terms of the concepts and the categories of the science of physics.

It has been our contention in this paper that there can be no half-way house between this position and the one we have elaborated here, as many sociologists seem to have fondly imagined. If sociology is to be a relatively autonomous science, then the same relative autonomy would have to be granted to supra-sociological realms and ultimately even to the individuals who constitute those realms. Otherwise, there is no alternative but to treat them as footnotes in some book of physics—footnotes that might not yet have been written, but which are bound to be added sooner or later.

Adoption of the Roman Script in India *

by PUNYA SLOKA RAY

IF we ever agree to change our scripts for a common and more practical system of writing our different languages, we should adopt the Roman script. It is basically more scientific than any of our Indian scripts and that for three reasons. It uses not mere diacritical marks but independent signs for writing the vowels. A sign in its system is the same irrespective of whether it occurs before or after another sign. It does not use compound letters. Thus the total number of signs needed to write or print a particular language can be kept down to a very low minimum. The gain in practical efficiency is enormous. Portable typewriters and other useful office machines, not yet invented for most of our Indian scripts can be used straightaway if we change to the Roman script. If we wish to use our languages for all the purposes of life in an age of technology, commerce and organizational efficiency, such advantages should mean much.

* The arguments for and against Romanization are surveyed in Punya Sloka Ray, "A Single Script for India," *Seminar*, July 1960. Different technical solutions to the problem in addition to the proposed in this article are surveyed in Punya Sloka Ray, "Romanization in India," *Seminar*, December 1962. A technical comparison of the relative efficiencies of the Roman and the Devanagari scripts is available as Chapter 9 in Punya Sloka Ray, *Language Standardization* (The Hague, 1963).

The Roman script is international. It is indeed the only script which can be said to be genuinely international. It is significant that in spite of their nationalism the Chinese are replacing or at least supplementing their ancient script, and that in spite of their militant Communism they are not adopting the Russian script. The Chinese are on the eve of adopting the Roman script for their language. Several other communist countries, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Yugoslavia and Rumania use the Roman script. Among Asian countries, Indonesia, Turkey and the Philippines have already adopted this script. Only the Roman script can serve the purpose of international communication.

Still another consideration is that if a common script can bind the different parts of India together, it can only be the Roman script. The Roman script belongs exclusively or pre-eminently to no particular language or group of languages. That is why any language can adopt it without losing identity or its being felt as the language of a defeated minority. It will be very different with the Devanagari script. Only Hindi and Marathi are written in it. For the rest of India it is too obviously connected with the expansion of Hindi. There is also the consideration that the adoption of the Devanagari script will mean no improvement in practical efficiency. The Roman script is on the contrary something super-national, like modern science or technology. We can surrender our own scripts in its favour without feeling that we are getting into a disadvantageous position in comparison with other groups of people in the Union.

If we accept the basic necessity of adopting the Roman script, it becomes a real problem to find the most suitable method. The existing system of transliterating Sanskrit will not do. This system was invented more than a century ago when the scientific study of language-writing was still unborn, and was meant for printing Sanskrit alone. It takes over unnecessary distinctions from the Bengali or the Devanagari script and is neither elegant nor consistent nor economical in design. It takes less space than Bengali or Devanagari to print, but is otherwise nearly as cumbersome and unpractical. It will be best to make a new start altogether. Actually there is common agreement about 23 signs composed with 15 letters: *i u e o h n m k kh g gh c ch j jh t th d dh*

p ph b bh. There are four ways of solving the difficulty about finding the rest of the signs.

One solution is to use new letters specially invented to suit Indian sounds. There are precedences. German and Norwegian use each one special letter, Icelandic two. But we cannot really recommend this method. For one thing it will set us apart from the international system of writing. For another it will not be possible for us to keep down the number of signs to one or two; we shall need a far larger number.

Another solution is the use of diacritical marks. Many of the languages now being written in the Roman script use such marks. German, French, Danish, Swedish, Polish, Hungarian, etc. may serve as examples. But if this method is to be practical the number of marks and signs with marks must be kept down to a low number. The main disadvantage of diacritical marks is that they slow down writing and cannot get across telegraph wires.

The third method is the use of digraphs. Two or more letters may be written together to signify a single unit of sound. The use of *ng* in the English word "singing" is digraphic. Of course only such clusters may be used as digraphs which do not normally occur in the language. English can use *ng* as a digraph only because the sound cluster, *n* followed by hard *g*, does not normally occur in English. This method has the great advantage that it does not require any new types. Its only disadvantage is that it makes words look rather elongated. Of the many languages which use digraphs English is the most familiar example.

The fourth method may be used together with the third. Such letters in the Roman inventory of letters which have no near equivalents in the Indian languages can be used to indicate characteristically Indian sounds. The letters *q f w x* would be superfluous for us if we adopt a system of writing as nearly like the current convention as possible. But we can also adopt them and assign them altogether new^a and peculiarly Indian values. In this we shall be emulating the Greeks, when they adopted the Phoenician system of writing but decided to use the unwanted signs to represent the then unrepresented vowels.

If we are to adopt the Roman script, we should produce a design that will have no new letters and as few diacritical marks as possible. We may learn much from the other peoples who

have adopted the Roman script for their languages so successfully. It will be decidedly better if we could select the diacriticals and the digraphs we need from among those now being used by them. Let me mention a few examples: In Hungarian *s*=English *sh*, *sz*=English *s*, *a*=English *a* in "ball", *á*=English *a* in "palm"; in French *é*=English *e* in "get", *ê*=almost as English *a* in "man"; in Indonesian the letter *j* is used as a sign for the palatalization of the preceding consonant or group of consonants so that *tj*=English *ch*, *dj*=English *j* and *sj*=English *sh*.

We shall go into the details first with the Indian vowels. Sanskrit has 12 vowels which may be written: *a aa i ii u uu r l e ai o au*. Since the semivowels *r l* do not occur in the same contexts as the vowels *r l* we need not distinguish the two pairs in our script. Now Hindi has only 10 vowels and Bengali only 7. Oriá has 6 or 5; there has not been a dependable analysis as yet. If we are to be just to the Indian languages we must alter the design a little to suit the different sound habits of each. In Hindi the short vowels never occur at the end of words; hence the long vowels in those positions need not be distinguished in writing from the short. Two of the vowels used in Hindi and Bengali are new. In Hindi these are often written with the digraphs *ai au*. They may be written, especially in Bengali, with the diacriticals *ê ò*. The South Indian languages will need the distinction between short *e o* and long *ee oo*. While Sanskrit and Hindi may both use *y v* for their two semivowels, such a language as Bengali will have to use bare *i u e o* for its four semivowels and, on occasions where confusion is to be guarded against, emphasize the syllabic vowels as *ii uu ee oo*. There is one more problem with the vowels. In many Indian languages nasalized vowels have to be distinguished from those which are not. We may adopt either the apostrophe or the superfluous letter *w* as the sign of nasalization of a preceding syllabic vowel. For Sanskrit, of course, we shall need signs for the *Afusvara* and the *Visarga*; we may adopt *w f*.

Diacriticals may also be used instead of digraphs to mark the difference between the long or the syllabic vowels and the short or the consonantal vowels (semivowels). We may write *a á i í u ù e é o ó*. Perhaps, in this particular case, the two methods may be accepted as equally good alternatives.

The major problem with the consonants is about the distinction between the dental and the retroflex (the so-called cerebral) sounds. Only Assamese does not need the distinction. For other Indian languages we may write *t th d dh l lh r rh n nh s z*, bare for the plain sounds and with a dot under each for the retroflex. I must mention, however, that the use of diacritical marks under the main letters does go against the fundamental principle of the Roman script that the letters should stand up on a line and not hang down from it. We may however use the superfluous letter *x* as the sign of retroflexion (cerebralization) thus: *tx thx dx dhx lx lhx rx rhx nx nhx sx zx*.

Since the velar and the palatal nasals do not occur in Sanskrit between vowels, or in the beginning or the end of any word, but only between a vowel and a velar or a palatal consonant, one letter *n* will do perfectly well for writing the three nasals unnecessarily distinguished in the Indian scripts. But Bengali needs a separate sign for the velar nasal and it may be recommendable to borrow the digraph *ng*, since in Bengali *n* is normally never followed by *g*. I have been told that Tamil and Sindhi need a sign for the palatal nasal; the digraph *nj* may be suggested. For Tamil it seems we shall need signs also for the palatal *r* and the palatal *z*; we may use *rj zj*. In Hindi the more common sibilant is the dental; this may be written as *s* and the less common palatal may be distinguished as *sj*. The English digraph *sh* should not be borrowed, since *h* may sometimes occur after *s* within the same Hindi word. In Bengali it is the palatal sibilant which is the more common; in writing Bengali, therefore, we may prefer to use the single letter *s* for the common palatal and the digraph *sz* for the rare dental. To distinguish the so-called dentalized palatals of Marathi, Telugu and Kashmiri, *cs chs js jhs* may be suggested. The spirants of Urdu may be written *kh' gh' ph' bh'*. With the exception of its use in Urdu the letter *q* will remain superfluous.

I have discussed these details not for the purpose of providing a master plan, all ready for immediate implementation. I have only tried to outline and illustrate the basic techniques with which a simple and practicable scheme can be made out for each of our languages. Our people have not been, till now, enthusiastic over the proposal to change to the Roman script. I

am convinced that it has been because of the failure of our experts to bring forward a really feasible scheme. Even the latest recommendations of the Ministry of Education do not at all succeed in making improvements on the existing convention. It must once for all be clear that we will not be able to reproduce every single detail of the existing Indian scripts in any adopted version of the Roman script. If we wish to preserve all the idiosyncrasies and irrationalities of the scripts now in use there is really no reason at all why we should ever change to the Roman script.

Romanization can be successful only if we preserve that practicality and simplicity which is its characteristic advantage over the Indian scripts. The task will be easier and indeed first possible only if we take it as a principle that we shall transcribe the languages in their standard *spoken* forms, and not just try to transliterate them as they are written today in the existing scripts. The same borrowed words will have to be spelt differently in the different languages, insofar as they are actually pronounced differently in those languages. The situation will be similar to that in Europe. The same word is spelt "nationalism" in English, "nationalisme" in French, "nationalismus" in German, "nazionalismo" in Italian and "nacionalismo" in Spanish.

Let me end this essay with a few passages transcribed in accordance with the suggestions outlined above. I regret that I am unable to give an example for each of the Indian languages. Many of them have been as yet inadequately analysed and, in any case, my personal knowledge does not comprehend all of them. I propose to give an example each in Sanskrit, Hindi, Old Literary Bengali, Current Standard Bengali and Oriya. I hope readers who speak other Indian languages will find no great difficulty in working out equally simple systems of transcription for those languages.

Sanskrit:

*esxa devo visjakarmaa mahaatmaa
sadaa janaanaaw hrdaye saṁnivistxaf,
hrdaa maniisxaa manasaabhiklpto
ya etad viduramrtaaste bhavanti.*

Hindi:

*kisaan gaarxipar ja baithxa. yuvakne pahiyowko zor lagaakar uksaaya. kiicarx baht zyaada tha. usne phir zor kiya, udhar kisaanne bailowko lalkaara. bailowko sahaara mila, himmat bandh gayi, unhowne kandhe*jhukaakar ek bar jo zor kiya to gaarxi naaleke upar thi.*

Old Literary Bengali:

*srabon maser sòkalbèlae megh katxia gia nirmòl roudre koli-katar akas bhorja giache. rastae ga*xighorxar biram nai, phe-rioala òbisram hawkia coliache. jahara apise kaleje adalote jaibe tahader jonno basae basae machtòrkarir cuprxi asiache o ranna-ghòre unan jalaibar dhowa uthxiache.*

Current Standard Bengali:

sonibar rat dòstxae chelera stximar theke neme gele òlpokkhon pòrei sue pòrxa gèlo. gòrome gae kòmbol rakha gèlo na. rat dutxoe èkbar uthxechilam. car dike alo. stximar pul kholar pro-tikkha korche.

Oria:

bortoman sorotokalo. kintu khub jór borsa hóuci. meghe dxakuci, panxi porxuci, batxo upor dei sróto bohi jayci. aji ratijako borsa hobo bóli mone hóuci. mu thxakuro dekhikaku jibi bhabuthili, kintu ile jai paru ni.

Direct Action : A Pattern of Political Behaviour

by RAJNI KOTHARI

THE various direct actions that have taken place and are taking place in this country seem to form a pattern of political behaviour. The general approach to the problem of direct action in this country has been merely one of approval or disapproval; there has hardly been any serious study of the subject. It is not enough to speak of the propriety or otherwise of a social phenomenon without inquiring *why* it occurs and what is the situation that gives rise to it. The direct action is objectively there. It must have causes. It is necessary to inquire into these causes.

Such an inquiry must begin with an examination of the context in which direct actions take place. In this country, they have taken place under a parliamentary democratic form of government. In the present article we propose to examine critically the bases on which the parliamentary form of government rests, the chief aim being to investigate how far the idea of democracy can be realized in this form. We then analyse the relation between parliamentary government and direct action. This is followed by an evaluation of the direct action that took place in Kerala as a particular instance of a general phenomenon. Finally, we try to construct a causal theory of direct action based on our experience of this phenomenon.

Bases of Parliamentary Democracy

The idea of democracy has had a long pedigree from the Greek city-states to the modern times, but it is not necessary to trace its history here. The idea is simple. In the political sphere, it is the idea of participation by the whole community in the political process. It bases political authority on the will of individuals who by a process of co-operation make decisions that are binding on all. Our main interest here, however, is in the modern form that democracy has taken, namely, the parliamentary form. In our own country we are committed to the promotion of the idea of democracy through the institution of a particular form of democratic government. An examination into the form is more important in such a situation than in countries where a "spirit" of democracy preceded the institution of forms and where the "spirit" is capable of transcending the shortcomings that accompany the forms.

(a) *Philosophical Basis.* The basic assumption on which parliamentary government rests relates to the nature of the society it presupposes. It is the well-known assumption of "natural harmony" between man and man and between individuals and society. For it is clear that if there is a fundamental cleavage in society, parliamentary government could not work. The belief on which the classical view of society was based assumed that there is no possibility of a permanent or basic conflict between sections of the people, the task of political organization being merely to make "adjustments" and arrive at "compromises" between apparently opposing points of view on relatively minor issues of policy. The "invisible hand" would see to it that the individual, in following his enlightened self-interest, also promotes the general good of the community.

Recent developments have belied this belief. Even in England issues like the Irish Home Rule and the position of the House of Lords in the constitution brought the parliamentary fabric very near to breaking-point, which was only saved by a determined attempt to preserve the "spirit" of democracy that had permeated the consciousness of the British people. Elsewhere,

fundamental differences both in respect of ideology and of interests have divided societies into several political splinters and rendered parliamentary government unworkable. The chief defect in this belief in "natural" harmony, however, is not that there is no possibility of harmony among people. It is rather that by positing such a *pre-existing* harmony the theorists of parliamentary government discounted the necessity of *true participation of the people in the political process* which alone could have made such a harmony possible. The object of political effort was "assumed away," and that accounts for the inadequacy of parliamentary government in many countries in the realization of the democratic ideal.

Parliamentary government found another justification in the hands of the utilitarian philosophers of the nineteenth century. For the quantitative form that democracy has taken under parliamentary government is based on the utilitarian theory of the "social good." Faced by the prospect that the pleasure of one man might be opposed to the pleasure of another (for example under the capitalist mode of production), the hedonist philosophers of the nineteenth century struck upon the idea of the "greatest good of the greatest number." Imperceptibly the principle of the greatest good turned into the idea of a "social good" as opposed to an "individual good." There was to be something like a "total pleasure," where the pluses and the minuses were to be cancelled out. At this stage individualism came under the shadow of a "General Will" and turned to collectivism. The idea of social good now ceased to have reference to the individual, and democracy degenerated to a mere counting of heads. The individual who was the bearer of the head was reduced to an abstraction. It is this defect in the theoretical basis of parliamentary government which explains the practical situation where the individual finds himself lost before the "machine" of the state.

(b) *Institutional Basis.* The fundamental institution on which the parliamentary system of government is based is that of periodic elections. In fact, elections have become the linchpin on which the entire constitutional apparatus of parliamentary government hangs. It is also the only form of popular participa-

tion provided under this system. This gives rise to a number of problems. The enormous importance given to elections tends to equate democracy with majority rule. This is because the chief purpose of elections is to give power to that party which wins a majority of seats in the legislature. In effect, this so-called majority rule is only the rule of a minority. Under a system of franchise as we have in India or in Great Britain, it is possible for a government to command a majority of seats in parliament on the basis of a minority of votes. But this is both unavoidable and hardly objectionable in itself. Only the pundits of a quantitative democracy can take serious objection to it.

What is far more objectionable is the qualitative nature of the system. Elections under a parliamentary system become highly formalized. The electorate is divided among contending political parties. Political opinion gets regimented along one line or another. This gives rise to a situation where all that an elector does is to stamp his approval or disapproval on one or another consolidated programme (known as a "manifesto") presented to him. This mechanical division of the electorate projects itself in the legislature where parties face each other as highly disciplined battalions. This means, further, that all the most important decisions are taken by the top leadership of the party in power outside the precincts of parliament. The enormous importance given to a few men in this system is also due to the fact that the parties have to rely on the "charismatic" character of their leaders in order to appeal to the irrational instincts of the voters. All this leads to an increasing concentration of power in the hands of a few leaders. Gradually and almost imperceptibly, the institution of elections gives rise to a process whereby power is transferred from the base to the apex and concentrated there.

Finally, there is the point that elections, under the present system, fail to fulfil the very purpose for which they are devised. Even the limited mode of participation allowed to the people—namely, the casting of a vote—is highly ritualized. An election is not held when the people want it and when they are dissatisfied with the existing government, but only when it is "due" or when the government wants it. This gives rise to a dilemma where the only type of participation allowed to the people is

denied to them at crucial times. All this leads to the clear conclusion that elections provide a very inadequate basis on which a democratic system of government can base itself. The problem of democracy is as L. T. Hobhouse said, "how to secure any effective expression of will from the ordinary man." This the elections are clearly incapable of securing.

(c) *The Logic of the System.* The theoretical justification for the institutional structure of parliamentary government is provided by the theory of representation. The theory of representation also claims two other things. It claims to base parliamentary institutions on the will of the individual and it claims to make government a government by the majority of the people. The logic of these claims is as follows. Each individual in society, once he has attained maturity in age, is entitled to have his will represented through a representative in the assembly which makes laws for the people as a whole. Since the representative represents a majority of his constituency and since government represents a majority of such representatives, representative government is a government by a majority of the people.

We have already seen that such a calculus of "a majority of a majority" is refuted by experience. But such quantitative considerations do not necessarily provide, in our view, a decisive argument against the theory, which suffers from more serious defects. Above all, there is the question of the proper function of a representative. Does he merely "represent" opinions as he finds them in the constituency or does he, following Burke's dictum, arrive at his own synthesis of such opinions by using his judgment? The former theory of "instructed representation" falls to the ground in a dynamic society where there is such a variety of views and where it is just not possible to "instruct" the representative on all possible contingencies. The Burkean synthesis, on the other hand, cannot be a true synthesis. A true synthesis of various viewpoints necessitates that the constituency is itself so organized that through a free and rational discussion, an opportunity is created for a true reconciliation of all contending views. The synthesis that the representative claims to have arrived at is little more than his own viewpoint, or rather his party's viewpoint, imposed on his constituents. The upshot of

all this is that a mechanical theory of representation cannot become the basis of political obligation. A democratic government must ultimately find its justification in the consciousness of the people it seeks to govern. This is not possible without true participation of the people in the political process. This the theory of representation does not provide for. On the contrary, the political arrangement that it posits denies both the scope and the necessity for such participation.

It is an arrangement in which all representation is representation of a party. In the parliament, in the government and in the constituencies, it is his party that is represented by a representative. This means that in effect the representatives, instead of being the agents of the people, are truly the agents of the Prime Minister or of the leader of one of the opposition parties.

Conclusion: The True Relations of Power. If we now bring together the various threads of analysis that we have so far conducted we can see that each of the bases on which parliamentary government rests suffers from serious disadvantages. We have found that the institution of elections is inadequate as a basis of democratic government, that the theory of representation is misleading and fails to base government on the will of the people, that the ethical basis of parliamentary government in hedonism renders it incapable of imbibing the true spirit of democracy, and that the assumption of natural harmony proves inimical to true participation by the people in the political process. What we find in reality is that power tends to get concentrated under parliamentary government. The participation of the people in the processes of government is kept to a minimum, the power of the people's representatives is equally minimized under the impact of political parties, and government—to speak in a language stripped of all constitutional verbiage and legal jargon—is a government by an organized minority. In a country like India there is also the important fact that if political power is so concentrated, any attempt at diffusing economic power through the agency of the state is bound to defeat its own purpose.

Concomitant with the concentration of power in a few hands under parliamentary government is the development of a

bureaucratization of political processes. The concentration of authority at the top necessitates a vast machinery of government which spreads its tentacles throughout the state. Bureaucratic government, in fact, lies in the very logic of parliamentary government with the enormous institutional hiatus that divides the government from the governed. The result has been aptly described as apoplexy at the centre and anaemia at the periphery. Bureaucratic power becomes unwieldy and dehumanized while those that are affected by it lose all initiative and power to think for themselves.

These, then, are the true relations of power under the parliamentary system of government. It can be seen that this is a far cry from the democratic ideal, and simply shows that the best ideals may be incapable of being realized if the forms evolved to express them "become so many fetters" and thwart such realization.

The Relevance of Direct Action

We have examined so far some of the institutional and theoretical grounds on which the system of parliamentary government is based. In the process we have tried to point out some of the weaknesses of the system. Such criticisms as have been offered above, however, touch only the surface of the problem. In order fully to appreciate it, we must now examine the ideological moorings of the system.

The Norm. Now in our characterization and criticism of parliamentary government, we have so far been vaguely guided by a certain norm. It is, in fact, the norm of "democracy" itself—democracy as understood in a basic and essential sense. In this sense, the individual is the starting point of democracy. The chief tenet is that man is the maker of his destiny and the task of the political institutions is to enable him to be so. This stress on the freedom and self-development of the individual should not, of course, be taken to mean that society is to be in a state of anarchy or that there should be no law binding on man. In fact, democracy is a form of social organization where everything would be governed by a law. It only points that *man*

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must be the creator of his own law, in association with his fellow-beings. Freedom here is considered not as absence of law but as a right to shape law. An entity is free in so far as it creates its own law. The degree of freedom associated with a social system is measured by the actual scope it offers to individuals towards their self-fulfilment. It is freedom to change one necessity into another. Under such a system, all laws and institutions are no more than the creation of men seeking and shaping their destiny. All government is "self-government" in a democracy.

The Form. If this is a proper understanding of democracy, the next step in the argument follows. It is that parliamentary government is a system of political institutions designed by men who seek to realize the idea of democracy and that its success or failure can be measured according to the degree in which it enables men to realize the chief tenets of democracy as outlined here.

We have tried to show that, by and large, parliamentary government has failed to embody the idea of democracy, and this failure principally stems from the fact that under it there is little scope for popular participation. Our experience proves that there is a growing hiatus between the government and the people and a consequent electoral apathy to governmental processes. People do not feel the government as their own but view it as something "there" and "beyond them," initiating and executing activities of which they are the docile spectators. This has resulted in the phenomenon of non-voting, i.e. a large number of possible voters remain away from the polls. Compulsory voting laws are made in some countries to check this tendency but such compulsion is a superficial way of tackling the problem. The need is to understand the phenomenon a little more deeply. It is a phenomenon where the individual thinks of himself as a nonentity whose opinion and vote do not make any difference to the political process which seems to him to go on in an inexplicable and mysterious manner.

This lack of participation leads to a sense of insignificance in the people, especially in those sections which are more politically conscious. Faced with a situation in which political power

is concentrated, they groan under a sense of powerlessness. In them there is an inward feeling of unrelatedness to anything significant. There is therefore a complete lack of creativity and initiative. And all this is in sharp contradiction to the ideology of democracy on which the individual has been brought up from his school-days onward. For the fact is that the maxims uttered from time to time by the apologists of parliamentary government are essentially democratic maxims. It is the large gulf that divides this ideology from the actuality that leads to a sense of impotency and frustration in the people.

The Context of Direct Action. At this stage of the discussion, and from what has already been said, certain conclusions emerge regarding the nature of the relation between direct action and parliamentary democracy. It is easy to dismiss direct action as unpermissible under parliamentary democracy; it is difficult to obtain conditions under which the need for direct action is wholly removed. This is not because the people are not mature. Nor would it suffice to say that parliamentary institutions have not taken root in our country. It is really because it follows from the very nature of parliamentary government. It is democracy which gives rise to certain deep-rooted expectations; but the fact that the democracy is parliamentary frustrates these very expectations. Frustration, more than anything else, characterizes the political picture under parliamentary democracy. The conflict between promise and possibility is latent all the time. In times of strain it comes out in the open. The result is direct action.

The underlying reason for this is that in parliamentary democracy the individual is just a constitutional fiction. He has, of course, the right of casting his ballot every four or five years. On that right, indeed, hangs the whole system. But apart from that functional link in the mechanism, the individual as such has no role to play. For, under the institutional set-up of parliamentary government, power gets centralized. This leads to insensitivity at the centre to what is happening at the circumference. The gulf between the electors and the elected cannot easily be bridged, and centralized power tends to move according to its own momentum. Decisions taken at the seat of power

and enforced by its agents come as *fait accompli* to the people. Grievances accumulate. A psychological case is slowly built up in the minds of the people who are affected by such decisions. The normal channels provided for removing the accumulated grievances prove to be impotent when serious disagreement is the issue. The stage is set for direct action.

Government and the governed, into which the people are divided in a parliamentary set-up, tend to become rigid categories. These categories can pull on together only under two conditions. Either the issues which divide them should be issues of only secondary importance, in which case some compromise is always possible, or the governed must reconcile themselves to the fact that it is not possible to influence the government in any significant manner. Where none of these conditions obtain, divergent interests assume the form of a permanent conflict. The result is a showdown sooner or later.

The Usual Arguments against Direct Action. It is so often argued that if direct action is allowed in a parliamentary democracy, the result would be chaos and anarchy. Fear of anarchy in the body politic, however, is the symptom of a deep-lying malady. It is no use dismissing direct action without giving due thought to the conditions in which it takes place. The helplessness of the people and the inefficacy of the prevailing machinery to relieve men from their "sense" of helplessness might give rise to a situation where men are no longer prepared to tolerate things.

Another argument advanced against direct action is that though it is justified against an alien government, it is highly inappropriate under a government which is "our own government." It is after all, we are told, "self-government." The snag, however, is that though self-government is indeed the ideal of democracy, it is largely unrealizable in a parliamentary matrix. We have seen the hollowness of the theory of representation which serves as the only basis for the identification between "self" and "government" in the parliamentary system. Not until real self-government where the "self" in fact participates in the process of "government" is achieved, can the people be expected to identify themselves with the government. For, until then, the

state is still an *alien* "power"; it has not established itself as an "authority" acceptable to the people.

It is also argued that the electorate ought to give a fair chance to the government in power and that it is free to overthrow it in the next elections if found unsatisfactory. But surely the trouble is that elections, under a parliamentary system, are no more than a rubber-stamp on one party's manifesto or another's, which may be drawn up deceptively leaving out measures which are likely to be unpalatable to the public. These manifestoes are hardly ever a true index of the parties' real intentions. Under such conditions it is possible for power to be grabbed by a party which has no intention of upholding the values most cherished by the people. The mechanism of the "mandate" so often proposed, also tends to become more of a tug-of-war between opposing political parties than a device for investing the people with true sovereignty.

Finally there is the argument that direct action makes a mockery of the sovereignty of parliament. However, the fact is that while in some countries it was the parliament that fought for the liberties of the people against the arbitrary rules of the monarchy, parliament can itself, under different circumstances, become arbitrary and remote from the people. Parliamentary sovereignty in effect often turns out to be the sovereignty of an organized minority, with the majority having little participation in the political process. The curious fact, indeed, is that the only *real* participation possible for a majority of people under such a form of government is the participation in direct action. Kerala is a case in point.

Inevitability of Direct Action. From all these factors, it is possible to formulate one proposition. It is that *direct action may become inevitable under parliamentary democracy*. The general climate of frustration, the ineffectiveness of known channels of communication, the alienation and atomization of the individual, the tendency towards regimentation and the continuous state of conflict (which may remain latent and suppressed for a time) between the rulers and the ruled—all these make the ideal of self-government more and more remote and render parliamentary government an unstable form of political organiza-

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tion. *It needs to be rejuvenated from time to time by a more general and direct impact of democracy, and failing such rejuvenation it is likely to degenerate into a constitutional dictatorship.*

There is need to guard here against two possible misunderstandings. It is not suggested that because direct action is inevitable under parliamentary government any direct action is necessarily desirable. We shall return to this point later. The other point is that in drawing attention to the limitations of parliamentary democracy, we do not wish to posit it as opposed to real democracy. The fact that parliamentary democracy is a great improvement on more authoritarian forms cannot be doubted. Nor can it be denied that parliamentary government, together with the institution of local self-government, has proved successful in some countries in channelling the initiative of the politically-minded. What is contended, none the less, is that in the absence of more direct participation of the populace in the process of political decision-making, parliamentary government tends to be formal. Not until the common experience of all is pooled in the political process can the arbitrary and insensitive character of such a system be removed. And so long as arbitrariness and insensitivity are parts of the system, direct action is the only method open to the people to assert themselves.

In posing the issue of direct action in this manner, we are up against a difficult problem. Without both the threat and the actuality of direct action, the limitations of parliamentary government cannot be transcended. On the other hand, to justify every type of direct action would undermine not only parliamentary government but democracy itself. There is therefore an urgent need to reformulate the concept of "direct action." We may start by defining direct action in general and irrespective of the form it takes.

A Tentative Definition of Direct Action. The first thing that is clear about direct action of any type is that it is essentially a technique of political action. Secondly, it is directed against constituted authority. Thirdly, the means it follows are extra-constitutional, that is, they are not provided by the legal and constitutional machinery of the state. Its method is that of by-

passing the existing parliamentary forms and evolving new categories of political behaviour. Fourthly, it takes on the character of group action. This may take the form of a spontaneous mass upsurge at the bottom or it may be engineered by a group or groups, however motivated, that either are already political or have "become political." Finally, it is aimed at some political change: a change of a particular policy or policies, or a change in the constitutional machinery, or a change in the government in power. In all cases a change is desired, and it is a change in the political sphere. Thus, briefly, *direct action can be defined as an extra-constitutional political technique that takes the form of a group action, is aimed at some political change and is directed against the government in power.*

Having given a tentative definition, we can proceed to formulate the concept of direct action. Now in the formulation of any concept the first maxim is that it should enable us to explain that part of experience to which it refers in an objective and efficient manner. In this case the essential need is to rid our minds of a certain connotation that we are apt to attach to direct action but which does not necessarily follow from its definition. The orthodox Communist, Syndicalist and other terrorist movements and theories have conditioned our minds in such a way that we have come to identify all direct action with unbridled and unscrupulous violence. We must get out of this conditioning. An action can be direct with or without being violent; it can be aimed against the government with or without inciting the baser instincts of men; it can by-pass the existing categories of political action with or without becoming, in the process, unprincipled and opportunistic. If we do not wish to exclude a large part of the experience of the civilized world, we have to admit under the category of "direct action" activities that are admittedly directed against constituted authority but whose main aim is to strengthen the democratic character of existing forms by appealing to the "spirit" that is supposed to be embodied in these forms.

If this is not allowed we have to dismiss all agitation from below. The result is that we have to satisfy ourselves with parliamentary government as the highest form that democracy can take at the present stage of our knowledge and inventiveness.

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In other words, all the disadvantages of parliamentary democracy cited above have to be accepted irrevocably as part of the system. This would be an impossible situation from the point of view of democracy. Unless our notion of direct action is rid of its existing connotations and reformulated, we would have to rule out all possibilities of strengthening and rejuvenating our democracy. Experience of some countries suggests that it is possible to rise above the parliamentary forms and participate in the democratic process by resort to actions which are essentially direct actions.

Democratic Direct Action. In our own country we have the example of Gandhiji, who by resorting to peaceful but none the less effective direct action against the government in power forced it to change its policy on a number of issues. Gandhiji's technique of arousing the opinion of the people and thus influencing the government of the day was not confined to the British. He tried that technique even after independence on the issue of the rights of Muslims in India. Another remarkable aspect of Gandhiji's method from which we can learn an important lesson was shown in 1920 when he withdrew his movement as soon as he found that it became violent and unprincipled.

When we turn to other democratic systems, we come across instances which are a tribute to the maturity which the "democratic sense" has reached in those countries. The British people provided such an instance during World War II. The wave of opinion, running across the country and at all levels of society, on the highly moral issue of whether or not to appease the Fascists, will live in the memory of all democrats as a standing testimony to the degree to which the principle of democracy has taken root in the conscience of the British people. This agitation was for the most part extra-parliamentary and direct, though it did find its echo in the parliament. The Suez crisis also showed that although the government never lost its hold on its legislative majority, the way in which the people in Britain reacted to the incident and showed to what extent their moral sense had been violated had to be reckoned with. It led to a reversal of policy and ultimately to the resignation of Sir Anthony Eden. America also, very recently, gave us an example of the high

degree of democratic sense that had developed there, especially among the intellectuals. We refer to the way in which the professional and academic people fought against the onslaughts of MacCarthyism.

It might be objected by some that it would be a misnomer to characterize these actions of the British and American peoples as direct action and that they are in any case very tame affairs compared to the agitation that took place, for example, in Kerala. If one looks closely into the matter, however, it will be seen that each case was a case of a major difference on policy where a large part of the public could not see eye to eye with the government, and secondly that in each case what took place was an "agitation" that by-passed the existing parliamentary forms. It is only because of the maturity of their democratic system and the high degree of sensitivity that characterizes their legislature and government that the agitation stopped short of violence. The extreme form an agitation takes in India is only the result of a situation where while lip-service is paid by all to democracy no one really acts democratically. Neither the government nor the legislature is sufficiently responsive to changes in public opinion. But that does not prove that the basic issue is any different here than in other countries.

Types of Direct Action. Assuming that the concept of direct action covers all such experiences, our next task is to distinguish between two types of direct actions—those that enable us to give to the parliamentary form a greater democratic content and those that lead to its deterioration towards authoritarianism. The characteristic of the latter type of direct action is that it uses any means to achieve its end, is unmindful of consequences and considers success as its sole justification. The former, on the other hand, is characterized by a selection of means, is careful of the democratic content of the action and judges itself not by success alone but by other considerations as well.

It is possible to define certain criteria by which to judge whether a direct action has taken a desirable form. The chief criterion is that the means used must be intended to further the principal aim of strengthening freedom and democracy. The action is desirable only if the political change desired by the

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group involved in direct action offers a greater scope of political freedom than is offered by the existing political arrangements. This would also mean that no section of such a group should intimidate those outside the group and thus narrow the area of freedom. Finally, the actionists should be in constant touch with informed public opinion and be sufficiently responsive to the same. The assumption here is that the conditions for a higher form of democracy exist in a rudimentary form in the system of parliamentary democracy and that these provide us with a beginning and a basis for experimentation. The great merit of parliamentary democracy is that it allows freedom of expression. That makes a direct action possible. It is clear, then, that a direct action can be justified only if it furthers, and does not impede, the cause of democracy.

Now it is true that direct action, under certain conditions, takes undesirable forms. In a situation where people's patience and forbearance have been exhausted, various forces, social and psychological, come into play. If the direct actionists act under the impulse of unconscious urges or under the direction of a wrong type of leadership and do not give due consideration to the ultimate outcome of their acts, it is quite probable that they would pull the parliamentary form of government to pieces and push the country into the hands of a dictatorship or a military junta. In order to prevent such a catastrophe, therefore, it is imperative to evolve conditions under which direct action would not take such a form. *For if it is clear that at some point parliamentary government leads to direct action, the essential problem is to provide constructive channels to such action.* It is futile to talk of the dangers of direct action without reference to the conditions under which they take place.

Application, to Kerala

So far we have tried to analyse the problem of direct action in a general manner. In the course of this analysis we referred to the Indian situation from time to time for purposes of illustration. We shall now try, in the light of this general analysis, to examine the situation in Kerala before the Union government

intervened to establish Governor's rule in that state. The relevance of the recent events in Kerala to the future development of the country's internal politics is so crucial that it is necessary to analyse them in some detail here. The procedure we shall follow is to state and evaluate the social and political facts of Kerala and then to draw some general conclusions regarding the political situation in India, the place of direct action in it, and the location of the motive force behind direct action in the social structure of India.

The Background of Direct Action. The politics of Kerala on the eve of the general elections held in 1957 was in a state of confusion. In the ten years that had gone after independence there had been as many as eight administrations in the state, including two periods of President's rule. The Congress Party in Kerala had been torn by internal wrangles, and instability of government had become a characteristic of the politics of that state, with the result that urgent economic reforms were neglected and the populace suffered from mounting hardships. The general consequence was the prevalence of a deep sense of frustration among the people of Kerala.

The Political Situation. It was against this background that the Communist Party came to power in Kerala. This does not mean, however, that a search for stability led the people of Kerala to vote the Communists to power. It was believed by some at that time that the choice for the Communist Party was a conscious and calculated choice on the part of the people as a whole. The facts belie this belief. The Communists came to power on a minority of votes. The Communists could form a government in Kerala in 1957 as a result of (1) the acute dissatisfaction in the people of Kerala with the Congress and the PSP and (2) the disunity among the parties that opposed the Communists in the elections. On the positive side, those who voted for the Communists on the basis of their programme did so under the impression that they were the only party that could relieve unemployment and solve the problem of industrialization in Kerala.

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The Communal Grouping. The communal background of Kerala politics contributed to the victory of the Communists in the 1957 elections. They drew their major support from the Ezhava community and the scheduled castes, from the split among the Nairs, a large part of whom were alarmed at the growing Christian influence over the Congress party, and from the Muslims in constituencies where the Muslim League did not put up candidates against the Communists.

Economic Stratification. Such an analysis in terms of the communal and religious divisions in Kerala should not, however, be overstressed. The division into social and economic classes is also relevant and is growing more and more important in recent years. There is a constant interaction between economic class, caste and religion which must be taken into account. Thus the Christians who support the Congress are also economically and educationally more advanced than the other communities. At the other extreme, there is the Ezhava community which is economically and socially depressed and identifies the interests of its class with the Communists.

What was the class composition of the voters who supported the Communists in 1957? *Positive* support came from a large majority of landless labourers and subsistence farmers (subsistence farming is a prevalent feature of Kerala agriculture where fragmentation of land has reached ridiculous proportions) and a sizable section of industrial workers. The reasons for this support are clear. The landless labourers, who largely came from the Ezhava community and the scheduled castes, had been organized by the Communist party. The industrial workers were also organized in trade unions, some of which were controlled by the Communists.

The Middle Class. But all this evidence of positive support from the lower classes would not have brought the Communists to power. It was the negative support they secured from the

* For a detailed discussion of this, as well as other aspects of Kerala politics, the reader is referred to a recent book by Dr Jitendra Singh, *Communist Rule in Kerala*, published by the Diwan Chand Indian Information Centre, New Delhi.

splitting of the middle class votes that did the trick. The political attitudes of the middle class, which held the balance of power in Kerala, are interesting. It is a class that has imbibed democratic values and aspirations. Although it has a keen desire for a progressive economy, it is also normally against undue encroachments by the state on the life of the individual. This has, possibly, led to a general feeling of frustration among its members in the wake of recent economic and political developments all over the country. The large majority of secondary school teachers in Kerala were unhappy over their lot. They tended to be anti-Congress though not definitely pro-Communist. The lawyers and other professionals with their ingrained belief in parliamentary government and their general sense of respectability may be said to be anti-Communist in their attitude, though not necessarily pro-Congress. Such hesitancy informed the attitude of the middle class in Kerala. It was an attitude of non-commitment. The political result of such an attitude was that during the elections the votes of this class got divided between contending parties, although there was hardly any feeling of loyalty towards any of these parties. Chance oscillation in the voting behaviour of this class, therefore, could effect the outcome of the elections decisively. It was this that made political prediction difficult in Kerala where the middle class occupied a crucial position, and it has been observed by some that the Communists were themselves surprised at their victory.

In numbers, also, this class is important. According to the 1951 Census of Travancore-Cochin, the non-agricultural classes constitute 45.2 per cent of the population, and among these the "independent workers" and "others"—categories constituting the usual professional and middle classes—account for 45 per cent. Thus more than 20 per cent of the total population in Travancore-Cochin belongs to the middle class. As it is also the more educated, more conscious and more influential section of the population, there is no doubt that the middle class occupied, and still occupies, a strategic position in the politics of Kerala. Thus the Communists benefited from the fact that over and above the positive support from the lower classes, the negative and politically non-committal nature of the middle classes

towards the elections paved the way to tilt the balance in their favour.

And it was precisely the middle class which played a decisive role against the policies of the Communist government when it came to power. It not only brought together the traditionally rival communities of Nairs and Christians but also forced all opposition parties to unite on a common platform against the government.

Communist Conflict with the Middle Class. Had the Communists in Kerala succeeded in breaking the political neutrality of the middle class and winning their support, the experiment might have fulfilled the expectations of the proponents of co-existence. But, as everywhere else, they developed a conflict with this class and succeeded only in placing it in active opposition to their rule. The conflict that developed was not based on economic reasons. For the middle class can hardly be called a class of exploiters except on the basis of a far-fetched logic. The reasons behind the conflict were mainly psychological, although in the direct action that ensued the economic factor also played its part. As we intend to show below, with the assumption of power the Communists in Kerala began to humiliate this class. Perhaps this is true even of the Congress party wherever it is in power. But with the Communists it is deliberate, more organized, more direct and less subtle. Besides, with the Communists this conflict with the middle class is part of their ideology not only in India but wherever they have come to power. But here in Kerala their success demanded of them a greater awareness of the situation in which they were placed. They overlooked the fact that they were working under a system whose basis lay in the political consciousness and support of the middle class. They forgot that it was a system which was not of their own making. Their ideology of economic determinism prevented them from giving due consideration to a class which their theory held in contempt.

The fact is that the middle class was already finding itself politically alienated under a system of parliamentary government which made it feel powerless, and therefore indifferent, to the question of who came to power. The Communists having come

to power as a result of this indifference further alienated the middle class. With the assumption of power, they found themselves placed in a peculiar situation. Their entire prestige was based on their militant opposition to the alleged exploitation of the masses by non-State agencies. Their rise to political power owed a great deal to the impression they had created in the general mind that they alone could solve the economic problems of unemployment and speedy industrialization. This impression in turn was based on the achievement in these spheres in the countries under Communist rule. It was, however, largely overlooked that the basis of success in those countries lay in state-coercion of a type that is not possible to enforce in a parliamentary state which has to function under a quasi-federal democratic constitution.

Stage One: Loss of Prestige. The obstacles to their basic approach became clear in course of time. They could not materially affect the vested interests in the state without the co-operation of the centre which, however, was dominated by the Congress party. One of their first declarations on the assumption of power was to nationalize foreign-owned plantations in the State. But they could not take even the preliminary steps in that direction during the whole term of their office because the centre made its stand against any such step known to the State government. Thus the Communists in Kerala found themselves in a position where they could not "expropriate the expropriators." On the contrary, to further their economic goal they were led in the opposite direction. They tried to placate big business by offering liberal economic incentives of the type which even the Congress governments were reluctant to offer in their respective states. There was also considerable labour unrest in Kerala at the same time as this offer was being made. Some of this was engineered by the unions led by the Communist party. But a sizable part of the workers in Kerala owes allegiance of trade unions led by other parties which, too, did not obviously want to lag behind in demands. However, when it came to settling these disputes, the Communist government brazen-facedly discriminated against the workers led by the non-Communist unions in all possible ways, including protection of the employers by resort

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to firing, as it happened in the Chandanthope factory dispute. These actions of the Communist government together amounted to a considerable loss of prestige among the progressive but "uncommitted" sections of the middle class in Kerala.

Stage Two: Show of Strength. As if to compensate for this loss in prestige and for their failure to affect big business, the Communists in Kerala turned severely on the lesser among the vested interests. All such interests belonged to the middle class. The government began to enact rules against these small interests in a manner which annoyed and humiliated them. The minor incident of the ferry-boat charges in Kuttanad, after the taking over of the private ferry boats by the government-controlled Water Transport Corporation, becomes highly significant in this context. The increase in revenue could hardly have been the purpose behind the decision to quash the one-anna concession to students travelling by these boats. It was clearly a case of humiliating the "petite bourgeoisie." On the side of the middle class too, the seriousness of the protest was out of all proportion to the incident—which only shows how intense and "pent-up" was their feeling of humiliation under the Communist government. This was the beginning of the conflict between the middle class and the government in power in Kerala. Another point to be noted here is that contrary to the Communist charge that the students' movement was instigated by the opposition parties, the fact is that the initiative came from the students and their Action Council who then forced the opposition leaders to support the movement. In a sense this was a precursor to the direct action that was to follow later.

Stage Three: The Education Bill. The Education Bill could also be described as a measure directed against the small vested interests. The interests adversely affected this time were the private school managements. It is wrong to characterize the school managements as 'big' vested interests by reference to the control of the Church or of a society like the Nair Service Society. The important thing to note here is that the section which was represented by the Church or the N.S.S. belonged to the middle class as much as the teachers who were employed by these institutions.

While it is true that all was not well with the service conditions of the school teachers in Kerala and also that some statutory measure to rectify things was certainly called for, it is also true that the Communists were completely mistaken, as subsequent events proved, in treating the dispute between the managements and teachers on a class-war footing. In fact, the extreme measures of the Communists brought the two groups together against the government.

Stage Four: Deviations from the Rule of Law. When this conflict was developing the Communists also estranged those sections of the middle class who are very sensitive to the maintenance of the rule of law. The Communists began to tamper with the administration of justice. For them it was a moral problem. How could they let down their comrades even if they perpetrated "crimes," for the crimes were after all committed for a common "cause" and may be at the behest of the party? This subservience of the governmental process to the interests of the Communist Party began to pervade all political relations in Kerala. The party cells in villages and towns began to function vigorously. There were allegations of intimidation and violence by the Communists. Non-Communists were harassed and instances of lawlessness began to accumulate. The secretary of the local branch of the Communist Party reigned supreme in his locality. The unchallenged authority of the local secretary and his accomplices also meant that the local administration and the police force were gradually emasculated and rendered impotent. The non-Communists, including the uncommitted sections of the population, naturally felt more and more insecure. It is possible that the general sense of insecurity that prevailed in Kerala under the Communist regime may have been the result of only sporadic instances engineered by some unscrupulous party-men. But the fact of the prevailing sense of insecurity was certainly there, and perhaps in a large measure.

Stage Five: Rule by the Party. All these developments and the mounting feeling of opposition to its rule made the Communist government apprehensive of the impending crisis. This made them place the faithful in positions of effective power in

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the administration. In all the strategic spheres, like the Police, Civil Administration and the Magistracy, the key posts were given to officers who were considered more reliable or manageable by the Party. Merit became synonymous with the goodwill of the Party. Naturally, therefore, an impression was created that the entire administration was passing off into the hands of the Communist Party. Not much imagination was required from this point onward to think in terms of the impending strait-jacket of Communist rule one heard about in the Communist countries. People who looked on with disapproval felt, therefore, that the end of freedom was close-by and that they must either give in to what seemed certain to follow or fight and get out of Communist control. Direct action became inevitable. *The urge for direct political participation, the accumulated grievances and the mounting public opinion against the government—all these factors together gave rise to a situation where the tussle between the government and the governed came out into the open.* It is futile to lay all blame for direct action in Kerala at the door of the opposition parties or a few unscrupulous individuals who might, of course, have taken advantage of the situation. The fact is that the initiative for direct action did not come from the opposition parties. Rather, the opposition parties were forced to unite on a common platform of anti-communism by the gathering temper of the people, especially of the middle class.

The Causation of Direct Action

The purpose of this paper is to make an objective study of "direct action" so as to locate its rightful place in the sphere of political actions. Earlier, we formulated the concept of direct action and defined its meaning. Its precise character was brought out in the analysis that followed of Kerala as a particular instance of direct action. It was emphasized there that direct action was the expression of a political conflict between the aggrieved sections of the middle class and the political apparatus of a parliamentary democracy. Although Kerala had its special character, it was only one of many agitations that have taken place in India after independence. The events in Andhra, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Punjab are all instances of the same type.

In each case the movement originated in the middle class and was sustained by it, though it generally spread to other classes and thus gave direct actions the character of mass movements. A general analysis of direct action must therefore begin with an analysis of the middle class itself.

From the viewpoint of social composition the middle class is not a homogeneous class. Various sections of this class perform diverse functions and belong to diverse social groups. In spite of this fact, however, there is a running thread of unity between all these sections. This is found in the mental trait which is necessary in the performance of these various functions. It is the capacity to represent objects on a more or less abstract level. Such capacity is common to administrators, lawyers, teachers, doctors, clerks, technical personnel, etc. The members of this class have received at least secondary education and possess a fair knowledge of their immediate environments. *These characteristics—knowledge of environment and capacity for abstraction—single them out to constitute a social class.*

It is in their relation to the political society that we find divisions within this class. The principle of this division is the presence or absence of participation in the political process. Some are placed in positions of power and the rest are debarred from participating in the political process except in the form offered by the institution of elections. The middle class is thus divided among the rulers and the ruled. And the problem for the politically dispossessed sections of this class is now to mitigate these conditions and create new ones in their place. Direct action is one form that attempts to solve this problem.

The Hypothesis. We can now formulate our hypothesis regarding the causes of direct action. Such action is determined by four factors: (1) the division of the politically conscious middle class into the rulers and the ruled; (2) the need or desire felt by the ruled to be the rulers; (3) the rigidity of the political system in frustrating this need and (4) the ideology that this need is their birthright. Apart from these causal factors certain other conditions must be fulfilled before direct action is actually resorted to. These are: (1) The feeling of dissatisfaction and the sense of injustice must have reached a high pitch (thus, to

take an illustration, in the Bombay State the issue of prohibition did not lead to a flare-up but that of linguistic autonomy did) and (2) there must prevail a large consensus of opinion in favour of some drastic action and a widely felt desire for it. These six elements—four causal factors and two conditions of efficiency—provide us with a total causal scheme for any direct action. Together with the definition of direct action given above they provide us with a theory of direct action.

Prevailing Views on Direct Action. Such a formulation of the causes of direct action runs counter to the prevailing opinions, specially those held by persons in power. They trace direct action to the activity of local *apolitical* groups. Mr Nehru, for instance, had attributed the cause of direct action, when it took place in Gujarat, Maharashtra and Punjab, to the parochialism of linguistic or religious groups; while the Communists in Kerala traced the direct action there to the presence of vested interests. A little analysis would, however, demonstrate the weakness of this position: (1) Following Mr Nehru's reasoning, take away parochialism and there will be an end to direct action. This stands refuted by the events in Kerala. (2) According to Communist reasoning, remove vested interests and there would be no direct action. This stands refuted by almost all the direct actions that have taken place in this country. The fact is that this type of reasoning confuses cause with condition. Parochialism and the rest are merely social conditions under which direct action takes birth and develops. They play the role of giving a particular "colour" to the action. They do not "cause" direct action. The cause lies, as suggested above, in the urge to take part in the functioning of the political society which, being split between the rulers and the ruled, frustrates the urge for the large majority.

The difference we have drawn between the causal factors on the one hand and the particular social conditions on the other is important in understanding not only the problem of direct action but also the remedies suggested for its solution. For, the specific conditions may change but the causes remain. If a condition is identified with a cause, the remedy suggested will prove impotent. For instance, Mr Nehru, convinced of the theory that

parochialism is the root-cause of direct action, tries to eliminate parochialism by generating an intense feeling of nationalism. But experience so far bears out that this does not work, not because there is no feeling of nationalism among our people but because this remedy fails to attack the root of the problem. The basic problem lies in the latent need to participate in the political process which is denied to much the greater section of society under a formalistic democracy like ours. Parochialism serves the function of merely providing moral support to this need. The need to participate is at the individual psychological level; it is an expression of the individual's need to be free. But under the peculiar cultural environments of our society the individual need is not held in esteem, with the result that the moral support is sought in parochial institutions. Our authoritarian culture tends to suppress an individual need as against an "institutional" need, and the consequence is that direct action tends to take on an "institutional" or parochial garb. The individual acts not for himself but for a "cause"—language, religion, caste or class. This explains the importance of parochial groups, and also the distortion of direct action towards violence and rowdiness which are justified in the interest of the "cause."

The view that parochialism is not a cause of direct action is supported by the fact that practically all people have local and parochial loyalties and still are divided on the issue of direct action. Some favour direct action, others do not. The criterion by which the parochial group splits itself cannot be parochialism. There must be a criterion different from it. We suggest that such a criterion is provided by the extent to which one's "urge to participate" is satisfied. Those who either hold power or can influence it are satisfied with the existing state of affairs; others are not. This polarization provides the political problem that India faces today and also the background against which direct action takes place.

The Need to be Free. The need to be free is basic in man. It exists at the biological as well as at the psychological level. And it is precisely this need that leads men to live in a society governed by laws. As pointed out in a previous section, freedom does not consist in the absence of laws. Even at the individual

level, law is necessary. Every man has to evolve a law of his being, a law on the basis of which he orders his own behaviour. The function of such a law is to arbitrate between conflicting needs and demands of the individual self. And it is the same at the social level. In order that their freedom may be more secure men frame laws and agree to abide by them. The function of these laws also is to arbitrate between conflicting needs and demands. Then as social institutions become more complex, this function of arbitration between conflicting needs is institutionalized in the form of a state. The state is thus no superior institution; it is merely another social form whose sole justification lies in the needs of individuals. When the needs multiply, the functions of the state increase correspondingly, and as a result the state becomes a powerful entity. It is then that the state may begin to overshadow the individual whom it was originally meant to serve. When this happens, the individual comes face to face with the state whose incursion into the individual's life increases every day. The urge to be free is now translated into the desire to participate in the political process.

The Political Need. The desire to be politically free is thus an expression of a fundamental human urge. The political need, however, may remain dormant for a long time in the process of social development. Then at a certain stage it comes to life and begins to agitate man. This activation of the need is conditioned by historical and social as well as personal circumstances. Throughout the medieval period the need was suppressed under the hoary institutions of religion. During the eighteenth century in Europe the need to be politically free was suddenly felt, at first by the rising middle classes. (The English tradition of "freedom broadening from precedent to precedent" made the nobility also fight for political freedom.) The process culminated in the French Revolution and the Declaration of the Rights of Man, the Bill of Rights in the American Constitution and the extension of the franchise in Great Britain. The process is still continuing and spreading in Asian and African countries.

The Political Need in India. The experience of the struggle for freedom in European countries had its repercussion in India.

The vehicle of this repercussion was the middle class in India, in whom the need to be free was kindled. Being trained to think at the abstract level, they alone could absorb the experience of the European people and feel the need for a similar experience of political freedom. It was the presence of a large middle class (in whom the need to be politically free had been kindled) that singled out India from other Asian countries. It also explains why today she continues to cling to the democratic ideal while other countries in the Middle and Far East are turning to dictatorship.

The Role of the Middle Class. The pioneers of freedom in India saw clearly the problem of spreading the need to be free in their fellowmen. Their understanding of this need was not limited to the idea of political independence but extended to the idea of political freedom for the individual in the ordering of his own destiny. They saw that not until the need to be free is kindled in the people, especially among the educated sections of society, could they hope to achieve their goal. They succeeded in their task. It was on the basis of such an awakening that the existing state came into being. The problem facing India today arises out of a strained relation between the need that was then kindled and is still alive and the institutions that are supposed to fulfil that need but fail to do so.

During pre-independence days it was thought that the establishment of parliamentary institutions would solve the problem of political freedom. As it turned out, however, the problem continued. The rigidity of the holders of power in the working of these institutions created conditions where direct action took place from time to time in one form or another. It was the only way left to large sections of the middle class to express their need for political freedom.

The Other Classes. In the case of other classes like the peasantry and the working class, the need is not so keenly felt. This is partly because they are so pre-occupied with their material needs that the political need remains dormant, and partly because their conception of freedom hardly goes beyond the level of material well-being and personal security. There is also a

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relative absence of the knowledge of environments; the will to be a free agent requires such a knowledge. In spite of all this, however, when direct action ensues, the workers and the peasants do not remain immune from it. They are influenced in their actions by the beliefs and values of the middle class. This has been so all through in our country. The leadership of the independence movement right from the village level to the national level had been in the hands of the middle class. The historical explanation apart, in every society and more so in a semi-literate society, the educated members tend to take a lead in social and political matters. The involvement of the masses in the direct action is thus rooted in their social relation with the members of the middle class. On the whole, it can be said, then, that the middle class holds the balance of power in India, that any direct action is initiated and sustained by members of this class and that in so far as other classes join a direct action they do so by virtue of their being influenced by the middle class.

Conclusion. The above analysis is meant to be approximate and tentative. Its importance lies in assisting us in our understanding of direct action. Our approach in this paper has been to understand the phenomenon of direct action for what it basically is. The phenomenon, we are convinced, is not an accident. It forms a pattern by itself and in turn imparts a pattern to our political process. The fate of our democracy rests on an understanding of this pattern, which the conspiracy theory and the theory of parochialism do not explain. We have advanced an alternative theory in this paper which attempts an explanation.

Varieties of Moral Experience

by ABU SAYEED AYYUB

"Man is not man at all unless social; but he is not much above the beasts unless more than social." F. H. BRADLEY

The Ethic of Enlightened Self-interest

THE 17th century philosopher Spinoza and the 20th century philosopher Russell, whose philosophies differ almost in every other point, agree in defining the good in terms of desire. There is an oft-quoted passage in Spinoza's *Ethics* which states: "We neither strive for, wish, seek or desire anything because we think it to be good, but on the contrary we adjudge a thing to be good because we strive for, wish, seek or desire it." And Russell said as recently as in 1954: "I infer that the definition of good must bring in desire. I suggest that an occurrence is good when it satisfies desire." It is true that for Spinoza such a notion of the good is valid only at the level of imagination. And it may be urged that Russell is not saying that "good" is "what is desired," but "what in fact satisfies desire," thus bringing in some kind of objectivity in his conception of the good. The objectivity, however, is only spurious. For when anything is desired, its attainment will necessarily satisfy that desire, whatever total dissatisfaction or pain it may bring in its wake due to the frustration of other desires. Therefore, Russell's definition is equivalent to the more popular defini-

tion of the good in much positivistic ethical writing today, viz. "the good is what is desired." Perry broadens this a little when he stipulates that "value is any object of any interest," but in essentials the two are not different.

Such a definition of the good undermines ethics from the start. If the good is only the desired, then there cannot be any moral obligation to pursue the good. In fact, at this level morality, obligation, duty, etc. have no meaning. It is the level at which all children and unfortunately many adults too live, moved hither and thither by the sway of momentary impulses and desires. As intelligence grows and maturity is reached (not as universally as one would like to believe), it is realized that our desires and impulses are not always compatible, that to fulfil one we have to deny others, that to pursue indiscriminately every good, i.e. every desired object, is to live a very mutilated and frustrated life. Our desires are of many sorts: they differ not only in intensity but also in comprehensiveness and persistence; not only in being more or less compatible with a greater or smaller number of other desires, but also in their ability to give rise to shorter or longer chains of desires of varying quality. In such a complex desire-situation man can escape dissipation, frustration and suffering only by the exercise of his reason—that type of reason which Kant called "practical reason." Reason can lay down principles of coordination and subordination among desires, evolving in due course a comprehensive policy of life with many sub-policies under it. This policy tells him what he "ought" to do this rather than that, "ought" to live in this way rather than that way, and prevents him from acting impulsively and living under the sway of momentary desires.

In short, we have reached the life of prudence or enlightened self-interest. The goal may be said to be the maximization of one's total satisfaction in life by controlling the more incompatible and impetuous desires. Since one acts as one *ought* to act rather than as one merely *wants* to act—the "ought" of course being dictated by one's enlightened self-interest—we can characterize the principle of such a life as a moral principle. My suggestion is that where an act is directed to an end which is selected by desire alone, the act is not characterizable as moral. When a mother sacrifices her comfort and health for the well-being of

her child, that sacrifice is not a moral act. Normally, the conduct of mothers towards their progeny is not on the moral but on the instinctive plane. But when the end is selected by reason, and desire obeys reason, we have clearly the emergence of morality. That is why I accept prudence as a moral principle, though not as the highest moral principle.

The Ethic of Duty

In my opinion, Kant's most signal contribution to ethics lay in pointing out a still higher level of action at which all can, and some do, rise. At the level of prudential ethics other persons count no doubt, but count, in the last analysis, only as means to my own self-satisfaction. When I deliberate between two courses of action, one of which is for my own benefit and the other for the benefit of another, the deciding factor is the consideration as to which course will enable me to satisfy better my integrated system of desires, considering my life as a whole. But one of the three ways in which Kant interprets the moral law is: So act as to use humanity, both in your own person and in the person of every other, always at the same time as an end, never simply as a means. This is obviously a very different plane of action which needs a sort of Copernican revolution to reach. Here for the first time my own self, which so long occupied the central position in my scheme of life, is displaced and becomes peripheral, the connection between duty and self-interest is severed, and my own satisfaction or well-being ceases to have any unique importance for me. Though the acts of beneficence dictated by the two kinds of morality may coalesce in certain situations, the spirit behind the two is completely different.

There are those among moral philosophers who see in ethics nothing but the band spectrum of self-interest spread out towards its "enlightened" regions. Naturally they have made persistent attempts to derive the ethic of duty from the ethic of prudence. It is not the expedient act, however, but acts directed to the benefit of other people and to the promotion of social welfare which are usually regarded as duties. One kind of beneficence, the value-payable kind, is obviously a dictate of prudence. But a more genuinely other-regarding conduct is also traced to self-love.

Apart from all calculations of return benefits, doing good to others is, according to these philosophers, an immediately satisfying emotional experience for the agent, because love for all men is believed to be an essential ingredient of every man's emotional make-up.

I doubt if there is sufficient empirical basis for this wishful belief. Far from being a part of human nature, love of mankind is an extremely rare phenomenon. Love of friends and relations is a familiar enough emotion; I can also understand the occurrence of a loving concern for a stranger whom I have casually met for a little while, or at least of whose individual existence I have acquired some distinct consciousness through sharing a neighbourhood or an important common interest. But that I or any other man living in Calcutta should feel an active emotional stirring for an Alaskan fisherman whom we have never seen or heard of, whose life and ways are altogether unknown—this is something that I cannot visualize. It is another matter that if I come to know that he lacks the bare amenities of life or has been wounded in an air raid, I should consider it my duty to send him what help I can. But this sense of duty comes from a *rational* regard for his human existence and from a recognition of his right to a full and free life. This is precisely the rational ethics of Kant. I, or anyone, for that matter, can rationally acknowledge the value of every human person and accept the obligation to preserve and promote it; but few, if any, are emotionally capable of loving all. Possibly, the phrase "love for man or mankind" is used without a full acceptance of its meaning, and probably all that is meant by it or that it can properly mean is only a rational regard for the other's rights.

It may be objected that such rational regard too is not universally or even widely present. To this my reply is that I can envisage such a progressively universal enlightenment of reason ensuing from progress in education, but I cannot understand how one person can be *taught* to love (in the strict sense of love as an actively felt emotion) all other men, known and unknown. The objector may persist and point out that love for the tribe or nation or clan is quite a living and powerful emotion in the minds of men. No doubt it is, but its genesis and precise nature are seldom examined. With the family, tribe or nation there is a

kind of self-identification based on a conscious unity of interests. But even more important, there is a differentiation of this group-self from other group-selves; the emotional integration within the group is a complementary phenomenon to the emotional alienation of the group from other groups. Tribalism and nationalism, whose important ingredients no doubt are strong feelings of love for the tribe or the nation, flourish on strife and reach their highest pitch in times of war. Love for mankind would become a very real emotion if and when hatred of the Martians becomes real. Until then, it would be wiser to base our ethics on the disinterested rational regard for the human person—as Kant had stipulated.

I conclude that the ethic of duty is *sui generis*; it cannot be reduced to or deduced from the ethic of prudence. In fact the two ethics are connected with two different conceptions of value.

The Consciousness of Values

With the emergence of rational morality on the human plane as distinct from prudential morality on the egocentric plane, a development of our value-consciousness takes place which deserves notice. Although, in contrast with Kant, I prefer to regard the principle of prudence as a moral principle since under it desires are subordinated to rational control, the control still is in the interest of desires themselves. We can continue to define "good" in terms of "desire," though the definition has to be somewhat stretched insofar as the highest good on this plane, the maximization of satisfaction, is not usually an object of an actual desire. It is to be regarded as what "ought to be desired," or, in Russell's terminology evolved in reply to his critics, "what we desire to desire."

But when we come to Kant's principle of rational morality: "act so as to treat every human person as an end and never simply as a means," we have come to the plane of objective values, i.e. "value" not definable in terms of "desire" or "interest." The fundamental point in this principle is that other persons are ends for me in their own right, not insofar as I happen to take an interest in them or to love them. Their status as ends is quite independent of the facthood of my interest in

them, love for them, or desire for their welfare. I am speaking of course of natural interests and desires, for the apprehension of objective values may itself be described as implying an interest or love (in Brentano's language, "right love"). We shall come to this later. The point here is that if I cease to find interest in other persons or to desire the unfolding of their personality, it is not *their* personality which loses value. On the contrary, it is *my* personality which will fall in value—in my own genuine value-consciousness.

This is to be contrasted with the situation that arises in the consciousness of the lower values, the subjective values, or the values definable in terms of desire. If I cease to like mangoes, then mangoes just cease to have any value for me—though they may continue to have value for those who still like them. There is no question of my own value falling in my eyes concomitant with the fall of the value of mangoes for me. On the egocentric plane of values my own value is absolutely fixed; the value of everything else rises or falls according as my interest in them (or desire for them) rises or falls. This plane has a morality of its own, the morality of prudence. But genuine morality, as I have pointed out, is on a different plane—a plane whose centre is not occupied by one's own self. Every self becomes an object of value in an absolute, objective sense. Robert, Ram and Rahim are values out there, whether in a moment of ennui I lose all interest in them, or in a moment of malice I disvalue them.

A few remarks on the much debated issue of the subjectivity and objectivity of value-experience seem to be called for. I think positive philosophers are unduly chary of drawing an analogy between our value-experience and our cognitive experience. In epistemology the definition of the objective as "what is directly given" must be amplified into "*that* given on the basis of which predictions about the future course of cognitive experience can be made and verified." For what is merely given in perception may well be illusory. The veridical nature of what is given in one perceptual experience is taken for granted in that experience, but remains infirm and shakable by all kinds of doubt. It remains in need of confirmation through further perceptual experience, or through conceptual recognition of it as a case of a previously established generalization.

Similarly in the field of value-experiences we have veridical experience as well as illusory experience. For instance, if I am deeply moved by a poem and as a consequence rank it high in value, but on re-reading it the next day find it insipid and continue to find it so on other occasions afterwards, then I shall conclude that my first value-judgement was wrong, and, therefore, the value that appeared to be in the poem was only a subjective projection of my mind. On the other hand, if later readings confirmed my first value-judgement, then I should be justified in regarding the poem itself as possessed of high objective value. Confirmation in other people's experience will strengthen my critical judgement but is not essential to it.

It may be pointed out that though a particular value-experience can be verified in the future experience of one and the same person or, in more favourable cases, of a group of persons, one never expects, far less finds, universal confirmation. This is one important reason why values have been treated as subjective in contrast with the contents of cognition which can claim objectivity through universal confirmation, or at least through the possibility of that. All this is a mistake. We have seen in our analysis of the principle of genuine morality that it is based on the recognition of a value-experience whose claim to universal validity must be accepted; otherwise we cannot have any genuine morality at all. Thus, on the one hand, we have this value-judgement whose universal validity must be granted. On the other hand, the universality which science claims is spurious. The verifiability of scientific experiences is also relative to a group—large, though not confined to any land or race, capable of expansion, but not in fact embracing all humanity now or in the foreseeable future. This group is constituted by the acceptance of certain basic attitudes and beliefs which can be logically denied by any one and are factually denied by groups anchored around certain religious dogmas and by still others who according to the scientific community are steeped in ignorance and superstition (*vide* Polanyi, *The Logic of Liberty*, Part I).

In the field of art and beauty our value-experience has its universality diminished and confined to a particular tradition and culture, sometimes to tiny aesthetic groups. In romantic

love, which is undoubtedly an area of some of our deepest value experiences, the precincts are narrowed down to a single person. This variability of the area of universality should not blind us to the fact that within each area there is the possibility of consilience and confirmation. Therefore within each field we can speak of objective values, though error and subjectivity have to be allowed for—just as they have to be allowed for in the case of perception and inference. The objectivity of science is usually regarded as objectivity *par excellence* because of the exaggerated importance which the scientific community commands in our society, mainly in consequence of the power over natural forces with which it can tantalize mankind—surely a doubtful gift in the absence of wisdom. Scientists are the magicians of our times; unfortunately they never succeed in producing any wisdom out of their hats. It is fair to admit that they never even try to do such a trick.

Value and Obligation

Unlike facts, values put us under an obligation to pursue them, preserve them, promote them, etc. I have spoken of three kinds of values broadly: the subjective value of desire, or rather of the desired; the objective and particular value of art, knowledge, etc.; and the objective and universal value of the human person which according to me constitutes the basis of morality in the full sense. These three values put us under three different kinds of obligation, and, therefore, give rise to three different kinds of morality.

There is no obligation bound up with the object of immediate desire. But on the plane of desires we can build up a policy and a goal. This gives rise to a kind of morality which we can call prudential morality. On another level altogether is the genuine human morality whose basic principle I have equated with Kant's second formulation of the moral law. This absolute and universal law which expresses the strongest possible obligation has been already commented on. Before passing on to a third type of morality expressing a weaker and more restricted obligation, I should like to examine a little further Kant's maxim.

Humanity in other persons as well as myself is always to be treated as the final end of my moral actions—is the purport of that maxim. This sounds rather vague and not quite accurate. In what way can I make my own person the end of my moral actions? The *ae facto* existing person that I am, it may be presumed, is a pretty poor specimen of humanity. And even if I were not such a bad fellow, surely Kant did not mean that actions done with the goal of maintaining and furthering this fellow, this "I", could be truly moral actions. At best these actions would fall under the principle of prudence. Kant had spoken of my moral perfection as one of the ends of my moral action in one sense, though in another sense his theory does not admit any ends in morality. Others have substituted for it self-perfection in general; still others—amongst whom the acutest moral thinker was probably F. H. Bradley—have put forward the realization of my ideal self as the final end of my moral choice. But I do not see how I can perfect my self within the precincts of myself, nor can I conceive myself as an ideal self unless I go out of myself into the world of objective values. Niebuhr had said: "Existent being does not seek the complementary good necessarily for the sake of achieving its own state of perfection; it may well seek and serve the complementary good as an end and thereby grow towards its internal good, the realization of its essence, without direct concern for the latter. . . . That may come as by-product" (*The Centre of Values*). This is surely an understatement, a half-truth. Not only I may realize my essence through outside goods complementary to myself "without direct concern for my essence"; that is the only way I can do it. Man's pursuit of values is always in the world outside himself; his inner perfection can only come through his self-transcendence. Self-realization is necessarily a by-product of world-realization.

Art, knowledge, love and the social good—all present themselves as goals before the self. Self-realization by itself cannot be properly set as a goal for the self, unless by it we mean nothing more nor less than the realization of these objective values. And where there is apprehension of value there is also apprehension of some kind of obligation towards it. The relation between value and obligation may be characterized, after Moore,

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as synthetic *a priori*. But obligation does not mean in all cases absolute obligation. We cannot say that everyone must cultivate art or knowledge, must realize himself through romantic love, or even that he must dedicate his life to the promotion of social good or to the service of mankind. There is no absolute universal obligation or duty towards any of these things. Though striving after one or more of these is commendable, failing to do any does not render a man morally blameworthy. If one lives a plain and unambitious life, earns his daily bread by honest toil and does not shirk the little responsibilities of his quotidian existence, he also is a good man—even though he love not the Muses, nor go out to nurse the lepers.

There are of course some absolute moral obligations which everyone must fulfil, some duties which cannot be left undone without incurring blame. A recent moral thinker, Toulmin, has put them all under the maxim: "so act as not to cause any avoidable suffering." This, I think, is too broad and mild a way of formulating the principle of duty, for it would easily admit of many acts of commission and omission which we all regard as a clear dereliction of duty. For instance, if a tradesman was making a small extra profit by using a yardstick measuring only 35 inches, he could hardly be convinced that he was "causing avoidable suffering"—particularly if he took care to cheat only his rich customers. But even if it remains doubtful whether by any particular act of cheating I am causing any appreciable suffering to anyone, it is obvious that whenever I cheat someone, I am using him as a means to further my self-interest: I am not treating him with the dignity which he as a person, as an end-in-itself, always claims. I am, therefore, failing in my duty. I know of no better expression of the principle of duty than Kant's second maxim.

Nevertheless, I must persist in asking: what precisely is meant by telling me to treat the person of another as the end of my moral action? A little earlier I had raised the same question about treating my own person as an end. Similar difficulties arise in both cases. For it is not the existing paltry, sometimes perverse, selves of every man which I can regard as the end of my moral will. The question is the same, but there will be two different answers, depending on whether the question pertains

to my self or to other selves. And this difference is an important difference.

Treating myself as an end meant, as we saw, pursuing the ends which are presented to myself, and these ends are not within my self.⁴ Shall I, in regarding other selves as ends, regard the ends presented to them as the ends of my moral obligation? But how? For one thing, it is most difficult for me to find out what are in fact the ends of each and every individual. For another, could I, effectively and conscientiously, cooperate and, by actively helping him, participate in another's pursuit of ends which he accepts as his own but which I reject for myself? If the answer is in the negative, should I help everyone to realize ends which I regard as the proper ends for myself? This again does not seem to be the right thing to do. Here two alternatives present themselves:

1. I may regard the principle of duty as only a negative principle. My duty is not to promote another's good but to recognize, in thought and in deed, his right to pursue his own good—provided of course he does not thereby infringe upon anybody else's right to do the same. In other words, my duty is not to put any obstruction in the way of another's pursuit of what values he chooses for himself, rather than to give him a lift in my own moral car. This negative duty itself will create two positive duties: (a) to work for the creation of those material conditions which enable everyone to pursue his good, (b) to work for the prevention of the rise of such social conditions, and for their demolition if and when they have arisen, in which an individual or a group restricts in any way the right of other individuals and groups to pursue the good life according to their conception of the good.

It will be seen that in modern times these two positive duties which were once duties to society are being rapidly transferred to the state, the moral relation between one individual and another assuming more and more the negative form of non-interference. The second duty is clearly a political duty: it is the duty of maintaining the democratic state against the attack of totalitarian forces from outside, but even more from inside the body politic; and it is the duty of standing up against the totalitarian state and to work for the restoration of democracy,

wherever democracy has been destroyed. As regards the first, with the conceptions of the socialist state and the welfare state fast gaining ground the world over, duties of private beneficence are being increasingly replaced by the welfare measures which must be undertaken by the state in regard to the livelihood, health and education of all its members. When there are no unclothed or unfed neighbours, when the sick are well nursed in public hospitals, what charity can I perform? I can go and sit by the side of a bed-ridden fellow citizen, but I should make very sure that my company cheers him instead of boring him. To speak for myself, I am maddened by kind visitors when I lie sick, unless they happen to be congenial friends. Of course in economically backward Asia, there is still a great deal of scope for these positive obligations of private charity. But our need for economic and social change is much greater. These changes are under way, and I am sure would be sufficiently advanced in a couple of decades for the Asian ethics of duty too to pass from the positive to the negative phase in person-to-person relation.

2. The second alternative is that I may find out ends which are not just ends for me or ends for you, but the proper ends for all men; and having found this out, assume the positive duty of helping all men (irrespective of what erroneous notions they might entertain in their heads) to pursue and realize these natural or proper ends. When I conceive my duty as not only to *help* but to *make* all members of society realize this "good for man," this "natural goal for mankind," I am well set for communism.

Scientific Ethics

Communist ethics is important for us for two reasons. First, it is a very good example of a school of ethical thought which commands great popularity and some prestige today under the name of "scientific ethics." The biologists Waddington and Julian Huxley and the psycho-analyst Eric Fromm are its other well-known contemporary exponents. The basic premise which underlies it is the assumption that there is such a thing as a common human nature and "in order to know what is good

for man we have to know his nature." This knowledge, we are told, science is competent to give us. But Eric Fromm puts his theory under great stress right from the start by making the contradictory statement that "the infinite diversity of personality is itself a characteristic of human existence." (*Man for Himself*, pp. 18 & 50.) If every man's nature differs from every other man's, how can there be a "theoretical science of man"? Fromm liberates his scientific ethics from this stress via his notion of "productive living"—which embraces all the things calculated to delight the hearts of even the most romantically idealist moral philosophers. Marxists are more inveterate materialists and devotees of the positive sciences. So instead of swinging right towards idealism, their ethics turns left towards economic determinism. And this brings us to the second *raison* why Marxist ethics is important for us: it is an astounding example of a moral theory which begins as an ethic of unlimited freedom and ends up as an ethic of unabashed control. This about-turn over 180 degrees has been in the interest of, leastways in the name of, science.

Marxists present freedom as at once the highest end for man and the inevitable finale of the movement of human history, which naturally reminds us of the Hegelian identity between the real and the rational. The *summum bonum* in which the dialectic of history will culminate is described in the *Communist Manifesto* as "an association in which the free development of each is the condition of the free development of all." Unlike Hegel, for whom freedom was a highly philosophical notion at times bordering on the mystical, Marx and his followers are anxious to give a concrete form to this idealist notion—and the rub is there. Before we come to that, a moment's diversion may be permitted.

The conception of freedom as the highest good for man is as prevalent in the West today as it was in India two thousand years ago. The two freedoms, however, are very different from each other. The Western notion of freedom is based on a positive attitude towards the world ("world- and life-affirmation" in Schweitzer's language), and the Indian freedom on the negative attitude of withdrawal. For the present we shall be concerned with the Western conception of freedom. I want to ask the

question: can freedom be conceived at all as the end or as an intrinsic value? If so, in what sense and to what extent?

W. H. Auden has said somewhere that "liberty is not a value but the ground of value." This is true in a very obvious sense. Whether we understand freedom as "freedom to" or "freedom from," surely I want to be free to do certain things or to be free from certain things. And what are the things which I want to be free from? First of all, I want to be free from the forces and powers which obstruct the continuation of my life or restrict its growth. Secondly, I want to be free from the forces and powers which thwart my endeavours to realize the values which I hold dear. Is it not clear that I value freedom as a means to other values (as "the ground of value") rather than as an end-value? If there was nothing else that I valued, freedom itself would cease to be a value for me. And it does not make sense to say that other values are only a means for the attainment of the goal of freedom. I may want economic and political freedom to enjoy works of art, but I do not cultivate music and poetry to gain freedom—unless "freedom" is being used in a mystical sense as almost equivalent to the Indian notion of *moksa*. *Moksa*, which is often translated as "freedom" and literally means that, had a double significance—at least in Vedantic thought. Negatively, it stood for liberation from pain, evil and illusion—necessary adjuncts of our phenomenal existence. Positively, it was conceived as equivalent to the state of bliss associated with the intuitive experience of oneness (more punctiliously referred to as "non-difference") with the noumenal reality, Brahman. Less intelligible to me is the Buddhist goal of *nirvana* (complete negation of all being) and the Sankhya ideal of *kaivalya* (withdrawal from being-to-the-world to being-as-self).

Yet there is a sense in which freedom can be understood as an end or intrinsic value, though not as *the* end. For myself, freedom can only be a means to other values. But when I regard it in connection with other individuals, it becomes an end for me. We have seen before that the person of the other is an absolute value, a *sine qua non* of morality. Our binding duty towards the other is not to do good to him directly but to bring about conditions in which he can realize his own good. We can also express it as a duty to preserve and promote the freedom

of the other. For him of course his freedom is only a means to other more ulterior values which he strives to realize in his life. But as far as I am concerned, another's freedom must be treated as an end-in-itself in all my other-regarding actions.

After this diversion I return to an examination of the Marxist version of scientific ethics. Even more than the biologists and psycho-analysts, the Marxists are enamoured of science and determined to turn ethics into a positive science of human nature. According to their prescription, science after a proper study of human nature must tell us what is good for man, and society after it has mastered the forces of production (instead of being its slave, as it at present is in the non-Communist world) must ladle out this scientifically determined human good in ample measure to all. Freedom, at this stage, is identified with each man's ability to obtain this universal human good from scientifically planned society and socially planned science.

Marxists, however, find the old-fashioned "desires" and "interests" of the bourgeois ethical philosophers too abstract and subjective for their scientific minds, and so substitute them by "needs and requirements." The "good" is not the satisfaction of "desires and interests"; it is the planned fulfilment of the more concrete and measurable entities, "needs and requirements" of all. These empirically ascertained "needs and requirements" may run counter to the subjectively entertained desires and aspirations; even so, the good of man lies in the fulfilment of the former, not of the latter. Maurice Cornforth, for instance, states that "struggle for freedom means in essence people's struggle to be able to satisfy their own requirements, material and cultural, for which is needed knowledge of those requirements and of how to satisfy them, and the power to effect that satisfaction." And Howard Selsam bases the Marxist aspiration to possess a scientific ethics on the confident assertion: "In more and more spheres we have reached the possibility, if not the actuality, of determining what men ought to want *in terms of what they actually need* within the possibility of scientific determination." He goes on to add, "It is not too fantastic to suggest that there are cultural needs in the sense of requirements under given conditions of the development of healthy and stable personali-

ties, that can be empirically arrived at, and that may run against opposed desires under certain conditions."

The difficulty is that "requirement" or "need" is an extremely restricted concept, and is always relative to some norm agreed upon or arbitrarily set up. Such an agreed norm of a "healthy" and "stable" body is not difficult to formulate; consequently medical science can tell us what amount of oxygen, sleep or exercise we need daily for the upkeep of a healthy and stable body. But while "need" or "requirement" are the correct words to use in connection with our biological functions, they seem to be singularly inapplicable to our cultural and spiritual activities. What kind of poetry and how much of it does a man "need"; and is it really necessary for all men to read poetry at all? It is a fact that some men desire poetry; we can even say that all men ought to desire poetry, in the sense that poetry is something worthy of being desired by all. But what point would there be in insisting that even those who do not enjoy poetry, nevertheless "need it." Need it for what? If we say need it for the development of a "healthy and stable personality," then, first of all, that is doubtful, for surely we can think of some great men endowed from all accounts with healthy personalities who did not care for poetry; for example, Gandhiji. Secondly, there is no accepted norm of a healthy personality in reference to which we can determine the amount of poetry or political action "needed." If the qualification is made that it is only people with a particular type of personality-structure who need poetry, and a different type who require politics or mountaineering for their fulfilment, then do we not come back to Eric Fromm's "infinite diversity of personality as an essential character of man," thus undermining once more the basis of objective scientific ethics?

And if we insist on applying the word "need" to the sphere of our cultural and spiritual activities by unduly stretching its meaning, insurmountable difficulties crop up in "empirically arriving at our cultural requirements under given conditions." These requirements or needs are by their very nature incommensurable, scientifically indeterminable, whereas our biological needs are precisely what can be determined by the empirical methods of science. As a result, philosophers of "scientific

socialism" are always under strong temptation to confuse the two. The zeal to apply science to ethics results in slurring over those values which are unamenable to scientific treatment and over-emphasizing those which are. The recalcitrant higher values of life tend to be treated as interchangeable with the scientifically docile biological values, or as their by-products, or worse still, are made instrumental and subservient to the lower values.

I would not have given so much space to the Marxist exposition of "scientific ethics" if it were merely a matter of theoretical disputation among moral philosophers. Marxists being honest believers in the unity of theory and practice, a theoretical error committed by them is a practical danger for the rest of the world. Belief in an ethics which is claimed to have all the empirically verifiable objective validity of a positive science results in the cocksureness that they possess scientific knowledge of what is good for each and every member of society. Consequently, they feel not only morally justified but morally obliged to compel another to live his life in such a way that he proceeds towards the realization of this scientifically determined good for him even against his own desire or judgement. Such compulsive beneficence, in my opinion, is permissible only when the other is a child or a moron. In all other cases it does incalculably more harm than good. Apart from theoretical arguments, I am opposed to "scientific ethics" on the same grounds on which the Communists support it—it constitutes the "moral" framework of a totalitarian state. In mankind's adventure of ideas, "economic determinism" and "scientific ethics" are two important backward steps. Along with the notion of "the chosen race, nation or class," they are landmarks in humanity's backward march—backward along the great road "from force to persuasion."

The Ethic of Values

In this concluding section of my paper I want to return to the question of the relation between value and obligation. I have spoken of three different types of value, and three different types of obligation—consequently three different types of morality—which go with them. Connected with the value of happiness (which I have equated with the maximization of a person's

satisfaction achievable through the coordination of all his desires) is *prudential morality*; with the value of each human individual (which can also be expressed as the value of freedom) is the *universal morality of duty*; and finally with the values of truth, beauty and moral perfection is a morality which may be characterized as axiological

This third type of morality which centres around our apprehension of any of the "eternal values" is what I would like to call a *personal morality*. The obligations embraced by it cannot be expressed in the form of universal and inescapable obligations. We cannot say that it is the duty of everyone to appreciate the *Ninth Symphony* or *The Brothers Karamazov* or *The Principia Mathematica*; nor even can we generalize and maintain that it is everyone's duty to appreciate the arts and sciences and metaphysical speculations. No one, I am sure, can be morally blamed for his failure to carry out any of these obligations. Lack of response to the great values embodied in art and knowledge can be considered a defect but not a dereliction of duty. Positively, we can at best use the language of "fittingness" and state that it would be fitting for everybody to appreciate the masterpieces of art, science and philosophy, but we may not use any stronger language than that. And what does the above statement amount to except that the speaker himself responds positively to these values? There is only one value whose universal validity must be granted, insofar as non-recognition of that value renders a man morally blameworthy (there is no question of any demonstrative proof in the sphere of values). That value, as I have pointed out before, is another's human dignity or his freedom. If you object by saying that even in this case, what does my claim for the universality or universal validity of the value of freedom amount to except to this that I myself respond to it positively, then I shall put to you three questions. (1) Do you not respond to it positively? (2) What would you think of anyone who denied the value of another's personality or his freedom? (3) Does not the denial of the value of human person stand on an altogether different footing from the denial of any other value like art?

I am not making any distinction between the value of the person, his personality or his freedom. For the former two values

are ideal values, they are not values-in-existence but values-to-be-achieved. Therefore the value of personality is tantamount to the value of freedom to develop that personality. I need not repeat that this is an absolute value for another; to the person himself the ultimate value is not his freedom but the ends he wants to realize through his freedom. The value of these ends is relative to his personality. This holds not only for values in art or knowledge; it also applies to moral excellence. There is no absolute obligation or duty towards moral perfection—except towards that moral perfection which is attained when one respects in thought and deed the freedom of another. Towards other types of moral excellence our duty, in my opinion, is optative; it is of the same category as our obligation towards the cultivation of art or knowledge.

Let me give an example: If a man is attacked by a tiger in a lonely field and a passerby moved by the cry of the victim rushes in and grapples with the tiger unarmed and is killed in the attempt to save another life, he undoubtedly attains the high moral value of self-sacrifice, and deserves praise for it. But it cannot be said that he was morally obliged to do so or it was his duty to do so; nor can he be properly blamed for running to the nearby village for help instead of rushing in himself, though he was aware that there was every likelihood of the victim being killed before help from the village could reach the spot. Such heroic moral performances are not the only moral values the attainment of which falls outside our sphere of duty. If I, a great lover of drama, possess a ticket for a Hamlet show by a touring company, and finding that an indigenous friend is keen on seeing it, give it to him and deprive myself of the aesthetic joy, I might have done something praiseworthy, but it was certainly not my duty to do that. My point is that it is only one type of moral value, not all moral values, which it is our duty to attain or try to attain. Other moral values, like the values of art and knowledge, fall within the domain of axiological morality.

The values which a person apprehends and the different positions which they occupy on his scale of values, constitute the framework of his personality. And the scale of values determines a set of principles of action which are themselves arranged in

some order of priority and subordination for him. The coordinate body of these principles constitutes for each person his personal morality. This personal morality is an ethic of objective values. The objectivity of these values of course holds primarily within the perspective of a personality, though it might find confirmation in the experience of a cultural group.

The personal ethic of values may clash with the universal ethic of duty in some situations, but there would be no point in speaking of two ethics if they clashed all along a man's life—as Schweitzer thinks they do (*vide* his *Ethics and Civilisation*). When they clash, the weaker personal ethic should yield place to the stronger ethic of duty. But we are familiar with the transgressions of great artists and mystics which are often forgiven or overlooked. Society, I believe, has a point to gain from such forgiveness, though certainly it would have been better all round if occasions for such forgiveness arose less frequently. The point is that great artists and seekers after truth who have an overbearing passion for their vocations are often greater benefactors to society than those more directly devoted to social service. Society benefits from them even though their aim is not to serve man but to serve the gods. In fact, whenever their devotion to art and knowledge yields place to their devotion to society, art and knowledge suffer, and, therefore, indirectly society suffers.

To a man who deeply appreciates art or a particular work of art, it is a painful experience to see its value denied by others. But there is nothing that he can do about it; in particular, he cannot blame the others morally. Calling them philistines or bores will spoil his manners without improving their taste. He could use the language of persuasion—more effectively if he were himself an artist. That is to say, he could produce a work of art on another work of art. This is a form of criticism, to my mind the highest form. The point, however, that I want to make here is that it is even more painful to see the value of art inverted instead of being simply denied. What is most shocking is not the indifference of politicians to art but their determination to use it as an instrument of their politics. You are aware that a whole theory of criticism has grown up in recent times in support of this inversion of values. This theory is known as Socialist Realism.

Equally deplorable is the tendency in recent times in some societies to lose a sense of value towards knowledge as end and to develop a heightened sense of value towards it as means. I do not think there is a proper theory of criticism to support this inversion in the sphere of knowledge parallel to Socialist Realism, but the instrumentalist theory of knowledge is a near approach to it. Unfortunately, this instrumentalist view of knowledge is not confined to the capitalist countries and their friends, as the instrumentalist theory of art is to the Communist countries and their friends. I am afraid this must be accepted as one of the depredations of the human spirit under the wheels of technological advance.

From the point of view of the ethic of duty these value-inversions may not be condemnable as immoral. From the point of view of the ethic of values there could be no worse crime.

Leadership in Economic Transition and The Concept of Property

by AMLAN DATTA

ALTHOUGH in the Marxian interpretation of history economic factors are considered primary, there is a rather interesting difference between the Marxist conception of the main stages of the development of human society and what corresponds to it in the writings of the general run of economic historians. Looking at social evolution from the point of view of changing relations of production, Marxists have generally distinguished between certain fairly clearly demarcated stages of development, such as primitive communism, slavery, feudalism, capitalism in its two phases, mercantile and industrial, and, finally, socialism and communism. Non-Marxist historians, on the other hand, less preoccupied with ideological considerations, but interested nonetheless in the wider question of the development of technology and civilization, have usually adopted a somewhat different view of stages of economic development. Here hunting and the pastoral stage are followed by agriculture and handicraft, and then by increasing importance of trade, and, finally, of industry-and-trade. The Marxist is sure that in his account of historical development he is, at one and

the same time, indicating the successive stages of development of property relations in history as also of technology or, speaking more broadly, the forces of production. Indeed, this is a central point in Marxist sociology, that the forces of production create corresponding property relations, and when the latter fall out of step with the development of the former, the resulting unbalance ensues in social turmoil and revolution till harmony is restored at a higher level, and so on from stage to stage.

One has only to confront these two pictures of development to see that correspondence between them is significantly imperfect. Thus, to take the agricultural stage of society, for instance, the actual status of "serfs" is different in different countries and at different times, so that it approximates to slavery in some cases and comes close to free contractual relations in some others, but it is not always obvious that such differences are indicative of levels of development of the forces of production. Political and cultural factors are here evidently important. Again, countries at comparable stages of industrial development exhibit, not infrequently, interesting differences in the ideas of ownership which their social systems express and uphold. Thus, if one is asked to name the leading industrial nations of today, without taking any account of their ideologies, countries with widely different social systems will have to be named. The classification which we usually adopt when we are thinking in terms of productive relations, social systems, legal forms is quite different from the commonsense classification which we adopt when we are thinking in terms of development of the forces of production, levels of productivity of labour, industrial progress.

This is not to deny an element of truth in what Marx had to say on this subject. There does obtain a rough correlation between the level of material development of a country and the degree of justice, and, for that matter, of freedom, that can or is likely to be effectively embodied in social institutions at that level. But this relationship is disturbed and modified by so many and varied factors that it will be extremely hazardous for any one to try to guess back from the second to the first. Even within the same country, or what came later to be constituted into a single country (e.g., Germany), comparing one part with another at a pre-industrial stage, it is not unusual to find that the extent

of individual liberty and social justice achieved was smaller in that part where agricultural practice was more advanced rather than less. And a similar conclusion holds good, even more unmistakably, for industrial societies. The extent to which justice and freedom are embodied in the spirit and institutions of a given society is determined not merely by the level of material development attained in that society, but, to an important degree, by the historical path by which this level has been reached. Thus, for instance, the difference between the Soviet Union, on the one hand, and England and the Scandinavian countries on the other, is not explained so much by contemporary differences in their technological levels as by the respective histories of these countries.

II

The general conclusion from the above reasoning is simple: there is no definite and invariable set of institutions, or system of ownership of the means of production, which accompanies the transition from any given stage of economic performance to a higher stage. On looking more closely at the "capitalist" and "socialist" countries as we actually find them today, there is a further point that strikes us in this connection. In opposing "socialism" to "capitalism," Marx was opposing one abstract concept to another: either you have private property or you have it not. Now, in actual life we have, of course, many intermediate situations. I do not mean simply that private property in some industries or types of resources may co-exist with national ownership in other industries or other types of resources. I mean, rather, that a thing may be neither quite privately owned, nor quite nationally owned, but individuals, groups, such as municipalities, and the state, may, at one and the same time, have certain more or less clearly understood rights in relation to a particular thing or resource. Thus, in place of ownership, properly so-called, we may have a bundle of finely adjusted rights, and corresponding obligations, on the part of a number of bodies, private and public. Indeed, this is true even of such intimate possessions as children, over whom parents generally have certain rights, but not absolutely unrestricted rights. They

may not keep their children uneducated, and the state may conscript them and order them to go to the front.

Children, it may be objected, are a special case; they are nobody's property and are not considered as such in most civilized societies. But land is so considered and it is, indeed, the classic example of private property. Yet in the case of land, even if we consider such a normal relation as that of tenancy, the concept of property seems to dissolve within our grasp as we try to analyse it. Tenants have often certain very clearly specified rights in relation to the property which they hold in tenancy. The owner is not free to evict tenants whenever he likes. And just as children must be educated, so terms are or can be laid down that land must be properly cultivated or existing rights would cease. Finally, there is the reserve power of the state which makes itself felt in special circumstances; just as people can be conscripted so property can be commandeered. Absolute proprietary rights exist only as a legal fiction.

This analysis has obvious relevance to modern capitalism as well as to twentieth century socialism. The Communist commissar or manager is not any the less powerful than his capitalist counterpart because he lacks ownership rights. An increasing number of labour economists in England are veering round to the view that "it is the physical problem of control which is of the essence, rather than the metaphysical problem of ownership." More and more of them now realize that the insistence on "common ownership of the means of production" in clause IV of the Party Constitution is a hangover from an older and unnecessarily rigid way of thinking. In "revisionist" Yugoslavia, state ownership is no longer the issue; the practical problem is rather the manner and extent of control over enterprise to be exercised by various bodies, such as the workers' council, the local authority and the state. In a different way, and with a more pronounced ethical accept, the Gandhian idea of trusteeship tries to effect a not dissimilar change in attitude towards property.

The problem, then, is not one of simply preserving or extinguishing proprietary rights, but of effecting a careful adjustment among a plurality of competing and complementary rights. The habit of thinking in terms of a dichotomy of "capitalism" *versus*

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"socialism" has contributed to unnecessary rigidity of thought on questions of choice of new institutions for the future. If, on the other hand, one accepts the view presented above, alternatives are seen to be less sharp, and the curve of evolution of proprietary relations appears to be smoother and less beset with jumps. This last point may now be discussed further.

III

The idea that society is divided into two irreconcilably hostile classes, that the property-owning class has vested interests in the existing order and is bound to oppose the movement for a higher social order, in short, the theory that revolution is essential to social change, is strengthened by the belief that the real issue is proprietorship versus expropriation. But this dangerously oversimplifies the issue. And it is as unhistorical as it has been shown earlier to be analytically faulty. There are, indeed, instances in history of conflict, of people fighting for their vested interests, and perhaps even more for their wonted ways of life and images to which they have been long and fondly attached. But, on the other hand, there is a not insignificant number of instances of people high up in the social order being deeply influenced by new ideals, sometimes acquiescing in change and, at other times, even taking initiative in introducing the new order. By the time the French Revolution came, a large section of the aristocracy had already lost the strength of conviction to defend resolutely the old order and had been more or less won over in favour of change. In Germany, unlike France, the crucial period of the industrial transformation of the country followed in the wake of a defeated bourgeois revolution, and the administration almost throughout this period was heavily under the control of the aristocracy. An English House of Lords presided over the industrial development of England and the Tories carried through as many reforms as the Whigs. The initiative for the Meiji Restoration came from a section of the higher

Cf. "No revolution, whether peaceful or violent, has ever taken place without the new ideals having deeply penetrated into the very class itself whose economic and political privileges had to be assailed" (P. Kropotkin, *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*).

caste in feudal Japan, and although, as in other similar cases, there were rich merchants to support them, it is to these people enjoying high prestige and traditionally accustomed to a role of leadership in society that Japan owes the vision and energy that marked her development after 1868. It is they who proclaimed the abolition of feudalism, raised the "hinin" to the status of common people, introduced a system of compulsory education for every child, and preserved social cohesion through the strains and stresses of rapid economic development. Thus, people marked out as leaders in a society characterized by feudal particularism, with production chiefly organized for barter, can subsequently take on a new role and actively assist in building up a higher and more round-about system of production for large and interrelated markets.

It is necessary to be explicit on one point. A class, as a concept, has all the rigidity of an intellectual construction; but individuals belonging to a class are capable of fulfilling themselves in many ways. People, even when they have a privileged position in terms of the old relations of production, may not only be inspired by a vision of new possibilities, but come genuinely to believe that in the society of the future they themselves will have new functions more satisfying than any that they ever had in the past. In acting on this conviction, they will, in a sense, be sacrificing "vested" interests only to create new and higher interests. There is no reason, objectively speaking, why a whole class, or a major part of it, cannot be so transformed, like the Japanese *samurai*, partly by wise decision and partly by force of circumstances. When people behave inflexibly in defence of their vested interests, they often act against their best interests. The Russian aristocracy did not defend their interests any better for being more inflexible, nor the English aristocracy any worse for being a little more adaptable. In acting as they do, die-hards are not guided by rational calculations or economic motives, but by instincts which are deeper-seated and predate the emergence of the rational spirit in man.

Against the main drift of the above argument, there is one point which we ought in fairness to set out. Leadership in a new age cannot come wholly and exclusively from an old class, however transformed. People from different strata must have opportunity

to climb up the social ladder. For, in the context of the new tasks of the age, the old restrictions, if continued, would look infinitely more arbitrary and intolerable than they ever did before. If leadership is made a monopoly, this is likely to provoke a combination of those excluded from privilege who would now oppose even those efforts of the powers that be which, under normal circumstances, they would themselves have upheld and advanced. It is not enough, then, for leaders of an old society to take account of the future and address themselves to new tasks, but it is equally important that they make those appropriate gestures which appear to guarantee that talent everywhere, even outside the old ranks, will be recognized and valued. It is this that an old leadership, frozen into a caste, often finds difficult to achieve, even when it has otherwise resolved to pioneer progress.

IV

The transition to a new stage of economic performance, the development of productive forces from a lower to a higher level, is never altogether smooth and frictionless. But under certain circumstances the attendant strains and stresses are greater than usual. Common sense would suggest, and historical evidence seems to bear out, that a society in which the old leadership is rigid and incapable of evolving or evolving fast enough, and has to be replaced by a new leadership, more or less unrelated to the main tradition of the community, and lacking, therefore, the lustre and appeal that such tradition lends by association, has to pass through greater disorganization, bitterness, and physical and spiritual destruction, in the process of economic growth.

It is a little difficult to illustrate the point with decisive examples, since in any actual case the quality of leadership is not the only factor, but only one among a number of factors determining the nature of a community's experience of economic growth. But an attempt may still be made to make some comparison. It is instructive to consider, for instance, the contrast between the respective experiences of Japan and Russia. Both these countries have achieved quick industrial development,

beginning approximately with the eighties of the last century. Both found it necessary, at one time or another, to depend chiefly on "surplus" from the agricultural sector to sustain rapid growth of the economy as a whole. Yet in the manner in which this basic task was accomplished, the experience of the two countries differed profoundly.

Japan, in the crucial period of her economic transformation, had a leadership which was not as dissociated from the tradition of the country and as alien to the peasantry as the Russian leadership after the October Revolution. In the early period of modernization of Japan, this apparently made it easier for the government to collect surplus from the agricultural sector. The peasantry, long used to surrendering an appreciable fraction of its produce to the feudal nobility, could be easily induced to make a similar contribution in favour of a new government which inherited traditional prestige. On the other hand, the Bolshevik leadership, with its militant atheistic ideology, and lacking roots in the countryside, never succeeded, in spite of the decree for abolition of landlordism, in winning the allegiance of the mass of the peasantry. While in Japan new institutions grew out of the old with a minimum of social dislocation (some dislocation is inevitable), in Russia forms of collective farming came to be introduced, which never found favour with the majority of rural people, nor were justified by their productivity, and yet were deemed necessary to establish over the peasantry the control of a State which found it impossible to make its will effective in more normal ways. Twice within a generation after the October Revolution, the Bolshevik government was involved in a bitter and long-drawn-out conflict with the rural population in which millions perished and a reign of terror was established throughout the land.

This is not to suggest that what was achieved in Japan can be repeated elsewhere, or even that the lessons of the Japanese experience are all positive. Japan remained a private enterprise economy in the period of her industrial transition. It is likely that a new leadership in other countries and at this time of the day will have to follow a different course. Perhaps a change in the concept and content of ownership will be necessary to gain and retain the willing allegiance of the people. But this, as we

have argued earlier, should not be beyond achievement by peaceful means.

The Japanese experiment is open to criticism from yet another point of view. Although technology is built on science, a community can make great strides technologically, without experiencing a rationalist revolution to match its material progress. The conclusion is not that the political leaders of a people in a period of industrialization should themselves be the leaders of a rationalist* revolution. This second task they are unlikely to achieve at all well, while in attempting it they may lose much of their cohesive influence in society. Indeed, it might be much better if political leaders tolerated the rationalist radicals, the critical intellectuals, the *philosophes*, while they themselves remained closer to the central tradition of the community and were only indirectly affected by the philosophic revolution, which they only gently encouraged instead of proclaiming Robespierre-like a militant adherence to it.

Economic development can never be achieved without a people making substantial sacrifice for it. But there is a great difference between a sacrifice that is more or less willingly made and one that is forced upon a people. Where the new leadership evolves out of the old with a minimum of that fanaticism and bitterness, that spirit of religious war which passionate ideological opposition to tradition by men newly in power produces in a period of change, the transition to a higher economic level is likely to be made with a minimum of waste of spiritual energy and physical resources. Success in such venture has been best attained when the economic, political and intellectual leaderships of a society have acted in unison. But this idea of concerted action should not be too mechanically interpreted. The proper roles of these leaderships are not only quite different, but, at certain levels, seem to be almost conflicting. We may stay briefly to note this point.

The economic leadership in the modern industrial era has generally evolved out of a class or caste which was accorded a low social status in the older order. But in those countries where this economic leadership has functioned to best advantage, it has been protected, supported and, at the same time, held within wise limits, by a political leadership of more aristocratic descent.

While the intellectual leadership best fulfils its role by moving rather ahead of the times and helping to change current ideas, the peculiar contribution of a wise state consists not in this that it innovates, but rather in that it translates into law and common practice the social consensus as it evolves, functions as a centre of social cohesion, and serves and appears to serve as a source of justice in a society which continually threatens to disintegrate into factions. From one point of view, economic, political and intellectual leaderships of a society are mutually reinforcing; but, from another, they serve as checks and balances on the excesses of one another. This is why it is dangerous to concentrate all effective power in any one of them. The factors which help such concentration of power are many and varied. Property relations are not the only determining factor here. But in the complex society of our times, an absolutist concept of property, which can only distinguish between unlimited private ownership and state ownership, serves to strengthen the tendency towards an excessive concentration of power.

Affluence and Growth

by SUSHIL DEY

THE developed part of the world reached a new upsurge of prosperity some time ago. There have been minor set-backs from time to time. These are no longer termed depressions, but recessions, which are not strong enough to reverse the general trend. There is also every confidence that, with good management, pockets of distress which continue to appear can be caught up in the rising tide. This overall picture is not true of North America alone. The post-war miracle has continued in West Germany. In England it is widely granted that they have never had it so good. The same upward trend can be observed in other advanced economies. This includes Russia, where the thaw after Stalin not only relaxed political rigours, but revealed significant improvements in consumption standards and promised more. An international agreement on even partial disarmament could touch off an immediate further expansion of staggering proportions.

There is a noteworthy feature of the current prosperity of modern states. It is not confined to isolated individuals or a favoured class. It is widespread and touches everybody. Admittedly, it does not touch everybody equally. Disparities in income may be enormous. But destitution has been largely banished. Social pressures build up for a rising minimum for all. At the same time, public policy, made wise by past experience, finds much of this pressure in accord with the postulates of economic

advance on an even keel. There is a deliberate attempt to maintain a high level of demand through appropriate fiscal management. A decline in private enterprise, incomes and consumption is countered by an offer of capital and other incentives or made good by straightforward public disbursements, distributing material benefits far and wide in cash and kind.

These techniques of control are, of course, called for only in economies dominated by production under private auspices. They can be dispensed with where the public authority has the monopoly of all or most of production and adjustments of different parts of the economy are automatically accomplished according to central direction. Socialism has no technical problem of distribution, inasmuch as there should be no unabsorbed output. The pattern of output conforms to allocations for different categories of use determined in advance by the central authority. This must necessarily override the choice of the final consumers, but that is another matter. Basically, that is a human and psychological issue rather than economic. The principal economic score against socialism has been its failure to exploit the productive potential with maximum effectiveness through denial of full play to the individual's incentive to work.

This score is most valid where the individual is the prime mover in production, and the judgment and heart he puts into his effort make a large difference to the quantity and quality of the output. This can be seen in peasant farming, which has been least susceptible to socialization for this reason. This would also hold good in considerable measure in industrial production where it is carried out by competing units of small and medium size. It is worth recalling that even the propounders of scientific socialism recognized the progressive character of private production in its competitive phase. Undertakings organized with the aid of modern technology present, however, a very different scene. These are closely related parts of gigantic complexes, deploying elaborate and intricate equipment, operated under a disciplined routine, in which the individual worker has a severely limited role to play. The chain of action is too far-flung and devious for his effective grasp; he is in no position to influence its direction or shape, and has no scope or competence to use his own discretion. Foresight, understanding, judgment and

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initiative are still needed to put the system into motion and maintain it in efficient function; but such exercises are necessarily restricted to a small managerial elite. The human factor is not ignored. In fact, it receives increasingly meticulous and scientific care, through vocational and technical training, assurance of fair wages, insurance and pensions systems, courses in personnel management, time and motion studies, provision of recreation and welfare arrangements and even recognition of collective bargaining and methods of sharing of profits. But the focus on the human function has shifted from that of originating specific action to serving as an agent in a vast and impersonal production process.

Thus, the individual initiative of the mass of people has ceased to count for the efficient operation of the apparatus of modern production. It is the adoption of this apparatus which is responsible for the current prosperity of the developed economies, whether they are free or managed. Those which advanced under private enterprise put together this apparatus in piecemeal fashion over a long period of erratic progress. They had the advantage of an early start and of the open frontiers for capital accumulation which existed in the past. Late-comers were under the dual pressure of catching up with the others, while depending mainly upon their internal resources for their advance. They took recourse to central planning. It might be interesting to speculate whether the harshness with which economic reconstruction was accomplished in Russia could have been avoided if technical assistance and capital aid had been available from outside in as generous a measure as it is for many others today. The answer seems to be that the harshness could have been abated to some extent, but not significantly avoided, because the structural change called for to accommodate the new technology is only possible by a massive internal effort. The prospect is no different for the newly developing countries of today. Notwithstanding all the outside aid they can get, they cannot accelerate for the economic take-off of which they dream without stringent measures of central planning and control. Granted this aid, the degree of stringency will depend on two facts: first, how advanced is the base from which the start is made now; second, how soon is it planned to reach the front?

Having arrived at the front, can the controls be then relaxed? It would not appear to be so. By fortunate circumstance, the free economies attained their advance by an easier route in leisurely stages and in an exhilarating climate of open challenge to pioneering spirits. But the price of consolidation of each advance was to sacrifice a little of the pristine freedom of sturdy individualism. All modern economies are centrally managed, some more, some less. Whether achieved by private enterprise in the main or under central direction, once established, modern technology imposes its own internal logic by which it must be worked. All advanced economies, whether their ancestral record is capitalist or socialist, act under the common compulsions of the same technology. In the essentials of their operation and their impact upon the people, the contrast between the two economic systems has therefore lost much of its sharpness. The distinction between capitalism and socialism has now mainly a historical significance in respect of the methods by which economic advance was pursued in the past. It is commonly believed that they represent opposing ideologies which have continuing relevance for directing public policy. This belief must be questioned, since both capitalism and socialism seem to be headed for the same destination of progressive expansion of production and a rising standard of material attainment for the people. This is a commendable goal, but cannot be identified with the ultimate purpose of organized existence which an ideology is intended to define and towards which it is meant to inspire action. If capitalism and socialism have ceased to be meaningful models even for economic action today, it is permissible to suggest that they could never have served to express the larger and more abiding values of man's aspiration.

Scientific socialism has been professedly concerned with economic ends and claims its supreme virtue and historic destiny to be to lay down an institutional framework in which the expanding forces of production can have unfettered play. Its opponents have argued that they can do better in the same respect under their system, but they could do so without eclipse of man's economic freedom. In fact, the latter are able to fulfil their promise only by increasing encroachments on this freedom in the interests of the effective functioning of an expanding economy.

Both sides are fighting for the same end and are coming to adopt the same overall strategy, one of them exultantly, the other reluctantly and haltingly. It is consequently no matter of surprise that they do not represent true alternatives of public policy to the newly independent countries striving for economic betterment. If anything, the preference of these countries is for the course which seems more straightforward and logical and promises speedier results. The expression of this preference is tempered in practice only by calculation of favours which may be expected from one or the other side.

If there is true possibility of a different course of human development, that still remains to be adequately propounded. There are many indications that such a plea would be timely, because the consequences of allowing technological progress to become the overriding determinant of the pattern and quality of human living has begun to cause disquiet and concern among the most prosperous nations. This is a significant portent. In the past, arguments against unrestricted pursuit of material expansion came mostly from the poor or from advocates of an ascetic life. They could be dismissed as making a virtue of necessity or proceeding from an individual or sectarian idiosyncrasy which had no application to normal behaviour. Perhaps the only notable exception was the philosophy of the good life preached and practised by the Athenians of classical Greece. This was not an ideal of privation or mortification, but of the fullest growth of the human personality by a harmonious development of all its appetites and faculties. But although the world has continued to retain every admiration for the works of intellect and craftsmanship of that period, the social organization of the city state based on slavery was considered to have no relevance for the problems of later times. Perhaps this total rejection was unwise. Perhaps features of the Athenian pattern deserve to be salvaged for reinterpretation in contemporary terms to show the way to sanity in human growth.

Professor Galbraith's term of affluence has now become current to describe that state of material development which begins to produce serious toxic effects for man's continued growth. The trouble in the affluent society is no longer the adequate distribution of income. This is assumed to have been largely accom-

plished and the people in general have assurance of reasonable satisfaction of their material needs. But the economy, having been geared for automatic acceleration, continues to pour out supplies in a swelling stream. Consumers begin to multiply their possessions for vulgar display. Thrift ceases to be a social virtue. The rapid turnover of durable goods is induced by trivial variations in successive models of the same product. Advertising activity inflates beyond all proportions and resorts to subliminal devices in order to capitalize primal cravings. Tastes are perverted, sensibilities blunted, discrimination lost. There is less and less scope to take pleasure in creative acts. Recreation is reduced to passive surrender to stimulation manufactured in the mass. There is a spreading sense of lack of a larger and liberating purpose in existence. This particularly affects the teen-agers and the young. The beatniks and the angry generation flaunt new postures in speech, dress and deportment to express the pure essence of destruction and negation of all values in life. The outbursts of teddy-boy groups and the stilyagi provide cruder outlets for the same attitude in their less sophisticated counterparts.

These trends have proved a disturbing challenge to the social conscience in the West, the roots of which lie deep back in the traditions of classical humanism. The voice of liberalism, drowned for a long time in the din of technological advance, whether from the Right or the Left, is beginning to make itself heard again. It is still faint and faltering because, in common with other prevalent currents of social analysis, it is overwhelmed by the present-day material miracle and unable to conceive of solutions outside the accepted premises of economic advance. Recommendations for corrective action have been of two kinds. Professor Galbraith lays stress on a redirection of productive energy from commercial proliferation of goods to public investments in a number of relatively neglected fields. Provision could then be made for larger services for improved education, health, transport, town planning and other social amenities and to strengthen the cultural infrastructure of libraries, museums, national parks and institutions of art, which could promote creative enjoyment by the people of their expanding leisure.

Obviously, large-scale central control of the economic process

would be a necessary condition for implementing a programme of this kind. As has been pointed out, even democratic regimes are now resigned to progressive surrenders of the freedom of private enterprise, and while every further extension of the sphere of State action must be expected to meet with determined resistance, it will be from a dwindling minority and will not prove the most formidable hurdle in the way. The real difficulty is more fundamental. Mass acquiescence to central direction, whether under total or partial planning, has been demanded and rendered until now because of one final, unanswerable hard-headed argument. This is that measures of social control are indispensable for maintaining a modern economy at a consistently high level of production. In other words, the transcendent purpose of control has been always understood to be the increase of productive efficiency. All other arrangements of social life are expected to conform to the overriding requirements of technological advance. The liberal proposal implies a complete reversal of this stand. Controls are to be tightened, not in order to reach new peaks of high living, but to establish good living on the heights already attained. Such a view would be regarded as subversive of the basic principle of all established economic orders, and it is impossible to imagine that the majority of the people can be swung round to the support of such a course of action in any part of the developed world today.

It may be noted that the mechanics for switching off the productive apparatus from continuing material accumulation are already installed in an economy which is fully planned. Yet there is no reason to think that a planned economy is intended to pursue any such course. On the contrary, the proclaimed determination of the world's most advanced socialist regime is to overtake and surpass the world's most advanced capitalist system by every standard of material achievement within as brief a period as possible. What is lacking is not the physical means or the knowledge of the technique, but the motive; and this is so, because neither the population at large nor the ruling élite in any country is conditioned to look upon any activity as productive unless it has one ultimate object and is measurable by one dependable yardstick, and that is increase in the purchasing power of the output in national and international exchange.

Even health, education, leisure and other amenities are prized, not because these are desirable objectives in themselves, but for their contribution to raising the efficiency of the labour factor in production and because they are inescapable means of maintaining total outlay for stable operation of the economic machine. The liberal thesis begs the question by assuming that the validity of the reorientation it commends is already sufficiently clear for the policy to be put into practical effect. In the prevailing climate, the most effective argument might be that in the long run even the efficiency of the economic machine would be in danger if the men on whom that machine depends for its ultimate inspiration are dehumanized. Unfortunately, the liberals have become prisoners of their own wisecrack that in the long run they would be all dead, and hence that argument would cease to be of practical account.

A second way of escape from the glut of material output has received widespread attention in recent years. This way lies in venturing outside the national frontiers of the advanced economies to develop the demand for investment and consumer goods in the poorer parts of the world. No other course could seem better suited to combine material advantage with enlightened benevolence. There is no doubt that the countries at the other extreme of the material scale are in danger of being dehumanized from an excess of want, just as some others are in the same danger from an excess of surfeit. Consequently, a more even international diffusion of wealth would be to everybody's benefit. This is not, however, a simple process of moving capital from one part of the world to another. The poorer countries have to build up their power to make effective use of the capital made available to them by structural and institutional changes in their internal regime, and the speed with which they can accomplish this is strictly limited. When they will have done so and will have launched their take-off to self-sustained economic growth, they will be set on their way to the same blight of affluence which has afflicted those who have already arrived. For mankind at large, in the tightly knit world of today, this would be no true escape from the toxins of unrestrained material pursuit. It could merely purchase a period of reprieve until the misfortune had spread to all corners of the globe.

The problem seems insoluble because it still remains to be stated in correct terms. It is not a question of efficient functioning of the economic machine and the answer cannot lie in a more rational organization of its related parts. The question is the determination of the purpose for which the machine is to be used. The answer must be sought outside the economic order itself. The issue is human, moral or ideological and not economic. The apparatus of production is itself the creation of human beings and has no other reason for its existence except to serve human ends. Yet it has now grown to a vastness of size and complexity where it has assumed a majesty and autonomy of its own, expanding according to its own built-in accelerator of compound interest. Men are called upon to submit to the compulsions of this machine if they wish to regale themselves with the increasing material satisfactions which flow out of it. Their natural weakness, supported by the pervasive influence of an acquisitive society, makes sure of a mass response to this call. But in doing so, men have to deprive themselves of the freedom to cultivate and fulfil other needs of their nature. These needs become more significant as men grow. As one of the characteristics of this growth is the manifestation of greater differentiation and distinctiveness in people, the satisfaction of these needs becomes a matter of individual interest and pursuit. Through greater leisure and ampler facilities for education, the economic order can provide the material means to men for conducting these pursuits. But the active, creative exercise of the spirit which constitutes their essence is an entirely intimate individual responsibility. To strengthen this responsibility and assure an expanding scope for its exercise is the only way to permit the unrestricted growth of the human personality.

The advanced economies are deeply committed to their system and addicted to its rich material dividends. The people in general are getting accustomed in these countries to a life of passive enjoyment of manufactured pleasures rather than active cultivation of their innate powers and faculties. One cannot therefore expect a radical reversal of the current trend until the social deterioration spreads deep and wide enough to affect the progress of the economy itself. The newly developing countries are in a different situation. They have still to build up their edifice of

modern technology and it is open to them to decide on the role they will assign to it in the pattern of their future. Once again, the issue should be made very clear. The question is not whether or not to accept the achievements of modern science. It is to be clear about the terms on which these are to be adopted. Are they to be harnessed for liberating men for creative activities in pursuit of the many-sided growth of their personalities? Or are they to be installed for unremitting multiplication of physical assets which must doom men's faculties to gradual atrophy and decadence?

It may be asked whether the choice is so simple; whether the acceptance of advanced equipment and processes and the relations of production, consumption and commerce which govern their operation must necessarily give rise to the social and psychological situation which it is desired to avoid. There should be little doubt about the answer. The economy has no moral significance in itself and is endowed with no malevolent purpose of its own. It is created by man and can be regulated for his benefit. It fails to be operated to this end now for historical and not logical reasons. In the earlier stages it was built up in separate pieces by the efforts of individuals and groups, each concerned with the efficient working of a particular piece. In time, there began to emerge a comprehension of the total complex made by the interrelation of the different parts. The possibility then arose of managing the economy as a whole. But while this prospect began to be dimly recognized and acted upon by men in power, the idea of working it for any object other than increase of material satisfactions was considered admissible only in the event of a war. At the same time, the economy became so large and so complicated so fast that its total comprehension and direction became a mystery denied to ordinary men. They were overwhelmed into submission to what struck them as massive, impersonal forces. The imputation of a social, moral or human purpose is still regarded as an unwarranted intrusion in the field of economic planning unless it is demonstrably in furtherance of economic advance itself.

This situation has a number of lessons for those who are on the threshold of modernization. Wealth is a necessary means to accomplish well-being, but by itself it is not sufficient to achieve

this end. Equally indispensable is the wisdom to direct and use wealth for this purpose, and every further step in material advance must be inspired by this steadfast purpose if men are to make sure that it does not lead them astray. The need for economic planning is now widely recognized. Its technique is beginning to be mastered. But economic planning eschews all concern with the ultimate purpose for which it is used. Its object is threefold: to install the apparatus of modern production as quickly as possible; to work it to its maximum capacity; and to keep working it and improving its efficiency and output with the minimum of friction. Experience should now teach that this is not enough. Economic planning has to be subsumed to planning for human growth by subordinating it to a moral purpose. This is a realization which comes simply and naturally in the earlier stages of economic development. It is then evident without any special effort that what men are exerting their energies to produce has but one final purpose, which is to serve the manifold needs of their nature in a balanced manner. It is only when the expansion of the economy begins to outstrip the growth of average comprehension that it becomes impossible to keep track of this purpose through the intricate correlations of its multiplying specialized parts. The way to avert this is to adjust the pace of economic development to men's grasp of its process and, in consequence of that grasp, to the increase of their capacity to use its fruits for their own all-round improvement.

This thought should give pause to the countries straining for their economic takeoff. The temptation is to beg, borrow and buy the complete outfit of modernized production for transformation of the economy overnight. The desire arises from what is called the "demonstration effect" of the material attainments of the advanced economies and the prestige and power which go with them. The temptation is now held in check only by the realization that the new technology cannot be worked until the necessary infrastructure, the technical skills and the operating capacity have been developed. There is, however, a deeper limitation, if moral benefits are to be assured at the same time as material gains. The condition that needs to be fulfilled is that the people retain their mastery over each stage of development, so that they can use it to stimulate their inner potential for

growth. This is a matter of liberal and humanistic education, rather than training for particular technical vocations, demanding a grasp not of the mechanics of one segment of the operation but of the system as a whole and, beyond that, of its larger impact on social behaviour and attitudes. This is also a matter of the widest democratic participation in the organization of economic development, because only this direct involvement in the process of planning and management can give people the needed insight. Obviously, the spread of such education and the building up of this experience will be slow. The pace of material change must be adjusted to it. There are two processes of change involved, human and technical, and they are interacting, each giving a push forward to the other in their alternating advance. Every step ahead in techniques is a new jolt to the mind, which wakes up, appraises the change and then makes use of it. Having mastered it, the mind, in its turn, is ready to modify or improve on it by introducing a further innovation to move further forward towards the goal it has in view. But if the progress in understanding and in the capacity to dominate the development is to be general, no step in advance must be so big that it is incomprehensible to large numbers, who merely submit to be carried along without exercising any responsible judgement. As the process continues, men's grasp becomes surer and keener and they are ready to move faster than before. With their growing maturity, they can be also expected to turn progressively to the cultivation of a freer, ampler and more intense life of imagination, emotion and intellect by devoting an increasing proportion of their leisure and wealth to this end. In due course, sooner, perhaps, than can be now imagined, they can then take all that the most advanced technology has to teach and more, yet not take it blindly, but with discrimination, adapting and adjusting it to suit the human ends which they will have learnt to keep steadily in view.

To hold to this course is not impossible for the newly developing countries. The physical factors which limit the speed of their economic advance have been previously noticed. They already tend to slow down advance. Consequently, at the earliest stages of economic planning, the level of their current technology is not too far ahead of the capacity of the people at large to under

stand and organize it for their own benefit. This may not be true of certain sections of urban industry and commerce which have already felt some impact of modernization. But these will comprise a small part of the economy. The overwhelming majority of people will be engaged in the simple practice of agriculture, which will still constitute to them a whole way of life rather than only a means of earning. Retarded by the massive backwardness of the rural areas, even the urban sector of the economy will have made but little progress. In these circumstances, it is feasible to establish a pattern of development in which economic change is deliberately aimed at fostering the growth of the people and geared to the speed with which they can mature in their grasp and organizing capacity. It is in the sphere of rural development that this line of advance can be most easily discerned and worked out. Rural communities can be inspired to organize undertakings of mutual help for their common benefit in which improvement of agriculture and local crafts expands and strengthens the material base for improvement of other aspects of living. But once started, the process is not meant to be contained within the bounds of rural society. An increasing volume of supplies and services which are required to sustain it have to come from the more developed sectors of the economy. These are induced to adapt and adjust their pattern to conform to an expanding and diversifying rural demand. The gap between urban and rural economy and living is thus progressively narrowed until there is advance on a more even front of a more homogeneous people, who become progressively capable of giving a more purposive lead to their own growth.

The prospects of such a course of development depend upon two eventualities, neither of them impossible of fulfilment. The first of these is internal to the countries themselves. Its negative aspect is the capacity of the leaders to restrain their impulse to drag the people to precipitate economic advance before they are ready. Its positive feature is to initiate economic planning only on the basis of the widest democratic participation in its purpose and process. The second set of conditions is external. While refraining from hustling the new countries to premature take-offs, the advanced economies can stimulate their inner potential for growth by coming forward with the right kinds of assistance

in the right measure. It is in the long-range interest of the advanced countries themselves to do so, although for a somewhat different reason from what is usually supposed. As the regeneration of rural society can remove the blocks to overall progress in an underdeveloped country, so the initiation of the process of healthy growth at the poorest end of the scale can have beneficial repercussions on the affluent, which they could not have generated by their own efforts.

The last point calls for a little elaboration. Affluence can be of two types. The one of which we have present experience stultifies growth; but there can be another, which, by reason of being securely geared to the development of people's capacity to turn it to good use, can contribute to the balanced growth of human personalities. Each type of affluence gives rise to its own particular pattern of demand for goods and services. If the course of development in the new countries can be assisted to conform to the second type, the demand for imports into those countries will be more for the equipment and know-how required for truly creative activities than for the frills and gadgets of living for shallow pleasures, more for books and ballet, for instance, than for colour television and rock-n'-roll discs. This will still provide an expanding market for the increasing productivity of the advanced economies, but will induce a healthier change in the pattern of their present production. There is little prospect that this change will occur through an internal reorientation of the advanced economies themselves. It can, however, be induced by the impetus received from outside.

Some Suggestions for Revolutionizing Indian Education

by N. K. DEVARAJA

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

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

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

and diplomatic planes but also in the spheres of science, culture and social organization.

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

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

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

Let us ask a blunt question: What have our educationists and the Government done so far to prevent the emergence of caste-consciousness in the younger generation? That consciousness, it may be pointed out, is bound up with certain beliefs, partly religious and partly mythological; and its grip cannot be loosened, much less removed, until the propagation of these

beliefs is stopped at all levels of education. Here it may be recalled that even such widely influential teachers and reformers in Indian history as the Buddha, Kabir and Guru Nanak, failed to rid our society of caste-divisions. This indicates the stupendous nature of the task awaiting those who would fight this age-long evil. The Indian masses are highly conservative; they are still very much under the influence of the traditionally minded Brahmins and Pundits. It may be safely asserted that the majority of the Brahmins and Pundits are born propagators of the caste ideology; they also have a vested interest in the continuance of the caste system. The democratic Indian Government can do little to prevent the Brahmins from acting as moral and religious teachers of the masses in general. However, it can and ought to do something to keep the student community away from their conservative outlook and influence. And here I want to put forward a highly revolutionary suggestion: the pundit who has been educated purely on the orthodox lines, should not be permitted (or at any rate, encouraged) to have pupils to teach. The orthodox or pure pundit (as such a person may be called) may or may not enjoy social prestige, but he should not be employed in a teaching institution and thus have the benefit of state patronage. It follows from this that institutions imparting education of a purely orthodox type, e.g. those devoted to the teaching of religio-philosophic texts in Sanskrit and Arabic, should either be closed down or deprived of state aid and recognition.

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

college or university. *All research work relating to Sanskrit studies should be carried on in the modern colleges and universities*, under the guidance of teachers and professors educated on modern lines.

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

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

I shall not elaborate this most important point, but only illustrate it. High School students in the Hindi-speaking states get a good dose of the poetry of Tulsi Das and Suradas. To these poets, the highest virtue that a man can cultivate is the disposition of complete dependence on god. They also lay stress on the innate wickedness or sinfulness of man and laud the virtues of humility and self-abnegation. Contrary to this, Kalidasa, the author of the *Raghuvamsam*, extols in his favourite heroes such virtues as self-dependence, proper pride, perseverance in undertakings, learning, etc. While I am second to none in my admiration for Tulsi Das and Suradas as poets, I plead that the work of preparing text-books out of selections from

these and other medieval (and modern) writers should be entrusted only to those who, in addition to having knowledge of the writers in question have a sense of history and the awareness of the needs in knowledge and character of the present-day Indians.

3. I shall now enunciate the third important principle which should govern the educational policy of this country. By and large the Indian people today live either on their past tradition or on ideas and values prevailing in the West. While secretly resenting the restrictions imposed by a pre-scientific, parochial tradition, and cherishing the values whose vision has been evoked by science and technology on the one hand and the growing intercourse among nations on the other, educated Indians are yet unable to accord those values recognition and assent in terms of a national philosophy. We have, for example, a democratic form of government, but our people are largely without the ideological equipment which supports and nourishes the democratic mentality. On the one hand, the Indian Government are making heroic efforts to improve the material living conditions of the people through science and industry, on the other, our intellectual leaders have at their disposal no better philosophy than the Vedanta, wedded to the doctrine of illusionism, by which to exhort those people to be cooperative, just and reasonable. We refuse to see, what is clear as a summer day to simple common sense, that excessive respect for such ancient texts as the *Purushasukta* and the *Laws of Manu* is inconsistent with our denunciations of the caste system; and that we cannot at the same time be reasonably permitted both to idealize the tradition which enjoined the four stages of life and to have elderly presidents, vice-presidents and cabinet ministers as elected rulers and administrators.

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

and persuasive efforts of its own thinkers, writers and teachers; they can be developed, further, only through interaction with its traditional aptitudes, taste and convictions.

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

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

Yeats and Rabindranath
A Study in Tradition and Modern Poetry
by NARESH GUHA

THE readers of the English *Gitanjali* cannot have missed W. B. Yeats's very important introduction to the poems of Tagore. It came from a man who was a great poet in his own right, and who, evidently, was not playing the polite promoter of an oriental writer. Those who need some kind of critical support to lean on before making up their mind about the stature of a poet, in this case Tagore, proudly refer to that piece of document. But at the same time they are intrigued by the most unflattering statements that Yeats shortly chose to make on the same poet. The relationship that existed between these two poets was of a complex nature. No attempts, however, have been made to explain why Yeats revised his opinion so soon, and yet never could forget the implications of Tagore's achievement. The explanation will involve us in an inquiry into their attitude toward the nature of tradition and its place in poetry.

Yeats and Tagore met for the first time at William Rothenstein's home on June 30, 1912. Rothenstein had visited India the previous year, and briefly met the poet in Calcutta. But though he was sufficiently impressed by the personality of Tagore to want to sketch him at once, he was unaware that his model was primarily a poet, the greatest Indian poet, as a matter of

fact, since the time of the epics. None of Tagore's family thought it proper, perhaps, to mention the fact while introducing him. But Sir John Woodroffe, who had been engaged at that time in translating the *Tantras* with the help of Sanskrit scholars, and whom Rothenstein met in Calcutta, might easily have told him. He also did not. Back in London, Rothenstein's interest in Tagore as a writer was first roused by the translation of one of his short stories. He inquired if there were more, and someone sent him a few of Tagore's poems instead. That started an abiding friendship between the two. Soon after Tagore set out for England where he hoped to recover from the effects of an illness; on the way he translated few more of his poems. Rothenstein sent copies of these to Yeats and two other writers in London to obtain their reactions. The response was surprisingly warm and appreciative. Thus encouraged, he invited a small but influential group of writers and artists, H. G. Wells among them, to meet the poet at his home. Yeats also came and read out a few poems from the manuscript to the select audience. The impact of these poems on everyone present was again unpredictably powerful. The literary world of London was taken by surprise. An important poet had arrived.

Very few people in the West were really prepared for a phenomenon like Rabindranath Tagore, coming from, of all places, India. At best they could understand the arrival of a Swami or an adept of the type "discovered" and made famous by Madame Blavatsky. But what they found instead was distinctly a poet, speaking a language that was universal. The process of translation certainly impaired the poems a great deal, but enough remained to stir admiration. The English poets were surprised to find no asceticism in those poems, no renunciation, nor any craving for *Nirvana*. Ezra Pound, more known at that time as a young, brash, American promoter of modern poetry, was so moved with these poems that, as a foreign editor for *Poetry*, he persuaded Tagore to send some of them for immediate publication in America. The editor, Miss Harriet Monroe, was informed in Chicago: "I will try to get some of the poems of the very great Bengali poet, Rabindranath Tagore. They are going to be the sensation of the winter. . . . W. B. Y. is doing the introduction to them. They are translated by the author into very beauti-

ful English prose, with mastery of cadence."¹ She therefore capitulated, and *Poetry* published the poems with not too short an introductory note from Pound. A living eastern poet was thus published for the first time in a western literary magazine.

Pound was under the misapprehension that Buddhism was the religion of India, and so of Tagore. In his note he therefore warned the readers that the poems would surely "destroy the popular conception of Buddhism" which was generally regarded as a religion negative and anti-Christian. "The Greek shows us," the note added, "man as the sport of the gods. . . . The Bengali brings to us the pledge of a calm, . . . a quiet proclamation of the fellowship between man and gods; between man and nature." And then he solemnly declared that the publication of these poems should be regarded as "an event in the history of English poetry and of world poetry."²

Yeats's excitement about Tagore surpassed that of all others. He carried the manuscript of those translations "about with him for days, reading it in railway trains, or on the top of omnibuses and in restaurants," and he had to close it often lest some stranger would see how much it moved him. Though he was not exactly fifty at that time, did he have this particular experience in mind when he wrote, in 1931, the fourth section of the poem "Vacillation"?

My fiftieth year had come and gone,
I sat, a solitary man,
In a crowded London shop,
An open book and empty cup
On the marble table top.
While on the shop and street I gazed
My body of a sudden blazed;
And twenty minutes more or less
It seemed, so great my happiness,
That I was blessed and could bless.

The suggestion need not be pushed too far, but there is no harm in drawing attention to this coincidence. Anyway, the lyrics of

¹ *Letters of Ezra Pound*, ed. D. D. Paige (New York, 1950), p. 10.

² *Poetry*, Vol. I, No. 3 (December, 1912), pp. 92-94.

Tagore displayed in their thought a world Yeats had dreamed of all his life long.³

Shortly after Rothenstein had introduced Tagore to the literary world of London, the India Society, which included eminent men like Thomas Arnold, Roger Fry, F. W. Thomas (the Sanskrit scholar), T. W. Rolleston, E. B. Havell and others, arranged on July 10, 1912, a reception for the distinguished Indian poet. Yeats presided again, and in his address compared Tagore with Thomas à Kempis, pointing out how Tagore's poems, as compared with the works of that European mystic, were significantly free from a contemplation of evil, and were uttered out of profound joy of life.

When he went to Normandy to spend the summer of 1912 with the Gonnés, Yeats carried the manuscript with him so he could prepare an introduction to the first volume of poems by Tagore which the India Society was to sponsor. "That summer, in the holiday home of Maud Gonne, on the shore of the English Channel at Normandy," records a younger and minor Irish poet, James H. Cousins, a Theosophist, "Yeats's chantings of the newly discovered Indian poet's prose lyrics, that were destined to come out as *Gitanjali*, to a small company of guests, including my wife and myself, were like the ritual of a new era."⁴ In their sensitive reactions to the phenomena of nature and the mystery of the human heart the poems, writes Cousins, seemed no more alien to English than poems of ancient Celtic imagination. They confirmed the theories of the Celtic scholars like Henry D'Arbois de Jubainville who, in the early eighties of the last century, had established significant parallels between the old Celtic and Indian conceptions.

Maud Gonne's daughter, Iseult, also was deeply moved by the poems and asked Yeats to get her a Bengali grammar and a dictionary so that she might read Tagore in the original.⁵ How far she succeeded is not known, but before long she did make a

³ Yeats, "*Gitanjali*" in *Essays and Introductions* (New York, 1961), p. 390.

⁴ Prabhatkumar Mukherjee, *Rabindra Jibani*. 4 vols. (Visvabharati).

⁵ Abinash Chandra Bose, *The Three Mystic Poets, Rabindranath Tagore, W. B. Yeats, and A. E.* (Kolhapur, India, 1946). See Introduction, p. IX.

⁶ *Le Cycle Mythologique Irlandais* (1884).

⁷ Joseph Hone, *W. B. Yeats: 1865-1939* (New York, 1943), p. 281.

few translations for *The Gardener*, and also became Secretary to the India Society Library in London. This episode is mentioned because later when she turned down, as did her mother, Yeats's proposal of marriage, Yeats adroitly alluded to her enthusiasm for the Bengali poet in "Owen Aherne and his Dancers" which was occasioned by his love for Iseult. There the line "Let the cage bird and the cage bird mate, and the wild bird mate in the wild" is an allusion to Tagore's poem in *The Gardener* which begins:

The tame bird was in a cage, the free bird was in the forest,
They met when the time came, it was decree of fate.⁹

One wonders if Iseult had any hand in the translation of this particular poem.

Yeats's introduction to *Gitanjali* does not really reveal the mood of a detached critic, but of one who is profoundly involved in the theme and the achievement of the poet. Tagore impressed him not because, as Yeats's biographer Hone suggests, he looked "as if he had stepped out of the Vedic age" and might well, therefore, be carrying "light from the East."¹⁰ Tagore's "transformation into a prophet with a practical message for the West" also had nothing to do with the "intimate instructions" by Yeats at the Woburn Buildings where Yeats lived. Tagore came to the West as a poet, and Yeats thought that he had discovered in him similar ideas and attitudes about politics as about poetry. Intimate talks with Tagore must have revealed to him that their views of nationalism, for example, were not different. Both had an aversion toward bitter nationalistic hatred and terrorism, and therefore, both had to face the suspicion of their countrymen. In his short communication to *The Golden Book of Tagore*¹¹ Yeats refers particularly to Tagore's novel *The Home and the World*, where he found, he says, "wisdom and beauty, or both."

⁹ This fact is from an unpublished letter from Tagore to Yeats. A copy of this letter is in possession of Dr. Richard Ellmann, the noted Yeatsian biographer and critic.

Rabindranath Tagore, *Collected Poems and Plays* (New York, 1951), p. 77.

¹⁰ Hone, p. 281.

¹¹ ed. Ramananda Chatterjee (Calcutta, 1931), p. 269.

The Home and the World (1915) can be read as a long dialogue between a terrorist, a nationalist of the type represented by Tagore and Yeats, and a woman who is torn between the pull of these two opposing ideals. The novel raised a storm of controversy in his own country and its spirit is the same as in Yeats's play, *The Dreaming of the Bones* (1919). Both, moreover, had a deep religious instinct, but did not quite profess any particular creed. And both wrote on the heroic past of their respective countries. But the quality that Yeats regarded as most valuable in Tagore was the union in his poetry of sensuous images and deep spiritual apprehension of life. The poems "seemed to come out of the fields and the rivers and have their changelessness."¹² Yeats had a similar dream of bringing together the natural and the spiritual world in his poetry and of giving it back to the people. His vision of perfection had come to claim a firm basis in life. It was no longer called the Rose, but was expressed by the phrase the "Unity of Being," that he had first learned from his father. The realization of the ideal seemed to be most difficult, if not impossible, in the European tradition. In Tagore he discovered an ally who had the same sense of the Unity of Being, though in him it was a matter of inheritance.

Yeats's Unity of Being could only exist in a society where "poet and artist confined themselves gladly to some inherited subject matter known to the whole people,"¹³ and this inherited subject-matter naturally comes from the ancient myths and legends of a country. Ireland had a great store of imaginative stories which the uneducated classes knew and sang. Yeats, therefore, had been trying to give them currency among the educated classes. Every new fountain of legends, he was convinced, is a "new intoxication for the imagination of the world," and where imagination is untrammelled, the Unity of Being becomes easier to realize. Nature and God are not separated there by thought, a common myth is shared there alike by the common people and the best imaginative minds, and gaiety and joy remove the constricting sense of sinfulness. One could call this the conception of a classical society that frees the creative mind of the artist. The same need impelled T. S. Eliot to formulate his

¹² *Idem*.

¹³ Yeats, *Autobiography* (New York, 1938), p. 166.

ideas of a "Christian Society," and Yeats to conceive of the "aristocratic society," though, unlike Eliot, Yeats was quite free from the preoccupation with sin to which the modern Christian attitude tends to lead. Yeats's early poems are full of melancholy, but they have little to say about sin. He was never haunted by damnation. His ideal of the Unity of Being was not intended to be achieved by following any religious dogma, but by incorporating in his poetic phantasmagoria the ancient myths of Ireland. And in this attempt he found the living tradition of India seminal.

His dream, he felt, was no longer realizable in the European tradition because of what T. S. Eliot has termed the "dissociation of sensibility." "Since the Renaissance," Yeats wrote in his introduction to *Gitanjali*, "the writing of European saints—however familiar their metaphor and the general structure of their thought—has ceased to hold our attention."¹⁴ This was because spirit and matter were irrevocably separated in their minds, as a result of which nature came to be regarded as evil. Salvation, therefore, was considered unattainable without first discarding nature. Yeats refuses to agree, and the question that he raises is the agonizing question of an artist: "How can we, who have read so much poetry, seen so many paintings, listened to so much music, where the cry of the flesh and the cry of the soul seem one, forsake it [nature] so harshly? What have we in common with Saint Bernard covering his eyes that they may not dwell upon the beauty of the lakes of Switzerland, or with the violent rhetoric of the Book of Revelations?"¹⁵ Tagore, whom Yeats's Brāhmo friend had introduced to him as a saint, sings, on the other hand, of life's joy, which is simultaneous with a deep sense of sanctity.

Yeats's stimulating introduction to the poetry of Tagore, thus explains a great deal of the poetic problem of Yeats himself. Tagore's poems stirred his "blood" as nothing had for years. He found in them abundance and simplicity, innocence and humbleness. His Bengali Brahmo friend had informed him that as a young man Tagore wrote on "natural objects," in deep personal sorrow movingly on love, and with maturity on philosophi-

¹⁴ *Essays and Introductions*, p. 392. Later referred to as *E & I*.

¹⁵ *Idem*.

cal and religious subjects. This account is partial, since, soon after the *Gitanjali* period was over, Tagore's mysticism was very much modified by more secular interests. But even in *Gitanjali* Yeats noticed and appreciated this poet's intense love of life, and recognized his difference from modern European mystics. When he writes about God, for example, his heart flows outward to experiences of life "without derogation or condescension," and fills itself with the circumstances of everyday life. The images of his poetry are familiar. "The traveller in the red-brown clothes that he wears that dust may not show upon him, the girl searching in her bed for the petals fallen from the wreath of her royal lover, the servant or the bride awaiting the master's homecoming in the empty house" ¹⁶—these are his images of the heart turning to God. When he wants to express the mood of that heart in union with or in separation from God, he again uses familiar images like flowers and rivers, the blowing of conchshells, the heavy rain of the Indian July, or the parching heat of his tropical land. "A man sitting in a boat upon a river playing upon a lute" is the image of God himself. In praising this quality of Tagore's poetry Yeats certainly remembered what he himself had written in 1902 about the Celtic element in literature, that once every people of the world believed that all natural things were divine: "They saw in the rainbow the still bow of a god thrown down in his negligence; they heard in the thunder the sound of his beaten water-jar, or the tumult of the chariot wheels; and when a sudden flight of wild ducks, or of crows passed over their heads, they thought they were gazing at the dead hastening to their rest." ¹⁷

Moreover, since Tagore was nearer to the living tradition of his country, Yeats recognized in him a "popular poet" ¹⁸ of the kind he himself wrote about in 1901. His popularity is not like that of Longfellow, Campbell, or Scott, who had "unlearned the unwritten tradition which binds the unlettered . . . to the beginning of time and to the foundation of the world." Indolent ladies and ambitious students were not his only readers, but a whole people seemed to participate in the symbols and images

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 391.

¹⁷ Yeats, "The Celtic Element in Literature" in *E & I*, p. 174.

¹⁸ Yeats, "What is Popular Poetry" in *E & I*, pp. 3 ff.

that Tagore used. Yeats, therefore, called these poems the expression of a supreme culture, remaining all the while "as much the growth of the common soil as the grass and the rushes."¹⁹

This dream of creating an imaginative body of popular poetry shared by a whole people haunted Yeats for a long time. Among his contemporaries he chose to recognize this quality in Douglas Hyde's Gaelic poetry sung by mowers and reapers from Donegal to Kerry, and so he wrote in 1924: "In India . . . peasants sing the words of the great poet of Bengal without knowing whose words they sing, and it must often be so where the old imaginative folk life is undisturbed."²⁰ The example of Tagore remained in his mind.

Here, then, was a poet who seemed to have achieved what Yeats himself valued most as a poetic ideal. Tagore, too, asserted in his poetry the Unity of Being, and belonged to a tradition that had "passed through centuries, gathering from learned and unlearned metaphor and emotion, and carried back again to the multitude the thought of the scholar and the noble."²¹ Yeats therefore became Tagore's propagandist, and then he and Sturge Moore assisted in bringing out three books, *Gitanjali*, *The Gardener*, and *The Crescent Moon* including by far the best translations from Tagore.

Soon two of Tagore's symbolic dramas also were translated. *The Post Office* was done by a talented Indian student at Oxford, Sri Debabrata Mukherjee, son-in-law of Yeats's Brahmin friend, Mohini Chatterjee. *The King of the Dark Chamber* was translated by an Indian Civil Service student in England, Sri Kshitish Sen. Yeats's sister published a limited edition of *The Post Office* at the Cuala Press in 1914; and even before the original play was staged in Bengal, Dublin's Abbey Theatre produced the English version with fair success.²² Yeats's introduction to the

¹⁹ Yeats, "Gitanjali" in *E & I*, p. 390.

²⁰ *Autobiography*, p. 186.

²¹ *E & I*, p. 390.

²² Yeats wrote to Tagore: "The play was very successful with the house, which was quite enthusiastic. I think the performance was middling, the stage clothes worried the players and we had not quite as much time as we should have had for rehearsals but everything went very smoothly. Everyone I had met likes the play." (This unpublished letter of Yeats was quoted in a letter from Tagore on May 22, 1913. A copy of this letter was kindly lent to me by Mr Pulinbehari Sen, Tagore's bibliographer.)

Cuala edition of *The Post Office* does not suggest that he liked the play too well; perhaps he was already drawing away a little, but considered, all the same, that the construction of the play was perfect, and that it conveyed "to the right audience an emotion of gentleness and peace." *The King of the Dark Chamber* was produced at the Little Theatre in London, and Yeats took an interest in the production. It is important to remember this fact because Yeats later came to choose this drama as a point of departure, and wrote a strange variation on the theme of *The King of the Dark Chamber* in one of his last plays, *The Herne's Egg* (1938).

After the great success of *Gitanjali*, for which Tagore was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1913, Yeats seems to have cooled noticeably towards the poet whom he had admired so much only a year before. From Rothenstein's autobiography, and some letters of Tagore, it appears there was some rather unpleasant controversy regarding Yeats's part in the translations done from Tagore which has made him famous in the Western world.²³ Rothenstein refutes the current gossip that "the success of *Gitanjali* was largely owing to Yeats's rewriting of Tagore's English." The original of *Gitanjali* in English and in Bengali was in his possession. He could, therefore, affirm with authority. Yeats, he says, "did here and there suggest slight changes but the main text was printed as it came from Tagore's hand." Tagore also supports this view in a letter to Rothenstein where he writes that Yeats "was sparing in his suggestions." Moreover, he himself was with Yeats during the revision work, so that changes were made after consultation with him.

Both the detraction and the refutation, it will be noticed, pursue irrelevant patterns of argument. Both the sides seem to have quite neglected the important fact that Tagore's supremacy as a world poet did not depend at all on his ability to compose in English. His Bengali poems were there for comparison, and any sensitive reader could tell it was ridiculous to suggest that the translations improved upon the original Bengali poems. And yet, even his genuine supporters tended to take their stand, as some of them still do, on the "unaided" achievement of those

²³ See William Rothenstein, *Men and Memories*, Vol. II (New York, 1932), pp. 299 ff.

translations, as if a world poet must prove his stature by passing a proficiency test in English. It is probable that some such misguided judgment encouraged Tagore's western publishers to suppress in the collected edition of his works even the fact that they were translations and not originally written in English.

Those who revised his translations—as I suppose Yeats, Sturge Moore and Lady Gregory did—did no more than what any other able collaborators would normally have done. Tagore later spurned any collaboration and had to be on his guard because he was born in a country which “unfortunately” had cultivated the English language for over a century, and everyone, therefore, expected him to cook the translation of his own work. Yeats may have misunderstood him, and thought that he did want to be known as an English poet, which he did not.²⁴ But the probable misunderstanding over Yeats's share in the translations was not sufficient reason for Yeats's change of attitude towards Tagore. The real reason was intellectual.

Yeats came to realize that Tagore was not a traditionalist of the kind he took him to be. Already preferring the symbolic conceptions of mythological or Purānic Hinduism, Yeats had at first supposed that Tagore's poems confirmed his own ideas. But in the lectures the Indian poet was giving his passion for the abstractions of the Upanisads was made amply clear. Tagore declared that the Upanisads and Buddhism had shaped his life. Yeats, on the other hand, was soon to emphasize that Buddhism and Upanisadic abstractions were at the root of India's downfall. Their real difference, thus, lay in their attitudes toward ancient tradition. Tagore belonged to the reformist group of Hindus known as the Brāhmo Samaj. Though in his poetry he used Puranic Hindu myths, symbols, and ideas, which a devout Brāhmo would probably never have done, he did not have Yeats's fanatical interest in tradition. The Yoga system or the Tantra, both of which attracted Yeats, left Tagore unconcerned, cold or critical.

It so happened that at about the time Yeats discovered Tagore, the authoritative texts of both Yoga and Tantra reached Eng-

²⁴ *Letters of W. B. Yeats*, ed. Allan Wade (London, 1955), p. 834. See also Tagore's letter to Rothenstein in *Men and Memories*, III (New York, 1940), pp. 111 ff.

land. Yeats's interest in spiritualistic phenomena had been already renewed by the end of the first decade of this century. He had begun visiting regularly séance rooms in London. With Maud Gonne and Everard Fielding he went to France, in 1914, to investigate a miracle, and wrote a long report of their findings which remains unpublished. With the publication of a scholarly edition of *The Yoga System of Patanjali* (1914) from the Harvard University Press, and of the Tantric texts (1913) by Sir John Woodroffe, Yeats could now get an unmodified view of that part of the traditional Indian systems that was not abstract.²⁵ Thus it seems probable that Tagore, in whose poetry he found at one time the ideal union of the cry of the body and the cry of the soul, more and more appeared to him to possess the same love of abstractions that he connected with the Vedantic and later Upanisadic thinking.

One example of this fascination of the Indian poet for the abstract he probably found in *The King of the Dark Chamber*, where the *Ultimate Reality*, even though he is called the King, can never be encountered except in heart's darkness. Yeats never could appreciate this manner of using the term "darkness" to suggest any profound mystery. Writing, thus, to Olivia Shakespeare on James Joyce and D. H. Lawrence, he complained that these western writers had "almost restored to us the Eastern simplicity," but neither did it perfectly, "for D. H. Lawrence romanticizes his material, with such words as 'essential fire', 'darkness,' etc."²⁶ It is interesting to note that while God in Tagore, is "The King of the Dark Chamber" in Yeats He is called "The King of the Great Clock Tower." The similarity between these phrases does not appear to be merely a matter of coincidence, but the implications are quite different. One is the result of abstract thinking; the other is a concrete suggestion. Later another Indian, Shri Purohit Swami, was to confirm for him the concrete nature of the other part of traditional Indian thought.

Yeats's first excitement with the poems of *Gitanjali* changed

²⁵ I saw all the volumes of Tantric texts neatly arranged in Yeats's home in Dublin, and Mrs Yeats informed me that his interest in Tantra predates their marriage in 1917.

²⁶ Yeats's *Letters*, p. 807.

into a critical antipathy probably after the publication of Tagore's lectures on the Upanisads in *Sadhana* (1913). Tagore's poems affected Yeats favourably; his exposition of the Upanisads, coming later, did not please him. He later claims that he also had "fed upon the philosophy of the Upanisads" all his life, but felt that there was "an aspect of Tagore's mysticism" that he disliked. With this aspect of mysticism he connected the "absence of tragedy in Indian poetry."²⁷ It seemed to him that in their emphasis on the unity in diversity the Indians neglected the contradictions of life out of which tragedy rises. Yeats's own poetry was becoming more and more coloured with a sense of tragedy. Tagore seemed to be "vague" in his idealism²⁸; his imagination moved in a rarified air above or beyond history. Though his own earlier poems expressed a vague desire for a dreamed perfection, and an impatience and weariness with the world, Yeats was however gradually becoming more concerned with human history, with the rise and fall of civilizations. World weariness was being replaced by a passionate affirmation of life. And in this concern with history and civilization Tagore least resembled Yeats who certainly felt that the Upanisadic principles, expounded in *Sadhana*, would take one away from the continued effort and tireless strife necessary for building and maintaining the standards of a civilization. To Yeats these principles were too abstract and vague.

Sadhana is the collection of a series of lectures that Tagore delivered in 1913 at Harvard University, and later in London, to correct the exposition by the familiar swamis of the traditional heritage of India. He admitted in his preface that the subject-matter of the book had not been "philosophically" treated, nor had it been "approached from the scholar's point of view." But, all the same, the lectures were written by one to whom "the verses of the Upanisads and the teaching of Buddha have ever been the things of the spirit, and therefore endowed with boundless growth."²⁹ In these lectures Tagore, whose voice was being heard with respect as of the true representative of his country, made some unhappy and hasty generalizations

²⁷ Hone, p. 491.

²⁸ *Idem*.

²⁹ Rabindranath Tagore, *Sadhana* (New York, 1915), p. viii.

characterizing the civilizations of Europe and India. *Sadhana* begins, for example, with an outright condemnation of the trend of the Greek and the Western civilizations. "The civilization of ancient Greece was nurtured," he writes, "within city walls. In fact, all the modern civilizations have their cradles of brick and mortars."³⁰ Nature is subdued there as if men were living in a hostile world. One is urged there only to take an intense interest in one's "own life and work," thus creating "an artificial dissociation between himself and the Universal Nature" within whose bosom one lies. Western civilization, Tagore complained, demands the "ceaseless strain of every nerve," is acquisitive by nature, and has developed terrible war potentialities. As a contrast he painted the ancient Indian civilization as one that never encouraged the desire to extend one's dominion "by creating boundary walls around his acquisitions." Yeats might very well resent this over much simplified generalization. Being a supporter of the heroic age in civilization he became wary of this unheroic interpretation of Indian tradition and emphasis on the quieter ideals in Indian history. Later he came to know, and referred to it in his introduction to Purohit Swami's *The Aphorisms of Yoga*,³¹ that the heroic age in India ended with the development of the extreme forms of abstract thinking in Buddhism.

Tagore's conception of Reality also, as expressed in *Sadhana*, might seem unacceptable at a crucial point to Yeats. Tagore declared that there is *dvanda* or a clash of opposites in the world, such as "the positive and negative, the centripetal force and the centrifugal, attraction and repulsion." So far Yeats would have agreed with Tagore. But then Tagore quite easily dismisses these antinomies as "mere names," and affirms that "they are only different ways of asserting that the world in its essence is a reconciliation of pairs of opposing forces."³² Yeats was not prepared to put all the emphasis on the final resolution of all conflicts. The combatants, he insisted, must be there to turn the wheel of life. It is true, as *Sadhana* puts it, that "when at last we find a relation between these two, and thereby see

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 3 ff.

³¹ Shri Purohit Swami, *The Aphorisms of Yoga* (London, 1938), p. 14.

³² *Sadhana*, p. 96.

them as one in essence, we feel that we have come to the truth," but *Sadhana* fails to tell about the techniques of life.

Their attitude towards the body and sex also proved to be different. Tagore's idealism is not as disembodied as it sounds in *Sadhana*; moreover, during the last twenty years of his life he became more and more secular. The fact remains, however, that the body always was an embarrassing subject for him to confront. Avoidance of the body, or of sexuality, is not necessarily typical of India; classical Sanskrit literature and the magnificent procession of lusty, full-blooded ancient sculptures prove otherwise. Tagore, of course, never mentions this part of our glorious heritage, and from his translated works it might seem that even when he is writing on human love he minimizes the body. In one of his poetic dramas, *Chitra*, for example, the heroine is full of remorse that her lover has become a "prisoner" of her charms. She is a princess, but being the only daughter of the King she had been brought up as a boy and knew no "feminine wiles for winning hearts." She falls in love with the great epical hero Arjuna. The god of love comes to her assistance, and grants her bodily beauty and charm for one full year so that she can win over the hero as her devoted lover. However, when she succeeds, she puts to him a strange question: did he love her real self? "Whom do you seek?," she asks Arjuna, "in these dark eyes, in these milk-white arms? . . . Not my true self, I know. Surely this cannot be love, this is not man's highest homage to woman. Alas, that this frail disguise, the body, should make one blind to the light of the deathless spirit! . . . Alas, it is not I, not I, Arjuna! It is the deceit of a god. Go, go, my hero, go. Woo not false good, offer not your great heart to an illusion. Go." She considers her own beauty as "borrowed beauty," and "falsehood." Her body is her rival, and she is determined to reveal her "true self" to her lover.

Yeats could not forget this strange concern of the girl with her real self, and wrote at least two poems, "The Hero, the Girl, and the Fool"³³ and "For Anne Gregory,"³⁴ repudiating the position, probably with Tagore's drama in mind. Only the last

³³ *The Variorum Edition of the Poems of W. B. Yeats*, ed. Peter Allt and Russell K. Alspach (New York, 1957), p. 447.

³⁴ *Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats* (London, 1950), 277.

portion of the first poem, written in 1922, was retained in the *Collected Poems* where it is called "The Fool by the Roadside." The echoes of *Chitra* are hard to miss in the discarded portion, where Yeats wrote:

The Girl

I rage at my own image in the glass
That's so unlike myself that when you praise it
It is as though you praised another, or even
Mocked me with praise of my mere opposite;
And when I wake towards morn I dread myself,
For the heart cries that what deception wins
Cruelty must keep; therefore be warned and go
If you have seen that image and not the woman.

The Hero

I have raged at my own strength because you have loved it.

The Girl

If you are no more strength than I am beauty
I had better find a convent and turn nun;
A nun at least has all men's reverence
And needs no cruelty.

The Hero

I have heard one say
that men have reverence for their holiness
And not themselves.

The Girl

Say on and say
that only God has loved us for ourselves,
But what care I that long for a man's love?

The dramatic situation is the same as in *Chitra*. The hero is the victim of the girl's charms, but she herself is resentful of the power of the body's beauty. Like her Indian counterpart in Tagore she declares that her real self should have been loved instead. Tagore's hero meekly accepts the girl's exhortations;

Yeats's hero demurs. To love one for one's true self is not, he says, humanly possible. Even a nun does not receive reverence for her "true self" which only God can see. The Fool by the roadside, presumably the poet himself, comments with a sigh and perhaps a twinkle in the eye, that when he is dead,

When cradle and spool are past
And I mere shade at last
Coagulate of stuff
Transparent like the wind,

only then perhaps, may he expect to find the "faithful love" of the girl's specification.

The young philosophical girl in the poem "For Anne Gregory" argues in similar terms. To prove that her bodily beauty is ephemeral and, therefore, not worth any homage, she is prepared to dye her yellow hair brown, black, or carrot, and insists that her young man should love her for herself alone. The poet repeats in reply what the hero in the other poem tells the high-minded girl:

. . . only God, my dear,
Could love you for yourself alone
And not your yellow hair.

Yeats never refused to accept the notion that one's true self is the Universal Self, as the Upanisads tell us. But following his personal philosophy of the mask he would like to modify it and say "the world being illusive one must be deluded in some way if one is to triumph in it."³⁵ Tagore thus came to stand, according to Yeats, for a vision of life "separated from all that is not itself, from all that is complicated and mechanical."³⁶ Yeats, on the other hand, more and more emphasized life in its totality.

³⁵ Yeats's letter to his father, quoted in Richard Ellmann's *The Identity of Yeats* (London, 1954), p. 109.

³⁶ See *The Golden Book of Tagore*, p. 296. Yeats adroitly formulates in this short communication the basic difference between Tagore and himself. The communication, however, is usually taken by most readers merely as an unqualified ovation.

His admiration for Tagore was, therefore, bound to be modified soon.

In their attitude to the supernatural also these two poets were quite dissimilar. Tagore was sceptical about the world of spirits and ghosts. Yeats's interest in the supernatural was serious, because one of his abiding poetic problems was to arrange every human experience, including the widespread belief in the world of "separated spirits," in a suitable scheme of interpretation of life and the universe. This scheme, he had decided, should keep, on the one hand, a close relation with the "unwritten tradition" of mankind, while as a "metropolitan poet" he also could use it symbolically for his purpose. He never wanted, therefore, to explain away popular faith and experience as superstitious, and disliked those who were too intelligent or rational to have this sympathy or understanding. He had heard endless stories of apparitions from his childhood and they had had a great impact on his mind. Later when he came across, in the British Museum, the stories that the Irish writers of the eighteen forties and fifties had written, he was enraged more than pleased "because they turned the country traditions into a joke."³⁷ If the Irish writers had enraged him because they made fun of the "sacred" subject of ghosts and apparitions, an important part of his "unwritten tradition," he could not have been pleased by the stories of Tagore published as *The Hungry Stones and Other Stories* in 1916.

Tagore wrote his ghost stories with a suppressed smile of apparent disapproval. In the title story (1895) the narrator is an Indian with "no pretence to knowledge of science or the Vedas or Persian." In other words, he is a reformed Hindu, a modern sceptic. His theosophical companion, however, is all ears for any story of visions and apparitions. The story of the fantastic haunted house is told by a smart fellow-passenger on the train who seemed to know everything in the world, from current political developments to spiritualism, and is shown to be especially befriended by the Europeans. The theosophist is convinced from the story that the man "must have been supernaturally inspired by some strong 'magnetism' or 'occult power,' by an

³⁷ Yeats, "A General Introduction For My Work" (1937) in *E & I*, p. 53.

'astral body' or something of the kind." He even goes to the extent of secretly taking down notes of this conversation, and by the end of the journey is completely alienated from his sceptical friend. Another story in the same volume, "Dead or Alive," grimly depicts how faith in apparitions could lead to real tragedy. A tenderly loving woman in this sad story finally kills herself to prove that she was no apparition.

These "new" aspects of Tagore, his lectures on the Upanisadic abstractions in *Sadhana*, his mockery of theosophical ghosts in *The Hungry Stones*, gradually turned Yeats away from him, and from modern Hinduism. Yeats's adventures in Indian thought and literature thus came full circle with his association with Tagore. He had rejected Mohini Chatterjee's ideals of Vedantic renunciation quite early in life. Some of the world-affirming conception of mythological Hinduism that had reached him through Madame Blavatsky's Theosophical Society were suggestive and helpful, though the source was not authentic. In Tagore, for the first time, he had found one who was a poet like himself, and who, he supposed, had as his background the ancient tradition of India. But when he discovered that, as a modern Hindu, Tagore had rejected that part in the tradition which supported his own heroic ideals and spiritualistic interests, he went back to the unmodified traditional thought of India which he could now find for himself in authentic texts in translation. And soon after, when he began to formulate his private system of symbols in *A Vision*, it came to be coloured with the Yogic and Tāntric systems about which Tagore was silent.

Cultural Unity of India

by ASAF A. A. FYZEE

IT is often asserted that despite diversity in language, race, religion, creed, and mode of life, there is a fundamental unity of culture in India. For example, Rawlinson says: "And yet through all this apparent diversity there runs an underlying unity,"¹ and Humayun Kabir, "in spite of this derivation from many sources and the consequent variety of forms and types, we find a remarkable unity of spirit informing Indian culture throughout the ages."² Kabir has written other eloquent passages where his objective, historical and critical spirit has been influenced by a romantic glorification of India and its unity and spirit of toleration. If by Indian culture is meant "Hindu" culture, then statements such as those of the two scholars quoted are perfectly true. But if by Indian culture is meant the common factor of the culture of all the races, peoples and religions of India, then certainly the proposition is open to serious question.

By and large, Amaury de Riencourt in his *Soul of India*, takes a somewhat different view; he is more sober, less emotional. The apparent unity must not make us blind to differences in religion, in morals, in language, in food, in dress, in spirit, in modes of thought and even in daily social salutation.

¹ H. G. Rawlinson, *Cultural History of India* (London, 1937), p. 1.

² Humayun Kabir, *Heritage of India* (Asia Publishing House, 1955), p. 42.

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Perhaps it is nearer the truth to say:

(a) that there are times when the forces of unity were preponderant, such as the period of Akbar, or a decade prior to 1947, when the dominant aim of Indians was to drive out the foreigner and achieve independence.

(b) That there were times when the forces of disunity gained the upper hand, as in 1947-48, when thousands belonging to one community were slaughtered by those of the other and *vice versa*, and popular misconceptions, such as those graphically described by Saiyidain, prevailed: "A Muslim is a *mlechcha* who has always tried to propagate his blood-smeared religion with the sword and whose loyalty is suspect. A Hindu is first a stone-worshipping *kafir* with no vision of the divine or breadth of outlook. A Sikh is inflammable material incapable of cool and rational judgement and at conflict both with the Hindu and the Muslim. A Christian is only concerned with the conversion of the heathen and thus saving his hell-destined soul."³

(c) That at present there is *potential* but not actual unity in the country. Linguistic, religious and provincial jealousies have gained the upper hand.

(d) That the constant repetition of the slogan of the unity of Indian culture by quoting ancient scriptures and the "tolerance" of the Indians as a race is sheer self-deception, and should be abandoned on a nationwide scale.

(e) That real unity, on the basis of the love of one's country, namely patriotism and a true conception of tolerance, should be propagated. Hinduism (which permitted untouchability, allowed the notion of caste to grow and taught the non-egalitarian doctrine of *Karma*) and Islam (which asserts the brotherhood of man, but has broken itself up into Shia and Sunni, Shaikh and Syed, orthodox and heretic) are hardly good examples of the virtue of tolerance.

The unity of the future should be based on the following among other common ideals:

³ "The Role of the Intelligentsia in Emotional Integration" in *Gandhi Marg*, adapted from a paper contributed to a symposium held on September 20, 1961.

- (a) inculcating a love of the motherland;
- (b) strengthening the theory and practice of democracy;
- (c) creating a socialist welfare state (and the accompanying rapid industrialization);
- (d) evolving a better system of education;
- (e) learning the truth of other religions in order to respect and tolerate them; and
- (f) practising the brotherhood of man, irrespective of language, caste, creed or race.

Statements such as those of Rawlinson and Kabir are historically speaking not defensible and are liable to misguide us. A more scientific, realistic and critical view is therefore called for.

Before proceeding further, a few words are necessary to explain the terms "culture" and "civilization." They are often used vaguely and promiscuously, and it is therefore all the more necessary to understand and distinguish between them. Neither word is capable of precise definition; a number of authors have used the terms in different connotations and we must beware of school-boy definitions and class-room distinctions. T. S. Eliot says: "I have made no attempt in this essay to determine the frontier between the meanings of these two words; for I came to the conclusion that any such attempt could only produce an artificial distinction, peculiar to the book, which the reader would have difficulty in retaining; and which, after closing the book, he would abandon with a sense of relief."

The term "culture" is not synonymous with civilization, but it is better to use "civilization" for a special aspect of advanced cultures. "Culture" is akin to the word cultivating the soil, the cultivation of plants and animals, the cultivation of the spirit of man. But the sociologists use the term "culture" in a very wide sense. Tylor, in his *Primitive Culture* defines it as follows: "Culture . . . is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of Society." In this sense

T. S. Eliot, *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* (Faber, London 1948), p. 13.

"culture" is far wider than "civilization" and is objective; it does not indicate any higher or lower state of society; it is an entirely neutral term.

But in the philosophical sense it has another significance as well. Culture is an attribute of the spirit of man; it is humanity's effort to assert its inner and independent being. Human culture is a continuous movement towards a higher life. "Culture" in this sense is the creation of 19th century European thinkers and is to be equated to a large extent with "Civilization" as defined by Clive Bell. This meaning of "culture" the humanistic or philosophical one, need not detain us, for we are using the term in its wider, more neutral and objective sense which such authorities as Malinowski and Tylor have given it. It implies *the whole way of life of an individual, group or society*.

"Civilization" is the term derived from *cives*; citizens; and thus it refers to the rights and duties of a citizen. *Civitas* is the Latin word for society or a state, and "civil" means among other things, becoming or befitting a citizen, and therefore properly ordered; and not barbarous, but advanced; hence humane, gentle, kind, polite, courteous. "To civilize" means to bring out of a state of barbarism, to instruct in the arts of life, and thus to elevate in the scale of humanity.

Civilization thus means *an advanced state of human society*. The meaning of the term civilization has been extended considerably since Roman times, and a useful picture of civilization has been given to us by Clive Bell in his *Civilization: An Essay* (Chatto and Windus, London, 1928). For the purposes of this article we have agreed to accept Clive Bell's definition of the term Civilization.

To summarize, we may for our purposes say that "culture" is the wider, more ethnic term, embracing knowledge, belief, religion, morals, law, custom and, indeed, the whole of the inner and outer life of man. But "civilization" is the narrower and more specific term, to be restricted in its application to a *higher and more developed state of society*.

Will Durant says that "civilization is social order promoting cultural creation. Four elements constitute it: economic pro-

vision, political organization, moral tradition, and the pursuit of knowledge and the arts." ⁵

For our present purpose a more detailed discussion of these definitions and concepts is not necessary.

Culture is thus the way of life in the community, and in this sense Indian Culture, in common with other cultures, is and always has been, a composite one. Just as it is impossible to evolve a single world-culture, so also, for historical reasons there cannot be a *uniform* culture in India. In the first place we have many communities, many ways of life, many religions, many views of ultimate destiny in our country. To steam-roller them into one entity would be impossible even if it is considered desirable. In the words of Eliot: "For it must follow from what I have already pleaded about the value of local cultures, that a world culture which was simply a *uniform* culture would be no culture at all. We should have humanity dehumanized. It would be a nightmare." ⁶

In the second place our sensitivity to religion is highly developed. We may be Indians, some of us, but *every one* is either a Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, Muslim, Parsi, Christian, Sikh or simply non-descript. And *it is a mistake to think that all religions are one*, or even that their aims are one. Such an over-simplification leads to a mischievous sense of self-deception, a complacency which is utterly unjustifiable. "Ultimately antagonistic religions must mean antagonistic cultures and ultimately, religions cannot be reconciled." ⁷ All that can be done is for these divergent beliefs to settle down with one another in peaceful co-existence.

The first difficulty is between Hinduism and Islam; the one is a mystical, the other a prophetic religion; the one emphasizes contemplation, self-improvement, spiritual enlightenment leading to mergence with the deity; the other teaches service and love and brotherhood, and asks man to forget himself in the service of men, which really is service to God. But God and man are separate, discrete entities, and the two cannot become one. Man is man, created by God, God's slave, and God is the Creator, the Almighty, the One, Who is merciful to man. The basic

⁵ Will Durant, *Story of Civilization* (New York, 1935), Commencement.

⁶ T. S. Eliot, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

⁷ T. S. Eliot, *loc. cit.*

attitudes of mysticism and the prophetic religion have been tersely summarized by Radhakrishnan: "Mysticism is passive, quietist, resigned and contemplative; the prophetic religion is active, challenging, desiring, ethical."⁸ The main dichotomy in India is between Hindu and Muslim; but there are other off-shoots as well, Zoroastrianism, Christianity, Judaism, Sikhism and Jainism. These religions produce divergent kinds of culture and therefore to forge a cultural unity in India is a task of considerable difficulty and complexity.

The elements of a common culture among the masses can be described generally by dividing them into three:

- (a) Ancient;
- (b) Medieval;
- (c) Modern.

In the ancient Indian culture, as described by philosophers like Radhakrishnan, historians like Rawlinson, and critics like Amaury de Riencourt, there are a number of elements which have great relevance in the modern world. The recognition of a Supreme Being, *brahman*; the deathless character of the human soul, *atman*; the doctrine of *karma*; and the gradual evolution of the caste system—these exist in one shape or form to this day, and are responsible for the strength and the weakness of Indian society.

Muslims (45 millions out of 450, 1/10th of the population) on the other hand believe in the concept of absolute monotheism, without anthropomorphism; give the greatest importance to the service of humanity and proclaim that "all men are brothers" (*Koran*). Later, during Moghul times, Islamic culture was responsible for the progress of science and art in the country. The ancient Indian and medieval Islamic elements are alive and vital in the India of today, and shape the lives of the village folk in the country to a large extent.

The third and the last factor is Western and modern. The Western influence came with the British conquest of India, and even after their departure the legacy of the English language

⁸ Amaury de Riencourt, *The Soul of India* (London, 1961), p. 120, quoting Radhakrishnan's *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 666.

has opened to us a wide window on the world. The English language, British notions of justice and democracy, Western science, including nuclear physics and outer space travel are some of the valuable forms in which Western influence permeates Indian life. Urban life is far more influenced by modern science than the life of the villages. But the barriers are being broken down at a rapid rate, and electricity and family planning and housing and visual education will touch the life of the villager, taking him out of the cow-dung age and bring him nearer to the modern, atomic age.

None of these three elements, ancient, medieval or modern, can be given up by Indian society without grievous loss. A happy blend of them will produce the culture of the future, and an undue insistence on uniformity or harking back to the past, like the familiar cry of *Ram-raj*, or the strident call from the minarets—"Back to the Koran"—is likely to produce more difficulties than sound solutions. It may however be confidently asserted that there can be no mathematical proportions fixed for each component, and there is every likelihood of the Western element increasing and strengthening its hold in the future in the public sphere.

To take familiar examples of each of the three elements, the magnificent descriptions of the Supreme Being in the *Upanishads* and the beautiful tales of the national epics, *The Ramayana* and *The Mahabharata* should mould our character and shape our dreams. This is a value, which, within its own proper limits, and without undue glorification, cannot be given up. Similarly, some of the exquisite virtues of Islamic culture—the Muslims' sense of courtesy; their hospitality; their love of architecture and music and calligraphy and the things of beauty, in a variety of forms—how can India afford to cut itself off from these harbingers of joy and a civilized way of life? And finally, it is hardly necessary to stress the importance of science and its predominant voice in national evolution. For me a scientific conception of *law* and *society*, even more than the mere use of science for the utilitarian service of man, is the true spirit of the age, the *zeitgeist*, which India must try to understand from its greatest masters—Schweitzer, Bertrand Russell, Einstein, Dewey, William James, Croce, Maritain. The English law speaks of the "Reason-

able Man"—a myth which (despite A. P. Herbert) is truer than fact! And so it is permissible to say that the *Perfect Indian* will possess a true conception of the "Eternal Reality," as reflected in his own ethical life and social behaviour, an aesthetic perception making him an example of manners and taste and sensitiveness to things of beauty; and a mind capable of rational thought, a spirit of humility and an unquenchable thirst for deeper and better knowledge. In other words, he must be steeped in the Socratic prayer—"Give me beauty in the inward soul, and may the outward and inward man be at one." (*Phaedrus*, p. 279.)

We are now in a position to carry the argument one step further. India is declared to be a "secular" state. If by a secular state is meant a "state without a state religion," India is a secular state. But in reality every religion is equally protected; both Hindu and Islamic laws are recognized by the Constitution, and the Christian rule of monogamy is an ideal towards which all modern marital laws are converging. Thus India may more accurately be described as "a multireligious state without a state religion, guided by the ideals of a secular state." For it may be remembered that "the secular state" is by no means a magic formula which does away with the angularities of the *Sanatana Dharma*, Indian Islam and the Akali Dal, and brings about "peace on earth and goodwill among men."

The conflict between the Islamic way of life and the Hindu view of life has often been the subject of discussion. One of the best summaries of the problem is to be found in *The Soul of India* by Amaury de Riencourt, when he describes the extraordinary genius of Alberuni.

"One of the most remarkable episodes of this time was the journey and long sojourn in India of one of Islam's greatest intellects, Alberuni, for ever known as the Master. A philosopher, mathematician and astronomer of great repute, he came originally from Khwarizm (Khiva, in modern Turkestan) and accompanied Mahmud of Ghazni down into the Punjab. Having settled there, he proceeded to make a thorough study of Sanskrit and of Hindu literature, and has left us a penetrating description of India in his famous work *Tahkik-i-Hind* (An Enquiry into India). In this brilliant and yet scholarly study of India in the

eleventh century, we have a mine of information about the country and its people on the eve of the great Muslim invasions. Gripped by an irresistible impulse to discover truth for its own sake, Alberuni was not content with merely describing India as he found it, but philosophized at great length about India's relations with the powers of the Middle East throughout the ages.

"What appears to have struck Alberuni most forcibly is the extreme xenophobia of the Hindus, their exclusiveness and hatred for all *mlechchas*, all 'barbarians.' In some penetrating passages, he attributes this hostility (never mentioned by his predecessors: Greeks in the last centuries B.C. and Chinese in the early centuries A.D.) to the bitter rivalry between Mahayana Buddhism and Zoroastrianism in North-West India. In his eloquent pages, one can feel the hostile clash between two alien societies, between an ageing Hindu Buddhist Civilization and a young Middle Eastern Culture; and he goes on to say that the advent of Islam only intensified this hostility. The inroads of the Arabs, four centuries before his time, are blamed for a good deal of this feeling, especially the raids of Muhammad bin Kasim, who conquered Sind in the eighth century A.D. Yet it is clear that for centuries afterwards the Hindus did not trouble themselves overmuch about events taking place west of the Hakra river, historical boundary between Sind and Hind. For all practical purposes, the area occupied by the Arabs remained unholy ground to the Hindus, and India proper went on living unconcerned. It is only in the days of Mahmud of Ghazni and Alberuni himself that this Hindu hostility began to acquire the pitch of virulence he ascribes to it.

"Alberuni's work has been described as a magic island of quiet impartial research in the midst of a world of clashing swords, burning towns, and plundered temples; it is certainly that, and much more besides. Quite apart from its immense scholarship and scientific erudition, it is a masterpiece of psychological analysis and a precious clue to the enduring characteristics of the Indian soul. Among many other things, Alberuni singled out the Hindus' pride in their civilization and contempt for all things alien to Hinduism, their reluctance to communicate their culture and knowledge to foreigners; he marvelled at their

religious tolerance and lack of theological disputations among *pandits*, and referred with a certain contempt to their unwillingness to stake their lives for their ideals. And time and again, he describes their fanatical hostility towards all *mlechchas*. His description of the caste system as it was in operation at the time is masterly and proves conclusively that it had already reached the stage of absolute rigidity for which it became known centuries later.”*

In conclusion it may be stated that the secret of unity in future seems to be the recognition of diversity of thought in all aspects of life and particularly in matters concerning religion and the problem of ultimate destiny. Recognition of diversity will breed tolerance, and tolerance implies: (a) holding strong convictions of one's own, (b) understanding the faith of others and (c) realizing the possibility of truth having numerous facets, visible to different individuals in different forms.

In practice it is desirable to inculcate first of all, patriotism, by every means possible. For instance, in schools the beauty of our country in its splendid variety of flora and fauna, of people and scenery, of dress and forms of life, should be shown to the students who must gradually learn to love the variegated forms of nature, and of life and culture. Secondly, to strengthen democracy, complete freedom of action in the political sphere should be allowed even within the same family. And every form of political thought must be allowed full freedom of expression. Thirdly, the utmost possible freedom should be allowed in the matter of language. There are people in India whose real mother tongue is English. English is the mother tongue of the Anglo-Indians, and several Parsi and Jewish and Christian families have only one language, which happens to be English. They too are Indians and it is monstrous to look down upon them as de-Indianized. Similarly the Muslims, by and large, use some form of Urdu as the language of communication, and because of this should they be considered pseudo-Pakistanis? Fourthly, we must all bend our energies to creating a welfare state; and in the joy of creation, there will be a unity of action and ideals which will weld the nation into one indivisible entity. Fifthly, we must

* Amaury de Riencourt, *op. cit.*, p. 165 *seq.*

proclaim the brotherhood of man in no uncertain terms, and fight untouchability and caste as two of the greatest enemies of the nation. Silly prejudices regarding intercommunal and inter-religious marriages must give way to a rational and modern outlook. And lastly, we must learn to respect and understand the opinions of others in all matters, and even in problems of ultimate destiny. Why is it necessary to repeat *ad nauseam* that all religions are one, and lead to the same goal? The great religions of the world are not one; their means are not identical; their ends are not the same—and why should human beings think alike on questions relating to the ultimate reality? In the words of Hafiz: "Nobody has ever solved, and nobody ever will solve—the eternal riddle." It is quite unnecessary to hug the illusion that all religions are the same and teach the identical doctrine. This is all the more necessary when Russia has made godlessness so fashionable, and when some of the greatest thinkers of the day like Bertrand Russell are either agnostics or deny the validity of religion.

Two great religions are bound to influence each other when they come into close contact: such is the case of Hinduism and Islam in their mutual relationship. Nanak and Kabir, the Sufis and the Shaivites and the Bhaktas, the Khojas and Memons and Meos and Girasias, and many more instances of the mutual influence of culture should not deceive us. Such influences began during Moghul times. They are a good beginning for the mergence of the ways of life, and newer patterns of thought and culture will result from them. But in India this has not constituted real unity. Real unity comes not so much from identity of thought and mergence of cultures as from the humane and civilized *recognition of difference of outlook*. It is an attitude typified by Voltaire and Bertrand Russell. This fact has been completely missed by our thinkers and historians who have not been able to explain the terrible tragedies of the partition, and the spirit of casteism, linguism and provincialism which followed the creation of Pakistan. We are not fighting with Pakistan; we are not fighting Islam and the Muslims; we are quarrelling amongst ourselves. And this is not the fault of Jinnah, nor the fault of our British rulers whose policy of *divide et impera* was well known to us. This basic fact has to be recognized and cor-

rected. This is due to lack of real tolerance, the tolerance of views entirely different from our own.

India can learn a great deal from three remarkable illustrations of cultural unity in the modern world—Switzerland, England and the United States of America. Switzerland is an instance of two Latin cultures, Italian and French, commingling with a Teutonic way of life, German, and settling down to an orderly constitution, working for peace and neutrality in politics, and prosperity and thrift in industry. There are three languages, three ways of life, each distinct—and yet united. England is an illustration of Norman, Anglo-Saxon, Danish and Celtic elements which have come to constitute a liberal and progressive democracy. The United States is an instance of the common blending for social welfare of all the European races and cultures with Negro and native elements, and a variety of faiths such as Christian (Protestant and Catholic), Jew and now also Bahai, in addition to numerous smaller denominations.

Neither religion, nor race, nor language need be a permanent barrier. But we must discover that secret cement, that specific amalgam, which has yet to be found. And this can only be some form of practical vision connected with patriotism. Exclusive loyalty to the Ancient Culture of India and the Spiritual Heritage of Bharat Varsha must be steadily and firmly given up; for, "The opinions that are held with passion are always those for which no good ground exists; indeed the passion is the measure of the holder's lack of rational conviction" (Bertrand Russell).¹⁰

¹⁰ *The Basic Writings of Bertrand Russell*, ed. R. E. Egner and L. E. Dennon (London, 1961), p. 16.

Non-Violence, War and Peace

by RAJ KRISHNA

An Abstract Prelude

To begin with, I should like to examine the doctrine of non-violence in the light of a general theoretical formulation of the moral problem.

Modernity has added little to the repertory of the primary value-concepts evolved by the religious-ethical traditions of all the great civilizations of the world: the concepts of truth and beauty, freedom and justice, equality, charity and humility, self-control, selflessness and mutual cooperation, non-greed and non-violence.

The moral problem is not the problem of discovering new value concepts. It is the problem of translating the old, perennial value-concepts, to which individuals and societies are committed, into concrete, individual and social choices in unique, real-life situations. It is the problem of the *application* of familiar concepts to ever-new circumstances.

Moral action involves two distinct tasks: (1) the task of choosing the morally best, or the least evil, course of action out of all the feasible courses of action; and (2) the task of following the chosen course inspite of inner, psychological and outer, physical and social obstacles.

The second task requires a strong will, the cultivation of which is the function of moral education. This is an important sub-

ject. But here we have to concentrate on the prior intellectual problem of *choosing* the "good" course of action. Religious and moral teachers lay great stress on realizing the "good" assuming that the "good" is known. But the problem of knowing the "good" *in given situations* must receive first attention.

If the feasible choices in a given situation could be easily and unambiguously classified as "good" and "evil," moral choice would be easy. But they cannot be so classified. The basic difficulty is that each of the available alternatives furthers the realization of some values, but only at the expense of some other values. There is conflict, not between "good" and "evil" but between different "goods."

This point can be best understood with a quantitative illustration. Suppose there are two courses of action, C' and C'' and we are pursuing three values, V' , V'' , and V''' . Alternative C' conforms to the realization of values V' and V'' but at the expense of V''' . Alternative C'' realizes value V''' but negatives values V' and V'' .

$$\begin{aligned} C' &\longrightarrow +V' + V'' - V''' \\ C'' &\longrightarrow -V' - V'' + V''' \end{aligned}$$

If all the values are equally valuable, i.e. each carries, so to speak, a weight of 1, so that $V' = V'' = V''' = 1$, then we should clearly prefer choice C' to C'' . For, $C' = 1$, and $C'' = -1$. A greater sumtotal of "good" is realized by C' in terms of values V' and V'' than is lost in V''' . Course C'' involves a net balance of evil, for the loss of values V' and V'' is greater than the good in V''' .

In this example, one alternative realizes a net balance of good, and the other a net balance of evil. But in other cases, all alternatives may realize a net balance of good, but the good realized by some alternatives may be greater than the good realized by others, and we could choose the "best" alternative that realizes the maximum good. Or, all alternatives may realize a net balance of evil, but the evil realized by some alternatives may be less than the evil realized by others, and we would choose the alternative that realizes the minimum evil.

This formulation of the problem of moral choice brings out several aspects of it with great clarity. Firstly, we see that the problem arises because we pursue, not one value but several

values; and every alternative involves the realization of some values and the sacrifice of some others. The values, the "good," themselves are in conflict.

Secondly, we see that the net balance of good or evil realized by any choice can be known only if we know how much of each individual value is likely to be realized or sacrificed by this choice. The consequences of each choice have to be anticipated as correctly as possible. Here the scientific, empirical knowledge of probable causal sequences is required.

Thirdly, we see that if different individuals or societies assign different weights to the same set of values, they will differ in their moral choices. For instance, in the quantitative example above, if for Mr or Society X, all the three values are equally important ($V' = V'' = V''' = 1$) but for Mr or Society Y, V''' is thrice as important as V' and V'' ($V''' = 3$; $V' = V'' = 1$), then X would prefer $C' (= 1)$ to $C'' (= -1)$, but Y would prefer $C'' (= 1)$ to $C' (= -1)$.

Conflicts between the moral judgements of individuals and societies, even regarding choices in the same situation, may arise either because they differ in their knowledge of alternatives, or in their anticipations of the consequences of different alternatives, or in their valuation of different values. Differences in the knowledge of alternatives and their consequences can be narrowed. But differences due to the divergent valuations of different values are fundamental. They create the most serious conflicts of moral judgement.

Non-Violence and Moral Choice

Let us now reflect on the value of non-violence in the light of the above formulation of the problem of moral choice.

First of all, we must recognize that non-violence is one and only one of the values which our moral heritage enjoins us to pursue. If non-violence were the only value we had to pursue choices would be easy. But it is one among many. Even so, if the pursuit of the value of non-violence did not involve the sacrifice of any other equally, or more, important values, there would be no problem. But in many concrete situations, the pursuit of the value of non-violence *does* involve the sacrifice of other equally

and more important value. Therefore, unless one is a moral monist, i.e. one who attaches an infinite weight to one value and negligible weights to all other values, one cannot hold that the non-violent course is, in all circumstances, the best course.

Many of the celebrated moral leaders of mankind have been moral monists. They gave a preponderant emphasis, in their precepts and practice, to one or a few values. They provided inspiring demonstrations of how far the pursuit of these few values might be carried. But these demonstrations also involved, invariably, a serious neglect of other important values.

That is why, even with the knowledge of all the examples of moral choice which history and biography provide, the moral dilemma of every new generation of men—the problem of the relative valuation of many different values—remains as acute as ever. In our time, since science has created unprecedented possibilities of realizing good and evil, and brought into intimate contact all the peoples and cultures of the world with very dissimilar value-systems, moral conflicts have become more complex than ever before. In this situation, moral monism of any kind is bound to be disastrous.

Once we realize the complexity of moral choice in contemporary conditions, and give up moral monism, the proper question to ask is not whether we are for non-violence or violence, but whether, in a concrete context, the good realized through non-violence is greater or less than the evil involved in the accompanying loss of other equally important values; or, whether the evil of violence in a given situation is greater or less than the good it may preserve or promote.

Our commitment to non-violence ceases, then, to be unconditional. It becomes conditional. The distinction made here between unconditional and conditional commitment is different from the old distinction, which used to be made in the struggle for independence, between non-violence as a *creed* and non-violence as a *policy*. Our commitment to non-violence is conditional not because of some considerations of expediency but because of the basic reason that we are simultaneously committed to the realization of other values. Our commitment to any single value is necessarily conditioned by our commitment to other values as well.

The theory of non-violence should, therefore, be an inquiry into the conditions under which the course of non-violent satyagraha realizes more good than evil, and the conditions under which the minimum necessary violence does so. What are the principles, if any, which can enable us to choose satyagraha or violent conflict as the morally best course in given circumstances?

Conditions in which Violence may be Justified

It is very instructive to re-examine Gandhiji's writings in search of an answer to this question. Gandhiji was fully aware of the complexity of moral choice:

"It would be smooth sailing if one could determine the course of one's actions *only by one general principle*. . . . But I cannot recall a single act which could be so easily determined."¹

More than one general moral principle may be relevant to any particular choice; and these principles may be in conflict.

As we all know, Gandhiji explicitly upheld the moral legitimacy of violence under certain conditions. Since he had a deep faith in the efficacy of non-violence, he regarded the conditions in which violence would be permissible as *exceptional*. The question whether these conditions occur rarely or frequently can only be answered on the basis of historical experience. But we should first formulate these conditions as clearly as possible. I propose to show that three general conditions justifying violence can be derived from the specific "exceptional" cases in which Gandhiji himself sanctioned violence.

The Sacrifice of Other Values

In the first place, violence is admissible—and this condition is a clear reflection of the plurality and discordance of moral values discussed above—if non-violence would cause the sacrifice of some other values of great worth. As the following passages show, Gandhiji himself would permit violence if the honour of women,

¹ N. K. Bose, *Selections from Gandhi*, p. 168. Emphasis added.

or the freedom and honour of a nation, or the overall strength and growth of a race, or the survival of democracy was at stake:

"I have not hesitated . . . to tell the Hindus that if they do not believe in out-and-out ahimsa and cannot practise it, they will be guilty of a crime against their religion and humanity if they failed to defend by the force of arms the honour of their women against any kidnapper."² "I would rather have India resort to arms in order to defend her honour than that she should, in a cowardly manner, become or remain a helpless witness to her own dishonour."

"I would risk violence a thousand times than the emasculation of a whole race."

"Strange as it may appear, my sympathies are wholly with the Allies. Willy-nilly this war is resolving itself into one between such democracy as the West has evolved and totalitarianism as it is typified in Herr Hitler."³

It is clear that even Gandhiji's commitment to non-violence was not unconditional. It was conditioned by his simultaneous commitment to other great values. In the cases cited he clearly reckoned the evil involved in the sacrifice of these other values to be greater than the good realized through non-violence, and therefore accepted the need to abandon non-violence. Implicitly, he recognized that adherence to an unqualified, monistic doctrine of non-violence, which regarded it as a universal panacea in all situations, could result in a great net balance of evil.

The Preparedness of Satyagrahis

It is true that, in his view, the practice of absolutely *pure* non-violence by ideal satyagrahis, on an adequate scale, would *always* be the morally best course. But he realized that if a sufficient number of people were not ready and could not be persuaded to believe in and practise true satyagraha, violent struggles for

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 155, 156, 170.

just causes would be justified. This is the second general condition which legitimizes violence. It is implicit in the following passages:

"My faith in non-violence . . . is as firm as ever. But I realize that India today as a whole has not that faith and belief and the government in free India would be formed from the various elements composing the nation." "If there was a national government, whilst I should not take any direct part in any war, I can conceive occasions when it would be my duty to vote for the military training of those who wish to take it. For I know that all its members do not believe in non-violence to the extent I do."⁴

The Convertibility Condition

While the second condition relates to the preparedness of the victims of injustice for satyagraha, the third relates to what may be called the "convertibility" of the oppressor. If there is little prospect of the conversion of the oppressor to the course of justice through satyagraha, the victims must defend themselves violently. This is by far the most important condition limiting the applicability of non-violence. For the heart of the doctrine of non-violence is *the principle of universal convertibility*—the belief that all evil-doers, anywhere and in all circumstances, can be persuaded to give up their evil course if their victims practise satyagraha.

This belief requires careful scrutiny. Gandhiji, while adhering to this belief in principle, recognized, in practice, the existence of differences in the degree of convertibility of different oppressors, and was ready to adjust his policy in the light of this recognition.

Comparing the British and the Japanese he wrote to the latter:

"the hope of your response to my appeal is much fainter than that of response from Britain. . . . the British are not devoid of a sense of justice. . . . All I have read tells me that you listen

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 174, 169.

to no appeal but to the sword. How I wish that you are cruelly misrepresented and that I shall touch the right chord in your heart." ⁵

And, drawing the logical conclusions from this comparison of the prospects of converting the British and the Japanese, he declared:

"what ~~may~~ be enough to affect the old occupant would be wholly different from what would be required to keep off the invader. Thus we can disown the authority of the British rulers by refusing taxes and in a variety of ways. These would be wholly inapplicable to withstand the Japanese onslaught. Therefore whilst we may be ready to face the Japanese we may not ask the Britishers to give up their position of vantage merely on the *unwarranted supposition that we would succeed by merely non-violent effort in keeping off the Japanese.*" "To make it perfectly clear that we want to prevent in every way Japanese aggression, I would personally agree, and I am sure the government of free India would agree, that *the Allied Powers might, under treaty with us, keep their armed force in India and use the country as a base for operations against the threatened Japanese attack.*" ⁶

The principle of universal convertibility is clearly discarded here. It is admitted that where the convertibility of the aggressor through non-violent methods is doubtful military defence is inescapable.

As soon as the assumption of universal convertibility is given up, whether a non-violent or a violent struggle is required against injustice becomes a matter to be decided on the merits of every case.

Convertibility—Philosophy and Facts

In spite of all the sacrifices of all the saints of history, aggressors and oppressors continue to appear with a sickening constancy.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 175-7. Italics added.

If anything, the frequency and enormity of aggression and oppression have been increasing over time. And there is no evidence that the aggressors and oppressors of today are in general more "convertible" than their predecessors.

Let us recall some cases of aggression and oppression in our own lifetime in which it seemed that a non-violent struggle would be of no avail. No satyagraha could convert Jinnah, Hitler, or the Japanese, or the Pakistani raiders in Kashmir or the Razakars of Hyderabad or the Portuguese in Goa, or the South African racialists, or Stalin who seized country after country in Eastern Europe after the Second World War and wanted to seize Berlin, or the Chinese Communists who invaded South Korea in 1950, and aggressively occupied Tibet and thousands of miles of Indian territory. Against one or a few cases in which satyagraha could effect some conversion, we have these numerous cases in which the tide of tyranny could not be stemmed by anything except violence in defence of justice. The Allied forces alone could stop Hitler, Tojo, Stalin and Mao in Europe and the Far East. The Indian army, alone could defeat the forces of chaos, oppression and aggression in Hyderabad, Goa and Kashmir, and will have to do so in the Himalayas.

A doctrine which has no effective and timely solutions to offer for the recurrent situations created by large-scale tyranny and aggression cannot be regarded as a panacea. It is not helpful to argue that a satyagraha of the required quality and scale could meet all these situations. For, in the first place, it is not clear that such a satyagraha could always be organized. Pacifists and the followers of Mahatma Gandhi, who do speak and write as if satyagraha could meet all situations, have not organized a single successful satyagraha to meet any of the postwar crises. They have only been creating an atmosphere of guilt around every effort to deal with aggression through organized military activity, without offering any adequate alternative to it. Most of their campaigns against armament and war are concentrated in the territories of the defenders where they are free to campaign. They are never directed, in equal measure, against the aggressors in the territories under their control. Thus they damage the defence efforts of the victims of injustice, without impairing in the least the plans and preparations of the aggressors. In effect,

they only help tyrants and aggressors—a strange anti-climax for Gandhism. It is no accident that Stalinists, and Maoists have actively supported “peace” movements in all non-Communist countries.

Gandhiji tried to conduct a non-violent battle against the injustice of British rule in India. For conducting non-violent battles against more massive tyrannies and aggressions men much greater than Gandhiji would presumably be required. They are certainly not in sight. All that we see are morally confused utopians unwittingly helping the oppressors, and demoralizing the victims of oppression, in the name of Gandhism, without fighting any battle at all.

The Condition for Conversion

We must now try to formulate the condition under which conversion of the oppressor through satyagraha is most likely. It seems that conversion is likely whenever the adversaries in a combat—one of them being the agent and the other the victim of injustice—share the same value-complex and speak the same moral language. If the moral orientation of the two is the same, then the perpetration of injustice may only be a lapse, a temporary failure of the moral will of the oppressor. And non-violent action on the part of the victim may revive the moral sensibility of the oppressor. He may see error, and reverse his course. But if the moral systems of the two parties in a conflict are very divergent the chance of a non-violent conversion of the oppressor, or even a sincere non-violent dialogue between the two, is usually very small. And a violent encounter becomes an unavoidable prelude to a dialogue.

The victory of Gandhian non-violent resistance against British imperialism in India, which is rightly cited as proof of the power of such resistance, must be attributed—apart from the dynamics of the political events leading up to it—to the fact that the crucial condition required for the success of such resistance was satisfied. We and the British shared the same norm of ethical judgement, and spoke the same ethical language. And so we succeeded in persuading the British that the course of imperialist rule was evil. Gracefully, they changed their policy and withdrew

their authority from India. Their withdrawal was as much a victory for them as for us.

But it is foolish and potentially suicidal to rush, from our unique experience, to the sweeping generalization that *any* people *anywhere* can similarly convert *any* unjust adversary. Where the contestants in a dispute do not share the same conscience, non-violence on the part of the oppressed may only lead to the indefinite prolongation and aggravation of their misery or to their glorious suicide. In the numerous cases cited above, the victims could hardly have fared better with non-violence. To recall a few examples again, it would be cruel to think that the 6 million Jews scientifically exterminated by Hitler or the millions condemned to forced labour camps by Stalin would have escaped their fate by offering satyagraha. And we cannot forget that Gandhiji could not persuade Jinnah at all. It is, in fact, arguable that the violence that followed the partition of India was not less than what might have occurred if the Congress leadership had threatened a civil war rather than appease Jinnah by agreeing to the partition of the country; and perhaps the other consequences of a refusal to partition the country would also not have been much worse than the consequences of partition. In order to avoid being misunderstood I may state that my theoretical argument has no implication whatever that the partition should now be undone.

The impossibility or the failure of non-violent persuasion in all such cases is best explained by the utter divergence of the moral systems of the parties involved.

The struggle of the negro in America may turn out to be an instructive, difficult case. The ethics of the whites and the negroes are identical. And yet the negro has been denied justice for centuries. The long-drawn legal struggle and even some satyagraha did not "convert" the whites. Recently the direct non-violent struggle has been greatly intensified. It remains to be seen whether it would suffice to create the conditions for a real dialogue with, and a real conversion of, the whites.⁷

In general, most of the disputes within an orderly society are non-violently settled because the disputants share the same ethics. But this process of peaceful settlement works because it is constrained by the readiness of the state to use violence in difficult cases.

NON-VIOLENCE, WAR AND PEACE

The notion that *all* oppressors cannot be induced to abandon oppression through peaceful protest was always recognized in the mainstream of the Indian tradition. The concept of the *ātatāyī* acknowledges the unfortunate existence of persons who are beyond persuasion and even beyond satiation with limited appeasement. Their identification with tyranny is such that they cannot be made to see the evil of their ways by any peaceful method.

A frightful new aspect of 20th century tyranny is that the tyrants have perverted the moral language itself. In the totalitarian imperialist ideologies of this century moral concepts have been abused to describe the opposite of what they have been traditionally supposed to describe. The word freedom has been abused to describe a state of servitude; democracy to denote a single party dictatorship; truth, to denote the current party line; justice, the condemnation of political opponents to concentration camps; and peace a worldwide violent revolution. Thus the alienation of the moral vocabularies of different peoples and movements has increased; and the task of peaceful persuasion and conversion has become more difficult than ever before.

Righteous War

Whenever and wherever the conditions required for the success of peaceful conversion do not obtain, defensive violence has to be organized. And this violence must be regarded as *just*. The old concept of the righteous battle, or *dharmayuddha*, must remain a central concept of political ethics.

The concept seems to have faded out in India partly because it can be and has been abused; but mainly because many people misinterpreted the doctrine of non-violence to imply that all violent conflict is *equally* bad regardless of the relative justice of the cases of the contestants. But it is necessary to resurrect the obvious truth that the two parties of a conflict cannot be *equally* condemned merely because they may both be engaged in violence. For the use of violence cannot be the sole criterion for judging the moral merit of the combatants' behaviour. The other moral dimensions of the case of each party must be evaluated before an overall judgement is made.

Gandhiji clearly emphasized the need to distinguish between the aggressor and the defender, and to give moral support to the defender, *even though both may be engaged in a violent conflict*:

"I believe all war to be wholly wrong. But if we scrutinize the motives of two warring parties, we may find one to be in the right and the other in the wrong. . . . For instance, if A wishes to seize B's country, B is obviously the wronged one. *Both fight with arms. I do not believe in violent warfare, but all the same B whose cause is just deserves my moral help and blessings.*"

"While all violence is bad and must be condemned in the abstract, it is permissible for, *it is even the duty of, a believer in ahimsa to distinguish between the aggressor and the defender.* Having done so, he will side with the defender in a non-violent manner. . . ." ⁸

In spite of this injunction, there are many followers of Mahatma Gandhi who condemn the participants in *any* conflict in *equal* measure simply because they are all committing or preparing to commit violence, without taking the trouble to examine the merits of the conflict in detail, and to distinguish between the aggressors and the defenders. This attitude reflects intellectual and moral sloth. It is the easy and cheap road to a feeling of immediate self-righteousness and superiority over the combatants. It is a neat escape from the human obligation to share the moral dilemmas and the moral anguish of the people engaged in conflict.

Even in the case of ordinary disputes which come before the courts, it is crucial to determine whether the violence of a person or a group was defensive or offensive. Offensive and defensive acts of violence are never equated. If the violence of the raider and the defender were equated, if the violence of the robber and the robbed were equated, society would end up in anarchy.⁹

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 171. Italics added.

⁹ Strictly speaking, three types of violence should be distinguished: aggressive, defensive and juridical. An example of the last kind is the violence of the police when it intervenes in a conflict, either to aid the victim, or just to restore peace, before the oppressor and the victim are identified by the legal process. Another example will be the violence of the United Nations forces intervening in an international conflict.

For the victims of every offensive act of violence trying to defend themselves violently would be considered *as* guilty and punishable as the perpetrators of the act. They (the victims) would thus suffer twice, first at the hands of the oppressors and then at the hands of "justice." The oppressors on the other hand would lose very little if during and after the oppression they were to be treated by society on a par with their victims.

Similarly, if the violence of Hitler, Stalin, Tojo and Mao, and the violence of the English, the French, the Polish, the Americans and the Indians were equated, there would be international anarchy. But thanks to the moral intuitions of a majority of humanity, an equation of all violence is consistently avoided. The violence of the Algerians and the French is never equated. The violence of Khrushchev and the Hungarian rebels is never equated. The violence of Communist Chinese forces and the U.N. or Indian forces is never equated. The violence of the Whites and the Negroes in America is never equated.

In this connection, it is necessary to point out that insofar as the doctrine of non-alignment has encouraged the indiscriminate condemnation of both sides in every cold war issue it has been palpably immoral. An escapist, self-righteous, moral neutralism is incompatible with the tenets of Gandhism.

We have to learn always to apply several tests—and not the sole of the use or non-use of violence—in order to come to a moral judgement about any conflict. We have to learn to identify and support the relatively just or righteous violence and oppose the relatively unjust or oppressive violence in all cases where non-violence ceases to be a feasible choice.

The Indian tradition has always been permeated with a wise moral pluralism. It not only recognized the multiplicity and the intrinsic disharmony of values but also the fact that moral precepts had to be applied differentially in different kinds of situations, and in the case of different personality types. What is moral meat in one situation (and for men of one type) may be moral poison in another situation (and for men of another type). And a variety of policy instruments might have to be used, in different combinations, to increase the sumtotal of realized "dharma" in different conditions. Moral monism is unIndian.

Righteous Cold War

The concept of the righteous war can and must be logically extended to cover the righteous cold war. Like war, the cold war, as a generalized concept, represents a recurrent human situation. Essentially, it is a conflict between two nations or groups of nations unfolding itself at the cultural, diplomatic and intellectual (or ideological) levels but not yet at the military level, although an arms race may be an important part of it. The dominant objective of diplomacy as well as armament in a state of cold war is to match or "balance" the actual or potential power of the adversary.

A cold war, involving a balance-of-power diplomacy and an arms race, has been anathema for Indian foreign policy thinking. But some bitter truths about this phenomenon have to be recognized. Firstly, we have to realize that a nation may not *choose* to be in a cold war and yet find itself forced into it. The behaviour of some other nation (or nations) may compel it to enter a cold war with it (them) in legitimate defence of its values and interests. Therefore no adverse value judgement applies to the mere fact of a nation being in a state of cold war with another nation. For this value judgement rests on two assumptions: (1) that it is always possible for a nation not to be in a state of cold war if it so chooses, and (2) that the evil of the cold war as such is a *priori* and always greater than the evil of jeopardizing other values and vital interests in case a cold war is not joined. These assumptions are not always true.

Secondly, nations who have condemned cold wars, arms races and balance-of-power policies, in which other nations have been engaged, have themselves been engaged in all these when and where *their* interests have been directly threatened. The so-called non-aligned nations have been condemning the cold war between the Western democratic nations and the Communist bloc but they have at the same time been engaged in small-scale but extremely acrimonious cold wars with nations whose policies have damaged their interests. Thus, India has been engaged in a cold war, a balance-of-power diplo-

macy and an arms race with Pakistan ever since the partition of the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent. The exchanges between India and Pakistan can any day be compared with the exchanges between the two great power blocs. Each of the two countries has been trying to win the sympathy of the largest possible number of nations on its side to match the support the other side has been able to enlist: in other words each side has been practising a balance-of-power diplomacy, with more or less competence. And each country has been trying to match its military power with the actual and potential military power of the adversary. In other words both countries have been involved in an arms race. It is true that the arms race between them is a small, non-nuclear arms race. But for the purpose of a moral argument and a moral judgement it has nonetheless been an arms race. India is also engaged, right now, in a full cold war with Communist China. Egypt, another non-aligned country, has been conducting a full cold war with Israel while condemning all other cold wars in the world. Similar instances of non-aligned nations participating in their own cold wars but condemning the cold wars of others, and feeling self-righteous about the latter, can be easily multiplied.

Thirdly, it has to be admitted that the arms race and balance-of-power policies pursued by the democracies—though objectionable in some details—have successfully contained Russian Communist totalitarianism and forced it to transform its theory and practice of foreign policy in many essential respects. And to these Western policies must go the credit for preserving such peace as we have had since the second world war. The maintenance of peace in Berlin and in Cuba, in spite of attempted Russian intrusions, the recent test ban treaty, and any further steps towards nuclear disarmament that may follow it, are the outcome, not of the mere sentiment for peace which the various peace movements in the world have spread and strengthened, but of the hard and solid nuclear stalemate created by the armament race. The nuclear armament race has made nuclear peace not only a necessity but a real possibility. Any confusion or weakness in the West about the unpalatable but inescapable necessity of maintaining, at all costs, a balance of nuclear power would not have improved the prospects of peace but would have led to a

repetition of aggression and war and a possible shrinking of the area of actual and potential freedom in the world.

Just as the refusal to recognize the legitimacy of violent conflict in certain circumstances can enormously increase the balance of evil in our imperfect world, so also the refusal to recognize the necessity and the moral propriety of a cold war, involving an arms race and a balance-of-power policy, in certain circumstances, may cause grievous errors and hypocrisies in the foreign and defence policies of a nation.

As in the case of war proper it is immoral to condemn both sides equally merely because they are fighting, so also it is immoral to condemn the participants in a cold war equally, merely because they are engaged in a cold war, without examining all the valuational dimensions of the conflict, and the feasible alternatives.

A Valid Pacifism

Nothing that has been said above denies the existence of one unproved possibility, namely, that a satyagraha, bold enough, efficient enough and massive enough, may force an aggressor to change his course. It is conceivable that a million-strong army of unarmed satyagrahis simultaneously urging balanced disarmament in the capitals of all armed countries, and ready to intervene physically between armies, and to dismantle naval, air and missile bases, may influence the aggressors to desist from aggression. An experiment of this kind in the conversion of the almost inconvertible will be unprecedented in history. But it is not unthinkable. In fact the consequences of war today are so unprecedented, that moral innovators—Gandhites, pacifists, religious and secular intellectuals, and earnest lovers of peace in general—must, if possible, think of and plan an unprecedented experiment of the kind suggested. It will be the only real test of the hypothesis of universal convertibility through non-violent action on the right scale.

But it is important to note the conditions that have to be fulfilled for such a test to be effective as well as morally unobjectionable. An international satyagraha of the type contemplated should organize *equally* intensive education campaigns in

all armed camps. It is extremely immoral to preach or press disarmament in societies characterized by freedom of speech and assembly, and not do so, or to do so in lesser measure in totalitarian societies which deny such freedom. For an *unequal* satyagraha weakens the democratic parties, and upsets the balance of strength. Should the satyagraha fail, the imbalance of power thus created might be disastrous for the democracies. Whatever be the risks of entering totalitarian territories and campaigning there, satyagrahis have to enter and campaign there as much as they campaign in democratic territories. They cannot exploit the privileges of democracy to strengthen the relative power of tyrannies by campaigning unequally. If satyagrahis are afraid or incapable of campaigning against arms in the zones of tyranny, they lose the right to campaign against arms in the zones of democracy. A valid satyagraha campaign must be equally weak or equally strong and absolutely simultaneous in all areas. And any damage caused by it to the armament of one side must be matched by an equiproportionate damage on the other side.

Until the regular efficacy of satyagraha as a means of converting the aggressors in difficult cases has been demonstrated, satyagrahis must recognize the right of the majority of defensive citizens and the defensive state to treat them and imprison them as saboteurs and traitors just as they admit the certainty of being treated as such by the aggressors. For they would, in effect, be functioning as saboteurs and traitors, undermining the military effort on the defensive side until and unless they prove that they have undermined it equally on the offensive side as well.

Either the satyagrahis should be able to organize a satyagraha or a series of satyagrahas for disarmament on the basis of the principle of equal and simultaneous action on all sides, regardless of the risks; or else they should accept the need to establish and maintain effective balances of power in the world. They can lend their moral support to groupings which, in their judgement, are defensive and less evil on the whole; or remain neutral between contestants, if and so long as they can do so, not with any sense of moral righteousness but simply with a confession of inability to form a judgement or the need to keep aloof from a particular conflict owing to weakness. They can also press for peaceful mediation or arbitration of disputes, whenever it is

acceptable to both sides, but again without condemning or weakening the efforts of defendants to balance power until mediation or arbitration is successfully concluded.

These conditions for valid pacifism may seem to be harsh and tedious, but pacifism cannot be an easy pursuit in a dangerous world. The line between a morally valid and a morally monstrous pacifism must be sharply drawn. The road to peace is not smooth; it is not paved by the exudation of cheap sentiment. It can be paved either by balances of power, and peace treaties dictated by an awareness of the futility of war created by those balances. Or it can be paved by equal and simultaneous satyagrahas of the type indicated. Sometimes it may be built by successful mediations and arbitrations against the background of propitious power balances. And occasionally the road to peace may pass through local wars. The infliction of defeat in battle may, on some occasions, be the only means of converting an otherwise inconvertible aggressor to seek peace sincerely. This defeat may be inflicted either by the military efforts of the defenders and their allies or by the forces of a peace-preserving international authority like the United Nations.

In the present state of the world, none of these alternatives is by itself a panacea. But none should be ruled out. It is worth repeating that the morally best or least bad choice may differ from case to case.

The Argument in a Nuclear Context

One issue remains to be considered at this stage of the argument. Does argument need qualification in the context of the nuclearization of war? Aren't the moral dimensions of feasible choices in the case of international conflicts transformed altogether by the fact that the issue of a war now may not be local or limited victory or defeat, but nearly universal death? Shouldn't war or preparation for war be ruled out altogether as a means of securing "justice" in any conflict whatsoever in this new situation?

These issues were debated in depth in a famous controversy between Bertrand Russell and the American philosopher Sydney Hook. The complexity and anguish of moral judgement on the

issues of war and peace in the nuclear age are fully brought out in this controversy.¹⁰ No thinking citizen can avoid the responsibility of facing and formulating his position on the fundamental questions discussed by them. I shall attempt to state my own position on some of these questions which are relevant to the present discussion.

It should be noted first that the essential structure of the moral problem as it was formulated in the beginning of the present discussion is not altered by the nuclearization of war. The effect of every choice on the realization of many values has still to be assessed to gauge the net balance of good (or evil) achievable through it. But it is true that when the alternative of war involves the extinction or permanent mutilation of a large part of the human race, the choice of the least evil course in a given situation becomes an unprecedentedly terrible choice.

Since armament has been nuclearized on a large scale in the particular context of a cold war between the Communist bloc led by Russia and the Western bloc led by America, the valuational implications of nuclear armament are best revealed by a consideration of actual Russian and Western policy.

According to the traditional communist ideology the Russian leaders used to be committed to the communization of the whole world by all means—economic, political, diplomatic, psycho-ideological and military—as the greatest good to be achieved in the long run. But it is extremely significant that the nuclearization of war led them to reject—sincerely and not merely tactically—that part of the traditional doctrine which visualized a series of wars to further the communization of the world. The maintenance of nuclear armament to match the nuclear armament of the West still remains an imperative of Russian policy; all means short of nuclear war are still to be used to promote the progressive communization of the world; but nuclear war itself is now ruled out. The *threat* of nuclear action is not excluded but a nuclear initiative is to be avoided, even if this means tactical withdrawals and compromises.

The position of the West is similar. Communist totalitarianism must be contained. Therefore a parity of nuclear power with

¹⁰ See Congress for Cultural Freedom, *Forum Service* release Nos. Fs/55 and Fs/71.

Russia must be maintained, whatever the cost. Russians are to be left in no doubt that if they use their nuclear power to threaten the vital interests of the West (as in Berlin or in Cuba) they must be ready to face nuclear retaliation. But there is to be no *original* nuclear action on the part of the West. Reasonable peaceful settlements are to be reached with Russia, against the background of balanced power, on as many issues as possible.

In short, both Russia and the West have been following a threefold policy of (1) maintaining a nuclear balance of power; (2) nuclear brinkmanship—going up to the brink, but never beyond, in vital matters; and (3) negotiating all possible, reasonable settlements within the framework of a nuclear power balance.

This policy may be called a "balance-brink-and-bargain" policy. It excludes two extreme alternatives: the alternative of a policy of unilateral disarmament and the alternative of preventive war or a nuclear offensive.

Unilateral disarmament is ruled out because both sides consider their particular ways of life, and the values whose pursuit is immanent in them, too precious to make them surrender to the other side unilaterally, in spite of the nuclearization of war. Thus the Russian Communists are not prepared to disarm unilaterally to sacrifice the values of the Communist way of life and let the USA rule Russia, for the sake of a mere survival in a nuclear context. Nor is the West prepared to disarm unilaterally, sacrifice the ideals of the free society and let Russia communize the world, for the sake of mere survival in a nuclearized world. Survival is a vital value but both sides consider the other values implicit in their ways of life weightier than the value of mere survival. Both are, in effect, saying that ultimately they are even prepared to sacrifice survival rather than these other values. Both consider the terrible costs and risks of balance-brink-and-bargain-manship as lesser evils, in their scales of values, than the costs and risks of surrender to an alien regime. Both have assumed—rightly as recent events show—that in imbalance of nuclear power and the consequent possibility of surrender to nuclear blackmail is more likely to cause a nuclear holocaust than a resolute balance-brink-and-bargain policy.

On the other hand, survival is precious enough to prevent

either side from launching nuclear action against the other side on any issue, *before* the other side does it, whatever the merits of the issue. Thus a nuclear initiative is ruled out as well as unilateral disarmament. Also, survival is precious enough for both to make ceaseless efforts to negotiate agreements for disarmament, in proper phases and with proper safeguards, while maintaining a balance of power in each phase.

The above interpretation of the valuational ordering of feasible alternatives by the two big powers in a nuclearized world yields for the important general conclusion that only a culture which values survival above *all* other values to which it is committed, only a culture which ultimately would not reject for its people even the degraded existence of an Orwellian Animal Farm or 1984, if only its people somehow *exist*, can choose in the present world situation a policy other than the balance-brink-and-bargain policy, regardless of whether armament is or not nuclearized. Personally, I do not think that in the mainstream of Indian culture, survival as such—at any cost in terms of other great values—has ever been or should ever be rated very highly. The votary of non-violence in any case does not and cannot value survival above everything else. Therefore, balancing the power, *nuclear and/or non-nuclear*, of the relevant potential aggressors (*ātatāyīs*) is for us, as for other great nations, an inescapable policy until and unless the resolute and continued balancing of power itself facilitates and brings into effect a universal disarmament agreement, aided, if possible, by a morally valid international satyagraha for peace.

Some Reflections on the Indian Philosophical Tradition

by M. P. REGE

“**E**XCEPT for the blind forces of nature nothing moves in the world which is not Greek in its origin.” In saying this Sir Henry Maine appears to have forgotten the claims of the Indian philosophical tradition, the only authentic and original philosophical tradition other than the Greek, which has formed and directed the cultural life of a people and furnished a theoretical basis to an enduring civilization. But perhaps Sir Henry Maine is essentially right, for, if we consider the intellectual and moral values of our modern civilization, the political and social institutions in which we seek to embody them, the scientific attitude which, on the one hand, is an expression of our loyalty to truth which is an intrinsic value of this civilization and, on the other, by creating scientific technology, gives material sustenance to this civilization—then we find that we can trace all these to their Greek origins. This is not to say that the whole course of modern thought in all its aspects is a mere unfolding of the consequences which were implicit from the beginning in Greek thought; but only that there is an essential identity of approach and method between Greek and modern thought, which makes it meaningful to describe them as two phases of the same tradition. The Indian philosophical tradition, on the other hand, remains distinct, self-

contained and cut-off from modern thought. The question we have to ask as modern Indians is what significance can this tradition have for us as citizens of the contemporary world and as aspiring to share in the universal cultural heritage of mankind? The task of interpreting and assessing the Indian philosophical tradition as a whole is a large and difficult one. In this paper I have only tried to take note of some of the characteristic features—or what have appeared to me such—of Indian philosophy.

The question 'what is the nature of existence?' was raised early by Indian thought and Indian thinkers have been much exercised by this question. The Nasadiya Sukta is the earliest recorded expression of philosophical wonder and perplexity. The vedic seer expresses his profound metaphysical wonder and puzzlement at the actuality of Being and gives free rein to his imagination in trying to account for it. The Upanishadas contain a sustained quest for the unity which according to them must be within things or behind or beyond them. The Samkhya concept of *prakriti* which is composed of three diverse kinds of *gunas* is one solution of the problem of how different kinds of things could have emerged from the one stuff. The Vaisheshika theory of indivisible atoms of various kinds is another solution to the same problem.

Students of Indian philosophy very often regard it as a unique and supremely valuable feature of Indian thought that it formed so early in its history this conception of the unity of things and held fast to it throughout its course. Actually, such a monistic conception of things is a widespread feature of primitive thought. It is perhaps true, as suggested by many sociologists, that primitive thought is dominated by social categories. These thinkers are haunted by memories of early tribal unity and the process of its fragmentation into distinct classes held together by an ambivalent relationship of conflict and cooperation. The emergence of such separate classes, or of the individual carrying the burden of determining his individual destiny, had a tragic aspect to it; it involved loss of the pervasive, enveloping unity and harmony of the original tribal state of existence. Existence of the separate class or the individual was regarded by many of these early thinkers as a transgression, as an instance of sinful egotism requiring expiation by a return to the original unity of

the tribe. It was natural for these thinkers to use these emotionally charged categories when trying to solve the riddle of the universe.

We find something like this emotional attitude dominating early Greek thought. Thales, Anaximander, Heraclitus, Parmenides regard the unity of things as essential or fundamental and the separate existence of things as only secondary, temporary, a transgression to be finally wiped out or even somehow illusory and unreal. On the other hand, Empedocles regards the existence of separate elements and the relation of love and hate between them as constituting the ultimate order of things. Another feature of primitive thought is that it is hylozoistic. The categories of matter, life and mind are not clearly distinguished and held apart. All things are regarded as sharing in the same, common, universal form of Being. The distinction between matter and mind and between inanimate forms of matter is a much later analytical achievement. According to Anaxagoras, "Nor are the things that are in one world divided nor cut off from one another with a hatchet." The principle or principles of Being recognized by the Milesian thinkers exhibit qualities of life and mentality. The "All" of Melissos which is infinite in magnitude is also something which is capable of feeling pleasure.

We find that these features characterize early Indian thought also. It is preoccupied with the notion of the fundamental unity of all things and the resulting problem of one and many. Secondly, it is also hylozoistic. The *gunas* of the Samkhya are the common stuff of which both mind and matter are composed. One of the kinds of atoms recognized by the Vaisheshikas are mental atoms. Now, as remarked earlier, these early speculations belong to a period when philosophy has not yet distinguished itself from science. Thought has not yet reached the level of abstractness necessary for the posing of a philosophical problem in its purity. The concepts, and the logical relations between them with which philosophy mainly deals were yet represented in crude and distracting symbolic material. As scientific theories attempting to give an account and explanation of the nature and behaviour of things they can now be for us only objects of historical curiosity. They are interesting as marking stages in the

growth of scientific knowledge and even as representing some of the wrong turns that science took in the chequered course of its development. To a sophisticated curiosity they are interesting as embodying out-moded models of scientific knowledge. They may also become objects of our retrospective interest as they sometimes contain concepts, hypotheses which have long lain sterile and dormant, suddenly to receive application in an important area of knowledge in novel and unimagined ways—as happened with the atomic hypothesis. Some of these theories, e.g. the Samkhya theory of gunas have penetrated deeply into the popular mind and come to colour its ways of thought and expression. The Samkhya theory retains some appeal and even validity as an imaginative, almost dramatic description and classification of the phenomenal qualities to be found in the psycho-physical microcosm and their analogical counterparts in the macrocosm. In the same way the Epicurean theory of nature and life presents a picture of the universe which we may still find valid in its broad essentials. From all these various points of view the speculations of these early thinkers retain their importance and value. But as giving a sober, matter-of-fact account of the nature of things and their behaviour in the manner in which science tries to do this, they have long ceased to be acceptable.

It is necessary to emphasize this obvious point because many Indian commentators take an ambiguous approach to traditional Indian systems. When a Western commentator tries to give an exposition, say, of the philosophy of Anaxagoras, he approaches his task as a historian of ideas. His aim is to achieve a sympathetic understanding of Anaxagoras' thought; to reconstruct as accurately as possible the meaning which it had for him and his contemporaries. He may, in addition, try to trace conceptual affinities between it and some later theories which have intellectually better survived the test of verification. But there is no suggestion whatever that Anaxagoras' thought remains valid for us even now. An Indian commentator approaches his task in a different spirit altogether. In the Indian tradition the question whether a writer on, say, Samkhya is writing as a historian of ideas or is actually engaged in philosophical thinking on his own is never sharply posed. He is, somehow, taken to be doing both at once. This traditional approach seems to have been con-

tinued by modern Indian commentators. Thus, the *Gitarahasya* of Tilak is both a commentary on the Gita as well as an exposition of Tilak's own ethical views. Now, the Samkhya theory of gunas, for instance, tries among other things to give an explanation of physical and mental phenomena. It is, therefore, to this extent in the same line of business as modern physics and psychology; and as a system of ideas must stand the test of competition with them. And if it fails in the test it must receive the logical penalty of being rejected in favour of a superior theory. Furthermore, if the theory of gunas is rejected as unsound all the super-structures based on it must also be given up or attempts must be made to give them a theoretically more secure foundation. Thus, the Yoga system of philosophy elaborates a set of practices as a part of spiritual discipline and it describes and assesses the results said to follow from them in terms of the theory of gunas. Now, it may indeed have been empirically verified that results answering to certain broad descriptions do actually follow from the yogic practices; this fact, then, must be accepted. But, it must also be clearly realized that once the theory of gunas is given up the job of giving a satisfactory description and explanation of these results remains to be accomplished. The reason why this theoretical need is not felt and recognized by many modern adherents of Yoga is that they have not really given up the theory of gunas; they do not bring the theory to the arena where rival scientific theories struggle with each other for survival. The theory is saved from the logical consequences of such a clash because it is vaguely thought that the theory of gunas is not a scientific theory at all; it does not function at the level at which a scientific theory functions. It is regarded as a philosophical theory functioning at a higher or deeper level though somehow concerned with the same facts with which a scientific theory is concerned. But, then, what is a philosophical theory? How does it differ from a scientific theory though both kinds of theory are concerned with the same facts? And, most important, what is the criterion of its validity? How does one proceed to establish such a theory? All these questions become relevant if the distinction between the philosophical and the scientific accounts of facts is to be maintained. It cannot be said that these questions have been properly faced by

most exponents of Indian philosophy. If they had been, large portions of traditional Indian philosophy would have been given up as so much theoretical dead wood.

If we deduct from the total contribution of Indian thought those portions which are really obsolete scientific theories, what remains? What remains, I believe, which is still capable of engaging our philosophical as distinguished from historical interest, is what Indian thinkers have achieved by way of (i) analysis of concepts and (ii) development of some original, fresh perspectives on the universe and human life. The critical parts of Buddhist, Nyaya-Vaisheshika, Vedanta systems contain much subtle, penetrating acute analysis of our ordinary concepts of substance, cause, person, knowledge and so on; and the constructive parts of the Gita, Buddhism, Vedanta, etc. contain sensitive and deeply realized portrayals of ways of life which represent perennially valid moral ideals. These contributions remain permanently interesting and relevant.

It would be taking a narrow view of the aims of philosophical analysis to reject Nyaya or Buddhist analysis of epistemological and ontological categories as irrelevant to us now because pre-scientific. The logical scope of the basic categories with which we operate extends very much beyond the narrow realm of scientific thinking. Analysis of the scientific method and of the concepts which scientific thought has evolved in the course of its development is certainly an important aim of philosophical inquiry; but it cannot be its whole aim. There may be genuine philosophical puzzles connected with the use of our ordinary, non-scientific concepts in our everyday thinking, in moral discourse, and so on; and to clarify these puzzles is an important and useful aim of philosophical activity.

The achievements of Indian thought in this region of what might be called analytical philosophy are very impressive indeed. Indian analytical thought is of the highest philosophical quality. It exhibits a great intellectual passion for clarity, precision and explicitness. It shows a marked distaste for anything that is slipshod; for loose ends or abrupt beginnings. It constantly strives to make explicit the hidden assumptions on which conclusions are made to rest; and is quite ruthless in driving

home the consequences which follow from accepted premises. In critically examining philosophical theories, whether one's own or those of opponents, Indian thinkers neither give nor seek any quarter. These are admirable intellectual qualities which are displayed to the best advantage, perhaps, by Navya-Nyaya which was the last creation of Indian analytical thought. The cultivation of these qualities by Indian philosophical thought and the respect for them which was diffused in the Indian intelligentsia kept alive the vigour and keenness of the Indian intellect. This disciplining of the Indian intellect not only led to the achievement of valuable philosophical results, but also made possible a rapid and thorough assimilation of the Western intellectual tradition. A mind which cared for the subtle distinctions of the Navya-Nyaya, its straining after absolute precision of statement, was formed to appreciate and respect the intellectual spirit behind, say, the law of evidence.

It would, therefore, be wrong for a modern Indian to belittle either the intrinsic importance of the achievement of Indian thought in the region of analytic philosophy or the part this thought has indirectly played in making real assimilation of an alien intellectual tradition possible. Particularly, it would be unfair to base a total, adverse verdict on the Indian philosophical tradition on the ground that it did not lead to the discovery of the scientific method and to the rise of natural sciences. The rise of natural sciences in the West itself may be a lucky accident for which a fortuitous concurrence of many unconnected factors was responsible. The scientific attitude is based on an intellectual respect for particular facts. It accepts the supremacy of the hard, brute facts, conformity with which is the final test of the acceptability of any theory. At the same time, it expresses itself in a persistent search for universality. The particular fact, for it, is significant only as exemplifying a universal law or laws, and its constant endeavour is to reduce the less general laws to special cases of the more general laws. That these two mutually opposed attitudes should be fused together to give a certain direction to the intellectual interest of a few men of genius at a time when the conceptual tools necessary for a successful pursuit of their interest were already at hand—this may surely be regarded as a lucky accident.

At the same time, it must be remembered that scientific knowledge is the only rational form of knowledge of the nature of things. If some of the intellectual attitudes and norms which shaped the Indian philosophical tradition prevent us from fully participating in this greatest intellectual adventure of mankind then our philosophical heritage becomes a burden. Moreover a post-mortem should be instructive. Why did the Indian philosophical tradition in spite of its brilliance, subtlety and fecundity fail to discover the sure path of scientific knowledge? What were the intellectual ideals and attitudes which gave a different turn to its development? We have noted that some features of the Indian philosophical thought were favourable to the reception and assimilation of Western thought. Are there any features of it which prevented it from developing in the same way as the Western thought and which may come in the way of our assimilating certain vital ingredients in the Western tradition?

When we consider the Indian philosophical tradition from this point of view, its most striking feature, I think, is the method of philosophizing followed by Indian thinkers. This method is to comment on a commentary which is a commentary on . . . a commentary on the sutras. To comment on a work is to attempt to elucidate its meaning. This method of philosophizing reduces the aim of philosophical inquiry to clarification of the meaning of a received system of ideas. It is owing to the almost universal prevalence of this method that the charge often gets made that Indian philosophy is not really philosophy at all but essentially something like theology. It is not the result of free and active speculation, but merely a systematization and clarification of passively accepted dogmas. This charge, of course, is formally false. Not all Indian systems take as their point of departure a scriptural revelation. It is only the various branches of Vedanta that take their stand on revealed scriptures and conceive their task to be limited to establishment and explication of the meaning of scriptural texts. Other systems like Samkhya, Vaisheshika, etc. even if they are orthodox and accept the validity of scriptures as an independent means of knowledge do not regard definition and clarification of the meaning of scriptures as their sole business or the only way to the knowledge of the ultimate truth. The fundamental tenets of these systems have been arrived

at by free speculation unhampered by any initial adherence to a revealed dogma. These systems trace their origin to the sutras which are the deposits from a period of intense philosophical speculation—the period which roughly coincided with the rise of Buddhism which was, indeed, its most remarkable contribution to Indian thought. These early speculations are truly philosophical in form and content; they are daring, uninhibited and radical in character. The sutras which are now taken as the foundations of the various systems are merely the terse summaries of these free philosophical discussions. They are mnemonic devices for reminding one of the views entertained in the course of these discussions, and the arguments and counter arguments, illustrations and analogies used in the course of the debate and the conclusions reached. The sutras, therefore, lay down no dogmas; they are merely the signposts which mark the course which previous discussions had taken. In employing the method of commenting on these sutras for the purpose of expounding their views, these systems may be said to be guilty at worst, of a *form* of dogmatism; the actual contents of these systems are the results of free, uninhibited philosophical thought and free from any taint of dogmatism.

All this, of course, is true. But it must be realized that this form in which philosophical thinking is presented is symptomatic. When after the early, brilliant explosion of speculation Indian thought settled down to a steady, systematic pursuit of truth the method it adopted was the method of commentary. This method is fatal to the spirit of free intellectual adventure. It accepts for thought the subordinate role of explicating, systematizing, clarifying the given truth. The philosophical activity of the early, unknown thinkers is not carried on in the same spirit by their successors who are addicted to systematization. They are merely content to elaborate on the achievements of their predecessors. Thought or reason in their hands becomes merely an expounder of truth; it may in addition prepare the mind better for receiving and accepting the truth by removing possible misconceptions about it and apparent inconsistencies from it. But thought does not have to discover the truth. It has already been discovered and handed down by tradition. This

reverence for, and dependence on, tradition maimed the free spirit of Indian philosophy.

The Western philosophical tradition is the creation of a succession of individual thinkers. Of course, great thinkers have founded schools and movements, or schools and movements have been named after great thinkers, and lesser men have made it their life-work to contribute to the development or defence of a school. It would be impossible to write a history of Greek philosophy without making a reference to the rise, development and decline of philosophical schools like the Pythagoreans or the Academy or the Peripatetics or the Epicureans, and so on. The Pythagorean school was a mystery-cult formed on the pattern of tribal life with its machinery of taboos, initiation rites comprising ordeals and revelation of mysteries by the elders. The mysteries revealed were of course philosophical even arithmetical wisdom; and the elders were the Master, the Founder of the Sect and his successors. The other Greek schools of philosophy also seem to be modelled after the same pattern. A school consisted of men drawn together because they shared and pursued together not the same tribal way of life but the same conception of the good life and this conception was best embodied in the personality and teachings of the founder. But though there were schools of philosophy in Greece which in their structure imitated the tribe and the mystery-cult, not all Greek philosophers belonged to or founded schools; for instance, Thales, Anaxagoras, Heraclitus did not. A philosopher would naturally be influenced by the views, arguments, methods of his predecessors; he might gratefully acknowledge his debt to them and point to similarities between their positions and the doctrines he had reached. But the notion that it was the responsibility and privilege of the individual thinker to discover the truth for himself was implicit in the way in which early Greek thinkers philosophized; and this notion on the whole, remained alive and valid in the entire course of Greek thought. Plato was not merely a minor or even a major Socratic; nor was Aristotle a Platonist. These thinkers were directly concerned with certain philosophical problems; they considered and criticized the views of their predecessors and the arguments used by them in support of these views; and finally arrived at their own views by a process of rational

argument. Thus rational argument remained the means of discovery and defence of the truth. It can, therefore, be said that the attributes in which the schools of philosophy resembled mystery-cults, though striking, were really superficial.

Things were different with Indian thought. While in the West it could be said that a philosopher belonged to a certain school because he had come to form certain views, in India it could be said that a philosopher held certain views because he belonged to a certain school. In the systematic period, when a number of schools had crystallized after the early turmoil of speculation, every philosopher wrote as belonging to a school. A philosopher was essentially an exponent of a certain school. All the Indian systems developed together through mutual dialogue. Every system became more precise, articulate, coherent and better defined in the process of meeting the attacks of other systems. But no system was finally demolished, finally superseded. Every system re-defined and re-affirmed itself in the face of other systems. There was no court of appeal transcending rival systems, for the final court to which a system appealed was internal to itself; and those were the fundamental tenets adumbrated in the sutras which demarcated the boundaries of orthodoxy which no adherent to the system could cross. Attempted refutations by rival systems based on rival orthodoxies were soon seen as irrelevant. Thus, every system was a closed system. Philosophical thought became stabilized into peaceful coexistence of rival systems. There were no invasions, only border-raids. One finds the social structure of closed castes reflected in the realm of speculation. The anonymity of Indian thinkers is a symptom of this. The individual has not yet quite emerged from the tribe; or rather, having emerged from it, he has re-entered the shell of a philosophical system.

The Nyaya system of logic recognizes and gives sanction to this situation. Logic, in the West, aims at discovering the fundamental principles of valid reasoning. Aristotle, in developing his logic, had before him the model of deductive geometry. For him scientific knowledge is demonstrable knowledge and all demonstration must have a point or beginning which is furnished by definitions of universal concepts and must proceed from these according to valid principles of reasoning to conclusions—the

theorems—which necessarily follow from them. The realm of science is, therefore, the realm of universal, rational knowledge as distinguished from the realm of perceptions or opinions which may differ from subject to subject. Logic has to analyse the structure of such universally valid knowledge and bring out the fundamental principles on which it rests. Nyaya, on the other hand, does not undertake analysis of the logical structure of a universally valid system of knowledge. The model before it is that of a number of rival schools debating with one another. It does not classify tenets into those which lie at the basis of demonstration—definitions, those which are demonstrated—theorems, and those according to which demonstration proceeds—principles of reasoning. Rather it attempts to formulate the code of fair debate among rival systems. It classifies tenets into those which are exclusively held by one system and those which happen to be commonly held by all systems and those which follow from the tenets held exclusively by a certain system and therefore are binding on the adherents of that system only. The Nyaya attempts to map the internal structure of any system and in doing so has necessarily to make a reference to other systems.

Now, it may be said that this kind of circularity, this being a closed and rival structure, is a distinguishing mark of philosophical systems. A positive science uses a method the validity of which it does not undertake to establish; and it pursues certain theoretical goals the possibility and validity of which it does not feel the need to prove. It is otherwise with a philosophical system which sets out to explain everything including itself, its own possibility and validity. Thus, empiricism is a philosophical theory of knowledge and any proof of empiricism must either be empiricist and therefore circular or non-empiricist and therefore invalid. There is a sense in which a philosophical system cannot be established from outside; the method and canons of proof we have to use for proving it, its final court of appeal, can only be internal to it. The only way to test a philosophical theory is to work one's way to its centre and from there view it as a whole. And if one finds that its centre and periphery support each other, and if the whole system is in accord with one's intuitive vision of things, one gives it the seal of one's

approval. There is no other way. It cannot, therefore, be held against Indian philosophical schools that they are circular. This contention must be accepted. But the point is that philosophical speculation and analysis in the West succeeded in creating the ideal of scientific knowledge, a system of knowledge which is open, which constantly invites and welcomes correction by being put to the test of more and more facts and which is progressive. This form of rational knowledge serves as a corrective to the speculative extravagances of philosophy. After all philosophical system, though it may claim to be autonomous and to validate itself, cannot fly in the face of established scientific knowledge. It must account for it, come to terms with it, square itself with it. Secondly, though philosophy, in the final analysis, is only an attempt to give rational form to our intuitive vision of things, this vision of things itself is influenced, transformed in more or less subtle ways, by the existing body of scientific knowledge. A scientific discovery may lead us to see the universe and man in a new perspective and new philosophical problems will arise in our trying to adjust old ways of thinking and the old mapping of the universe and the old scheme of values to this new perspective. Thus, philosophical activity itself which aims at developing a coherent view of the totality of things receives a constant challenge and direction from developments in science. In the absence of such a challenge philosophy is in danger of becoming stale and stagnant. And this is what, I am afraid, happened to Indian philosophy.

It wouldn't be true to say that Nyaya did not attempt at all to formulate principles of rational demonstration. Their doctrine of *vakya* which analyses the structure of a valid argument and of *vyapit* which tries to formulate the conditions under which universal propositions can be established, would go against such a contention. After all in the course of a discussion arguments are bound to be advanced and demonstrations attempted and these have to be criticized and met. Nyaya was, therefore, bound to take note of arguments and proofs, analyse them and determine the conditions of their validity. The point that I am making is that Nyaya does not have before it the concept of a universally valid system of knowledge and therefore does not attempt to evolve or analyse a method which will result in such

knowledge. The reason for this is that thought or reason is not taken seriously as an autonomous means to the attainment of truth.

What, then, is the highest or the primary means of attaining the truth according to the Indian tradition? The answer is "revelation." Indian philosophy is haunted by the possibility of revelation. This is true not only of those schools like Vedanta which take their stand consciously and explicitly on formal scriptures. This is also true of those schools like Samkhya or Nyaya-Vaisheshika which are not tied up with any scriptural revelation. The Upanishadic view is that the ultimate truth can never be grasped by thought; it can only be revealed and when the truth is revealed one becomes the truth. To know the truth is not to know that the object has certain properties. Knowledge of the truth transforms the being of the subject; in fact it is the highest form of being of the subject. It is obvious that these concepts of knowledge and truth are closely connected with magic-rituals, particularly, the initiation ritual. When the tribal mysteries are revealed, the individual's being is transformed; he really comes to be what he always potentially was, a full-fledged member of the tribe. Buddhism is often taken to be a form of rationalism because Buddha took his stand outside any revealed scripture. This is, I think, a profound misconception. For Buddha also truth is received in revelation the precondition of which is that the self is in a certain spiritual state. Buddha lays down an elaborate discipline for enabling one to fulfil this condition.

Two consequences follow from such acceptance of revelation as the primary vehicle of truth. One, denigration of the notion that all rational creatures are equal sharers, in truth, that all men have an equal duty and right to examine things critically in order co-operatively to arrive at the truth. There arises a distinction between the elect and the others, between those *adikaris* who have a right and access to the truth and others who have not. Secondly, once revelation is accepted as the primary mode in which the truth is attained, one is driven, in the absence of personal revelation, to fall back on tradition, established and perpetuated by those who have enjoyed revelation, as the repository and custodian of truth. That is why

every respectable Indian system likes to trace its descent from a body of sutras in which the truth is stored. It is well known that the Samkhya sutras are quite late in their origin. The system went without any sutras for sometime and someone wrote them in order to make an honest system of Samkhya.

The vital point for us to notice is that for Plato truth is not something passively to be received but to be attained by rational activity. And this remained the leading conception which inspired the main current of Greek thought. The leading Indian conception seems to be truth is grasped by directly confronting the real by experiencing it. The form of truth is not a system of rational principles but a direct experience. Or truth may be attained at second hand, by eliciting it from tradition in which these direct experiences are deposited and preserved. When direct experience is reached, thought has already fallen away. According to the spirit of Greek philosophy, the aim of philosophical thinking is to discover the nature of things; that is its measure of success. According to the Indian tradition it is to interpret, develop, restate and purify tradition. This view of the basic function of thought fosters certain intellectual attitudes.

(a) *Conservatism*: a deep respect for tradition becomes ingrained in the intellectual character of the people. A curious example of this is Shankara's attitude to Buddhism. It is well known that there is such a close resemblance between the philosophical outlook and views of Shankara, and those of the Buddhist schools he criticizes, that some of Shankara's critics have dubbed him a Buddhist in disguise. And yet we find that Shankara criticises Buddhism vehemently. This vehemence may partly be explained by his anxiety to distinguish his philosophical position from that of the Buddhist from which it essentially differs so little. But to a large measure it is an expression of Shankara's deep rooted antipathy to Buddhism for the way in which it breaks away from the tradition of the land. It is not the philosophical message of Buddhism that Shankara dislikes; it is rather its manner of arriving at it. It is the Buddhistic substitution of the intuition of an individual for the scriptural tradition that Shankara finds most objectionable in Buddhism. (b) *Revivalism*: if tradition is the vehicle of truth it becomes necessary to determine the original or the pure tradition. The only way to do

this is to go back to the sources of the tradition before its pure stream has been sullied by the admixture of error and heresy. (c) *Eclecticism*: with so many rival traditions with their conflicting deliverances, it is natural to suppose that the whole truth can be found only in a synthesis of all the diverse traditions. Indian thought revels in synthesis. It has a distaste for sharp logical incompatibility. It moves on the implicit assumption that as all traditions are vehicles of truth and truth is one, all traditions must in the end be reconcilable with one another. Indian thinkers, therefore, expend a remarkable amount of patience and ingenuity in ironing out the differences among the rival systems. Their constant endeavour is to take the sting out of differences, and show how what appear to be mutually incompatible views are different aspects of the same truth. Thus, persistent attempts are made to establish that the six orthodox systems which actually differ sharply from one another in their motivation, methods and conclusions, are really stages on the path to the same one supreme truth. This is actually unfair to these systems, robs them of the distinctiveness of their contributions to philosophical thought, and spreads an impression which is certainly wrong that Indian philosophical thought is a twilight in which all cows are grey. (d) *Anti-intellectualism*: if immediate experience is the mode in which truth is revealed, ideas, concepts, logic lose their importance. People lose their interest in ideas, in clarifying them, testing them by following their consequences, applying them to problems of individual and social life.

It has already been remarked that Indian thought exhibits a deep intellectual passion for clarity, precision and explicitness. This is the brighter side of the Indian mind. The anti-intellectualism inherent in the revelatory conception of truth is its darker side. It appears to me that this ambivalence, this internal conflict brought about a kind of demoralization. Indian thought lost its nerve, its creative impulse, and in the absence of the challenge of an adequate subject-matter turned back upon itself, upon its own past creations, analysing them and refining its analytical tools *ad nauseam* until at last it was overwhelmed by its own sense of futility.

A consequence of this anti-intellectual strain in Indian thought is that there is no methodology in Indian philosophy.

Plato and Aristotle were methodologists. Platonists contributed to the development of geometry. The contributions of the Peripatetics to positive sciences are well known. We find nothing similar to this in Indian philosophy and science. Indian philosophy did not perform its function of reflecting on the nature of thought, organizing, deploying it. The result was that our sciences in many cases did not attain the form of science. They remained haphazard collections of isolated facts and insights. Not having attained the secure path of science, they did not progress in a steady, systematic manner. Additions to the stock of knowledge were entirely at the mercy of accidents of individual genius. There was no grand design of a science progressively reducing the chaos of facts to rational order; no conception of a theoretical order, a scheme of sciences such as we find in Plato and Aristotle. It is significant that there is no philosopher scientist in India.

The Greek conception of reason as a faculty which independently of perception explores a rational order embodied in a system of general principles made possible the rise of sciences and of the scientific method. For the scientific method is essentially the hypothetico-deductive method which explains particular facts by showing that they exemplify general principles. But these general principles cannot be discovered by analysing particular facts. In a way they are a free creation of the imagination. Reason can use them for its own purpose by clearly defining their content and rigorously developing their consequences; and by modifying them until they come to conform to observed facts. All this procedure is possible to a mind which is liberated from the tyranny of perception, can freely play with ideas and yet can control this play rationally. The Platonic conception of reason as an autonomous faculty transcending perception which freely explores the structure of an ideal realm of being (which, in fact, is supremely real) of which sensible things are copies, made this kind of intellectual approach possible to the Greek minds. It did two things for science. It accustomed men to the notion that the truth of things is not to be discovered on their surface, but in general principles transcending them. It also accustomed them to the notion that perceived facts are explicable because they exemplify ideal structures which may be

rationally explored and determined. On the other hand, the Indian way of thinking remained wedded to perception as the supreme means of knowledge.

This ascendancy of perception as a means of knowledge in Indian philosophy is one curious consequence of the anti-rationalism of Indian thought. At the same time, the notion of perception becomes vague and elastic. The concept of a hard, theoretically neutral fact which is observable is a modern, sophisticated concept. It is sustained by its contrast with "hypothesis" which can only be conceived and deductively developed. Such a hypothesis, and the theoretical constructs in terms of which it is stated, become acceptable if the deductive consequences derived from it are consistent with observed facts. This kind of validation was not possible for Indian systems as the conception of deduction was lacking. The whole Samkhya theoretical apparatus of *prakriti*, *mahat*, *tanmatra*, etc. consists of unobservable entities. How is their validity established? One way of course, is to depend on the sutras, on tradition. But tradition itself must finally be rooted in a veridical experience; and this experience was taken to be the direct perception of these transcendental entities by the Yogins. Nothing, therefore, falls beyond the scope of possible perception. Perception is raised to the status of the primary means of knowledge. Again, the only way of establishing a universal proposition recognized by Nyaya is empirical generalization.

This ascendancy of perception and the consequent denial of the creative role of reason has led to the stunting of metaphysical speculation in India. We do not find here grand metaphysical constructions in the manner of Plato, Leibnitz or Whitehead. There is no conception of a pure deductive method developing the necessary consequences of *a priori* premises. And the premises necessary for such a rationalistic metaphysical construction are not available. Such premises can be obtained only through an *a priori* apprehension of rational principles. The possibility of this kind of *a priori* knowledge is not entertained in Indian philosophy. The premises of any metaphysical construction here must be derived from the immediate experience of the founder. There is much fine critical philosophy in the Indian tradition but no rational metaphysics.

We saw that the Greek distinction between "nature" and

"convention" and the notion that reason transcends "convention" and reveals "nature" to which truth must conform, made possible the rise of science. But the distinction between reason and convention has a moral aspect also. When applied to moral phenomena this distinction enables one to take a detached reflective attitude to the conventional morality, the customs of one's tribe. It also gives rise to a need to justify them rationally. Just as there is a rational structure which is exemplified in perceived facts, there must be a rational ordering of individual and social life which ought to be exemplified in the conventions of every tribe. And just as truth is universal and the same for all, and a man, after discovering it, must hold fast to it and ignore the medley of opinions, so also one must after discovering the universal, ideal way of life, spurn all the conflicting tribal customs. He may aspire to live like Diogenes, not as a member of a tribe or a city, but as a citizen of the world. It is the function of reason in the moral sphere to discover the moral law which conforms to nature, the natural law which is also the rational law. Thus, respect for reason which reveals the ideal nature of things (which is also their real nature) leads to a search for morality according to nature, that is, according to reason. It is significant that the Stoics, who valued the concept of natural law greatly, made the greatest contribution to ancient formal logic.

Now, such a conception of rational ethics was lacking in Indian thought. It seems that questions like "What is the ideal or natural or rational way of life?" or "What is the ideal or natural or rational constitution of the State?" never got asked in the course of Indian ethical thought. I am not suggesting that rational ethics cannot begin until these kinds of questions are asked. The words "Nature," "Reason," as used here, are ambiguous and demand clarification. But if the question takes this form, it shows that the mind is already released from the tyranny of established custom, and that it can freely form conceptions of alternative patterns of human relationships or schemes of human ends; and that it regards the basic principles supporting these constructions to be universally valid, and is prepared to apply them to established institutions and customs and modify or reject the latter if they conflict with these basic, rational principles.

Ethical thought in India is roughly made up of three strands. There is, first, the tribal morality based on socially inherited custom. Secondly, there is the ritualistic morality enjoying the sanction of the Scriptures. And, lastly, there is philosophical morality which describes an ideal way of life dedicated to the pursuit of "emancipation" and the virtues, attitudes and actions through which such a life expresses and fulfils itself. There can be no doubt that this philosophical morality is an expression of a most refined and pure moral sensibility and the portrait of the *sthitpragna* or *vodhisatva* as delineated by Gita and Buddhist literature embodies a noble moral ideal. However, this refined and pure moral sensibility co-exists in a spirit of happy mutual tolerance with the most barbaric practices which have received the sanction of ancient custom. The moral intuitions embodied in the Gita ideal of *sthitpragna* lead to the transformation of the inner life of an individual; but they never led to a criticism and revaluation of the established moral codes. The reason for this was that these intuitions were never translated into a system of principles which claimed to be rational and therefore universally applicable and which could serve as criteria for critically appraising established codes and practices.

Such a concept of rationality was not developed. As a result of this, the new way of life and the moral code, and the values in which these intuitions express themselves, instead of bringing about a transformation of established codes and institutions, make anxious attempts to fit in with them. Thus, we find that Shankara instead of rejecting the archaic, ritualistic practices as meaningless and incompatible with the insight of Vedanta tries hard to defend them and retain them as a necessary stage in the ethical discipline which leads to Vedantic illumination. This kind of amorphous eclecticism blunts the keen edge of moral thought. The constant need for these intuitions to compromise with practices and codes which are really incompatible with them leads to a gradual coarsening of the former which in time lose their purity and intensity. For, intuitions without reason are blind and helpless.

Dichotomy in Hindu* Life and Its Impact on India's External Relations

by NIRAD C. CHAUDHURI

IN one sense there is no point in speaking about dichotomy in any human being or group. All men, whether individuals or groups, are divided within themselves, pulled in opposite ways. Long before the appearance of modern psychology Shakespeare proclaimed the dichotomy

The writer does not apologize for using the word "Hindu" in the heading instead of "Indian." The shyness of the Anglicized Hindus before this word is not even bashfulness of the bride, but a bizarre paradox of our intellectual behaviour, because it results in the obscuration, if not suppression, of the most massive, powerful, determinate, and active human phenomenon in India, the India of today as of the past—which is the Hindu way of life. The Anglicized Hindu does not know that the term "Hindu" has no association of religion as distinct from secularity, and that its primary denotation is a simple definition of an ethnic group with all its outlooks and pattern of behaviour. In other words, it is just like the words "British," "French," or "American." In India there has never been an Indian pattern of life in which the different patterns of life presented by the diverse ethnic groups which constitute the Indian population, have been merged. So, to ignore the Hindu way of life is to reckon without the host, and to refuse to get introduced to the most powerful ethnic element in India. Or is it fear which keeps the Anglicized Hindus from employing the word? I think they are behaving in this matter like the common people who would not mention the dread names of "tiger" or "snake" at night. Neither tigers, nor snakes, nor the Hindus are going to be eliminated from our life by this subterfuge.—N.C.C.

DICHOTOMY IN HINDU LIFE

through the mouth of Hamlet, and Pascal cried out, "what a chimera is man, what a subject of contradictions!" But the dichotomy in Hindu life about which I am going to speak is of an altogether special kind. Its expression is a permanent civil war in Hindu life, in which nobody conquers, and both sides defeat each other. The tussle is so even that it induces a stalemate, and has the worst effect possible on the life of the Hindus. Through it, the expression of each of a pair of opposed inclinations or traits is, reduced to its lowest denominator. In other words, the opposed traits cut off their own noses to spite the rivals.

This kind of dichotomy is so pervasive in the Hindu existence that it influences every activity of theirs, and, today, after the attainment of political independence it is a powerful force in their political activities both in the domestic and the foreign sphere. In this article I shall describe a few of the opposites which are shaping the policies, but not all of them. The most important opposites which are operating in shaping more particularly the external relations of India today are the following: (1) A sense of Hindu solidarity going with an uncontrollable tendency towards disunity within the Hindu order; (2) Collective megalomania with self-abasement; (3) Extreme xenophobia with equally extreme xenolatry; (4) Authoritarianism with anarchic individualism; (5) Violence with non-violence; (6) Militarism with pacifism; (7) Possessiveness with indifference to property owned; (8) Courage with cowardice; (9) Stupidity with cleverness. In this enumeration the positive trait is put first, and the correlative second, but they are on a par in the power to stultify each other. I am going to deal in this place only with the first three pairs of traits. Let me set them out schematically:

SOLIDARITY → ← DISUNITY
MEGALOMANIA → ← SELF-ABASEMENT
XENOPHOBIA → ← XENOLATRY

Solidarity and Disunity

It is a perfectly valid thesis to hold that India is united and disunited at the same time. The unity is derived from the origi-

nal colonization of the country by an incoming and conquering people, and the creation, through that process, of a massive and self-contained culture, whereas the disunities are the natural products of the evolution of the same people which created differentiations in every field—linguistic, social, cultural, and political. In other words, the unity is an expression of Hindu solidarity, and whatever organic unity exists in India today is a survival and residue of that old solidarity. It follows from this that the unity of India cannot be maintained except through the Hindu group consciousness, supplemented by a sort of Hindu imperialism. But it is precisely this stark proposition which the present rulers of India, in spite of being Hindu, will not recognize. This utterly theoretical non-recognition is depriving the present Government of India of whatever emotional strength their campaign for the integration of the people of India might have had.

But whatever the power behind the sense of Hindu solidarity, it was always separative, not unitive. By this I mean that it made all Hindus aware of their distinctiveness from the rest of mankind, and roused their sense of unity only when, as a group of Hindu nations, they were collectively threatened by non-Hindus. So it was in the past, and so it remains at present. The sense of Hindu solidarity is still a great force, and when it is fully brought into play its coercive power becomes irresistible. All Hindus stand in a pack and bay together, *nemine contradicente et dissentiente*.

In this the Hindus present a diametrical contrast to the European peoples, and, more especially, the British people. If in India there ever were a Dreyfus case, to be Dreyfusard would have been to court suicide, metaphorically in any case. Let me also give some British examples. During the Boer War there were opponents of the war who were called "Pro-Boers." Among these was a future British Prime Minister. Again, from the first day of the British Empire in India to the last day, there were British politicians and publicists who voiced opposition to it publicly. Had Great Britain been India, Burke and Sheridan would have found themselves in the Tower soon enough, and later John Bright would have been hanged like John Brown.

Such an expression of opposition to a national ambition or

interest, or even national folly, is inconceivable among the Hindus. A modern Hindu might be anything in his politics or social philosophy—Leftist, Socialist, Communist, Liberal, Centre, Right, Ultra, Anglicized, or orthodox, but when facing the non-Hindu world, he will be made to speak the same language and will also voluntarily speak it. Even when a man does not share a general attitude, any public dissent by him is not to be thought of. I know that many very high-placed Hindus disapproved of the occupation of Goa, but not one of them protested publicly. Such is the coercive power of the sense of Hindu solidarity that a Hindu's behaviour is controlled not only at the stage of action, but even at that of thought and feeling. This was seen all through the management of Hindu-Muslim relations before independence, as it is now being seen in the ordering of our foreign relations, particularly, the relations with China.

But the sense of Hindu solidarity, with all its emotionalism, projects itself in an outward direction, and does not bring them together for any national purpose within the country. Thus the sense of solidarity contributes virtually nothing to internal nationalism. Naturally then its internal effect is seen for the most part only in the uniformity of psychological reactions and practical conduct which tend to be similar in similar circumstances all over India. Hindus from widely separated parts of India will give the same answers to a set of questions on moral and intellectual issues, not to speak of political ones.

The Hindu *apologia pro vita sua* is absolutely stereotyped all over India, and even those who brag about their emancipation from the Hindu traditions do not show themselves as un-Hindu in self-excusing. In comparable situations they also act alike. In short the unity is obedience to a pattern of behaviour which set in its mould long ago, and it is very close to the unity of the animals belonging to the same family or genus. Everybody knows how alike is the behaviour of all the cats from the domestic one to the tiger.

But all this unity is residual, whereas the disunity produced by the historical process is both living and continuous. Therefore that is the real evolutionary force in the development of the Indian population. It may be stated quite categorically that

the natural development of the peoples of India is opposed to their social, linguistic, cultural, and political unity.

The diversities created by history have now become so hardened that the process cannot be reversed. In fact, no one recognizes this more unreservedly in practice than our present-day rulers. They have even dismembered the two great bilingual provinces taken over from the British, namely, Bombay and Madras, and created linguistic succession states. The strength of the provincial sentiment is seen not only in the provinces, but in the Central Government of India itself. It has a very special cast, and everybody who knows anything about its inside working also knows that it is a federation of ministries from the provinces. Almost all Central ministers try to make their departments provincial by converting their personnel into provincial contingents.

The political unity of India, so far as it exists today, is a legacy of British imperialism, and till now the new Indian regime has made no contribution to it. On the other hand, the strong provincial sentiment is emerging as the true national passion in India, and its full emergence seems to be only a matter of time. Owing to the existence of this provincial sentiment as an incipient nationalism, all Hindus think of themselves primarily as Andhras, Assamese, Bengalis, Gujaratis, Hindustanis, Maharashtrians, Punjabis, Tamils, etc.

But the divisions of the Hindus do not end with the rival loyalties to the provinces on the one hand, and to India on the other. They disrupt even the allegiance to the province. Within each province there are social groupings which clash with one another in endless ways. There are classes and class interests, regions and regional interests, castes and caste interests. Below these there is not only stratification but even granulation—factions against factions families against families, persons against persons, capable of harming all corporate effort. Extreme factionalism in Hindu life is both deep-seated and stable. There is hardly any sphere of public or private activity in which this evil is not present and assertive. It is seen as much in school or hospital management as in game clubs or amateur theatricals. The unceasing and unresting groupings and regroupings of the factions under the pressure of personal rivalries are kaleidoscopic

in their changes, and if one can acquire the detachment of complete non-involvement, saying—"plague on all of you!" he can even enjoy the colourful spectacle.

In the Hindu world all the narrower loyalties have a disastrous impact on all the larger. Modern Hindus have not heard the dictum—*Publicum bonum privato est praeferendum*, that is, the public good is to be given preference over the private. So, in every case when the two come into conflict, the private triumphs over the public. To put it in explicit terms, a provincial interest will invariably prevail over one that is Indian, a caste interest over the provincial, the group's over the caste's, the individual's over the group's. The alertness and energy in pursuing an interest grow as the field of its operation narrows. The play of the Hindu loyalties may therefore be compared to the spiral expansion of a force radiating outwards from a centre. Their force weakens as they spread out towards the periphery, and the self is always the vortex.

Megalomania and Self-abasement

I come now to the second pair of contrasted characters: megalomania and self-abasement. The megalomania at its origin was natural. It sprang from Aryan pride and self-confidence—from the consciousness of racial and cultural superiority over a barbarous indigenous population, and also from the pride of power of a conquering and colonizing people. The Muslim and the British conquerors of India had exactly the same kind of feeling about themselves.

But the original megalomania took a negative and defensive form when the Hindus lost their vitality and strength and passed under the political domination of foreigners. They could not endure that without an illusion of greatness, which became the compensation for the humiliation. The Hindus could maintain their self-respect only by hypnotizing themselves into the belief that the barbarians had won solely through brute force and that they themselves were superior to the conquerors in every human attribute.

The Muslim attacks on the Hindus before their conquest of India proper, that is, from the eighth century onwards, went on

reinforcing the emotional compensation until, by the time of the invasions of Mahmud of Ghazni, the Hindu megalomania had passed beyond anything in reason. Alberuni noted this and wrote: "According to their belief, there is no other country on earth but theirs, no other race of man but theirs, and no created beings besides themselves have any knowledge or science whatever."

Instead of being chastened by British rule, this self-conceit became even stronger. It was refurbished in a very paradoxical manner, and I give one example. After learning English we Bengali Hindus came really to believe that we knew the English language better than the English people, at least the English in India, whom we regarded as the butchers of grammar. This was the force behind the self-confidence of what was known as Babu English. A young nephew of mine told me after independence that he had been informed by the senior students of his school that the English people at home never used verbs, but only said "I rice" when they really meant "I eat rice." Now, I cannot say that after having been taught English by my Bengali teachers in this atmosphere, I was not influenced by it, and the way I throw the weight of my English about was certainly fostered by that confident assumption.

But nothing Hindu can be anything Hindu unless set off by its opposite, and here, too, the contrast exists. The Hindu megalomania was always accompanied by the Hindu self-abasement, and even now it is. At the beginning the self-abasement was, however, a different feeling. It was a sense of the decline of worth, and it was a healthy feeling. It originated in the historical experience of the Aryans in India and did not paralyze all effort at regeneration. For one thing, like all ancient peoples the Hindus placed their golden age in the past, and believed, without ever reading Hesiod, in a sequence of retrogression of the virtues. "What a race the golden sires have left—worse than their fathers; and your offspring will be baser still," said the Greek, and the Roman echoed,

"Aetas parentum, peior avis, tulit
Nos nequiores, mox daturos
Progeniem vitiosiorum."

And that was only a paraphrase of the Greek saying.

The Hindus placed their degeneration in the fourth age of their collective existence, and the four stages of the retrogression were Satya, Treta, Dvapara, and Kali. The last age is the age of evil, and according to the Hindu reckoning it began on February 17, 3102 B.C., which shows how stupid it is to complain about our plight today. But apart from the general belief in retrogression the Hindus were certainly aware that something regrettable was happening to them in India; they were losing their original physical and moral stature. My mother used to tell me that after being thirteen cubits (or was it eleven?) in the Satya Yuga, we Hindus had come down to a mere three-and-a-half in the Kali Yuga. Alas! it is even less by the standard cubit for me!

On the whole, the old habit of self-abasement was a good moral influence, and inspired the Hindus to a sense and also emulation of the "antique virtues." In the nineteenth century, more especially, the Hindus had an interlude, absolutely exceptional in their history, of rational self-criticism. The sense of self-abasement was activated into something like the Judaic notion of repentance. Nothing is more striking in the emotional power behind the movement for Hindu regeneration and reformation of the nineteenth century than the burning eagerness to get rid of the dross accumulated through the ages, and to purify the Hindu existence in an idealistic fire. Not one great Hindu leader of that epoch denied the degradation, but they also believed in redemption, and were convinced that they could purge themselves and become new men.

But this phase of self-abasement is over. Hindu society has reverted to its passive form, which is the Hindu inertia or *Klaivya* at its worst. After independence the self-abasement is finding an expression which is incredible, and may even be called degraded. Certainly, it is opposed to every form of self-respect, and it is difficult to understand how it can co-exist with the absurd national arrogance of the same epoch. One day I was waiting for a bus at one of the stops in Delhi, and though I knew what the bus service here was, I gave vent to some impatience at the delay. A Sikh, a very well-dressed man who spoke good English, heard me and observed, "Why are you complaining? You are not in a foreign country."

I give a few more instances of how our inferiority is taken for granted. Complain to any shopkeeper dealing in hardware that the nails he has supplied get bent at the first blow of the hammer, and he has his answer pat: "*Desi aisai hota.*"¹ If you take back a box of pins to your stationer after discovering that every third pin is without a point, you will get the same reply, "*Desi aisai hota.*" The electrical mechanic has fitted a plug which needs the strength of the whole body to push into the socket and is torn from the flex at every effort to take out, but if you complain the man at once says, "*Desi aisai hota.*"

The most amusing instance of this plea that I heard was furnished by a difficulty with a water meter installed in my house. It was supplied by the municipality and showed a very high rate of consumption. The owner of the house complained to me because I have a small roof-garden. I myself went down and tested the meter, and found that it was registering 50% in excess. When I drew the attention of the plumber to it he at once replied, "*Desi aisai hota.*"

One or two additional illustrations. One day I was going in a car whose noiselessness and, more especially, absence of rattling in the body I noticed. The driver at once explained, "Not assembled in India, Sir!" That accounts for the prices people are ready to give for a car sold by a diplomat, and also why people take such trouble to get a car from abroad paying any price. That also explains why housewives descend like locusts on anyone going abroad and request him to bring household appliances for them, especially knitting needles.

Now, I would not deny that the goods in question as made here are of bad quality. But what I object to is why our incapacity to make better things should be treated as axiomatic and no attempts should be made to remedy the shortcomings. But the answer to that is simple. The belief in our collective inferiority is so deep-seated that there is no real confidence that we can ever become efficient. Modesty, so lacking in the moral sphere, is certainly blatant in the practical and especially the industrial.

¹"Country made things are indeed such."

Xenophobia and Xenolatry

The last two paired traits I have to consider in this article, namely, xenophobia and xenolatry, are an extension and complement of the two I have just described. The self-regarding megalomania and abasement naturally change to xenophobia and xenolatry when the human group in question becomes other-regarding. The xenophobia is the outward projection of Hindu pride, and it developed under the impact of the foreign and, more especially, the barbarian invasions. On this Hindu attitude, too, I might cite Alberuni, to indicate the pitch to which the hatred had risen even before the Muslim conquest of the country. He wrote, ". . . they (the Hindus) will never stake their soul or body or their property on religious controversy. On the contrary, all their fanaticism is directed against those who do not belong to them, against all foreigners. They call them *Mlechchha*, i.e. impure."

Alberuni went on to say that, so far as the people of the Middle East were concerned the Hindu hatred was at first directed against the fire-worshipping Persians, and then, he added, "came Islam; the Persian empire perished, and the repugnance of the Hindus against foreigners increased more and more when the Muslims began to make their inroads into their country." After the invasions of Sultan Mahmud, Alberuni wrote, "the Hindus became like atoms of dust scattered in all directions . . . and their scattered remains cherish, of course, the most inveterate aversion towards all Muslims."

The xenophobia continued through the period of Muslim rule and acquired a new lease of life with the establishment of British power. I shall quote an early testimony to the substitution of the object of hatred. It comes from Abé Dubois, who wrote about the customs and manners of the Hindus in the early part of the nineteenth century. He draws attention, like Alberuni, to "the hate and contempt which they cherish against all strangers, and especially against Europeans."

He adds the revealing comment: "Under the supremacy of the Brahmins the people of India hated their government while they cherished and respected their rulers; under the supremacy

of Europeans they hate and despise their rulers from the bottom of their hearts, while they cherish and respect their government." One may say that with independence the Hindu mind has gone back to its pre-British norm. Nehru has been apotheosized, temples were erected to him even in his life-time, but it is hardly possible to sound the depths of the contempt and hatred for the present government in the hearts of ordinary and true Hindus.

The anti-British form of the xenophobia became part of the nationalism of modern Hindus as soon as they acquired the nationalistic sentiment. As the nationalist movement gained strength, the anti-British xenophobia also became assertive. After independence, the emergence of a low form of xenolatry has somewhat obscured the xenophobia. But it is very much alive beneath the surface, and comes out at a slight provocation. I unfortunately provided one such. I wrote a sincerely appreciative account of the English people and their culture after paying a short visit to England in 1955. The book, which was published in 1959, got uniform abuse in the Indian Press, and the malice of the personal attacks had to be seen to be believed possible. In a respectable newspaper I was described as a dog wagging its tail, though slapped by its master. I had, of course, committed an unforgivable offence against the code of Hindu ethics in respect of foreigners—I had praised a foreign culture with sincerity, which no Hindu is allowed to do. Interested praise of foreign nations is a different matter.

But the xenolatry when voiced by the Hindus amongst themselves and privately, is perfectly sincere, and they prove their sincerity by acting on what they say. If a foreign customer, for instance, comes into a shop, say, the cottage industries emporium in Delhi, the salesmen, and more particularly the girls, will immediately desert the Indian customer even in the middle of a transaction and rush to the Mlechchha. In fact, the xenolatry is as natural as its twin brother, xenophobia. If the one was excited by a defiance of the foreigner, the other was the product of defeatism in the same situation. Even before the Muslims had conquered India the Hindus had come to feel that their new enemy was irresistible, and in the first century and a half of British rule its stability was founded on the unshaken Hindu belief in British invincibility, which did not clash with the moral

contempt for the British because it operated in the amoral world of power.

I am not, however, going to deal with the xenolatry as it was during Muslim and British rule. With a set of foreigners obviously superior to their native subjects in many things, the feeling of inferiority was, partly at all events, natural. If it was created by defeatism, it also showed some moral sensibility. It gave expression to admiration for the foreigner's *virtus* as well to regret for the loss of the same *virtus* in themselves. So long as foreign rule lasted the xenolatry had a partially corrective effect. It stimulated emulation. We were piqued to do better than usual both by the foreigner's example and his contumely.

But after the coming of political independence the xenolatry is showing itself not only in a more pronounced form, but also with an inexplicably servile complexion. The new xenolatry is unashamed, blatant, rampagious. It is morally degrading and economically ruinous. That for the practical ends of government and economic reconstruction the Hindus would so completely brush aside their megalomania is a thing which no one would have found possible to believe before independence. Yet this worship of the foreigner in every field is as indisputable as it is strange. It is more assertive in the ruling class than in the ordinary Indian.

This adulation of the foreigner in the Hindu ruling order, whose self-complacence and even self-conceit hardly touch any sea-floor, is a paradox, almost a perversity. A distinguished Indian economist once told me after his return from a congress of economists in the Western World that man for man no Indian economist was inferior to any foreign economist. Yet is there any country in the world which makes use of a larger number of foreign economists? In the field of technological development our rulers will never entrust any project to an Indian if they can get a foreigner. They will not employ any Indian if they can give the job to a foreigner, and in any case they will not pay the Indian half the amount they are ready to give to any foreigner.

I give one other example of the degrading xenolatry. Soon after independence, at the instance largely of Nehru, a laboratory for research in physics was established in Delhi. In the orthodox

imitative style it was called the N.P.L. Those of us who took interest in the institution came to know soon enough that not much was being done in it. But our Government obviously looked at the matter differently and went on bragging about India's eminence in physics, until suddenly they discovered that all was not well with the laboratory. So, to put it in proper shape, they at first invited Professor Blackett to become its Director and when he would not accept the offer they brought him over to look into the working of the institution and report with a view to get it going.

When he was doing that I one day met him at a party. As a young man he was in the navy and was present at the battle of Jutland. He and I were talking about the course of the battle, and particularly about the squadron in which his ship, the *Barham*, was when an acquaintance of mine came along to say that he wished to introduce a high Indian official to the Professor. This official turned out to be the highest permanent civil servant in the Ministry which had brought over Professor Blackett. When the Professor learned that he said, "Then it will be you who will read my report." The dignitary beamed with pleasure. I could not detect any embarrassment in his manner, nor any sign of a realization that the Professor's commission was in itself a disgrace to the Ministry, to the Government, to Indian scientists, and to the country. If I, Nirad Chaudhuri, had found that I could not work the N.P.L. with Indians I would have blown it up with dynamite. But perhaps this bravado is due to the fact that Indians of my generation were brought up on *Self-help* by Dr Samuel Smiles, whom it has now become the fashion to deride.

Let me tell all timid Indians and all patronizing foreigners, whom I hear saying, "But you cannot do without us," that however uninstructed or inexperienced we might be at this stage, we really do not need the kind of help our Government is begging from every country. In my view the help is not even the spoon-feeding of babies, it is the forced feeding of geese by the dealers in foies gras. And the degraded begging has been made even more degraded by the importation of such English illiteracies as "Know-how." Have we forgotten our pride in Babu English, too?

DICHOTOMY IN HINDU LIFE

This has been only a sampling of the dichotomy in Hindu life, offered as the canvassing of a working hypothesis. I do not think I have to expatiate on the relationship of these expressions of dichotomy in our foreign relations. That will have become obvious.

ARTS

The Uniqueness of Theatre

"The play's the thing . . ."—SHAKESPEARE

"The stage is a lie, make it as truthful as possible . . ."—VOLTAIRE

by VINOD SENA

TODAY, when amateur dramatic productions seem to be continually on the increase and when we find a small but steady and expanding group of enthusiasts attempting to found a professional theatre in this country in the hope that it may one day grow into a national one, we often find people wondering why there should be so much fuss about developing this particular form of mimetic art when another is already flourishing so abundantly in our midst. That India had some form of rudimentary theatre at the advent of the cinema is a fact still within the living memory of some of us. That this theatre was superseded without any struggle, allowing the cinema to have almost a walk-over, is implicit in the present (almost complete) absence of any professional theatre worth the name in our country. Then why, when the cinema has already proved itself as a more dynamic, more vital and more versatile form of mimesis, should we seek to revive the conflict already resolved, to rejuvenate a form that has apparently become *passé* and spent its force?

These are some of the questions that the average lover of the mimetic arts asks when posed with the issue of the revival of

drama in India. The arguments advanced in reply often tend to be: first, that every great nation today, American, French, English, Russian, has a national theatre of its own, and that no nation can hope to figure on the cultural map of the world without a theatre in at least its capital; second, that if the cinema is to attain a high and consistent level of art, it must find some nursery, some training ground where young talent could get the opportunity for training and experiment which the cinema itself (with its commercial dependence on stardom) cannot offer, and that a flourishing theatre is the best possible feeder that it can get. But neither argument really justifies any serious interest in the revival of drama. If vodka is a national institution with the Russians or Burgundy with the French, that is no reason why we should follow suit; and no art that is cultivated simply as a matter of international prestige can hope to have much life. And if the cinema needs a place for nurturing its saplings, surely it can afford to set up at one point a school or an academy where it could concentrate the nation's best talent for training the young in a manner not possible to the theatre whose resources must be dissipated over large areas, covering at least the major cities of the country.

No, if the theatre is to be resurrected, it must be for different reasons. It must justify itself in itself, and not in terms of something else. The more sensitive of the drama's fans have often spoken of its "uniqueness"; they have found in it something that no other art-form seems to offer in quite the same way or to quite the same degree. It is in terms of this individuality of appeal, this peculiarity of the opportunities that it offers, that drama, ultimately, must be justified. And to be able to do this, we must begin by attempting to define the essential nature of theatre-experience, for if we can show that the drama can offer that which no other like art-form—cinema, ballet, opera—can give, something that has its own distinct value, then the drama shall need no apologists: its necessity shall stand beyond question and the need for its development be self-revealed.

That the theatre has its own fascination, a magic, a thrill not to be found in any other art, is a fact well known to theatre-goers for centuries. But when one looks for any analysis or exposition of its individuality, one is surprised to find so little.

THE UNIQUENESS OF THEATRE

Our ancestors seem to have taken their theatre-addiction for granted. Many a Pepys may have left indubitable proof of the stage's extraordinary power, its ability to *grip*, in spite of its fanfare and exhibitionism, even men of a retiring temperament, compelling them irresistibly to itself regardless of their most ardent vows and promises. But they never stopped to examine the why and wherefore of their experience. It was enough for them that some divine Muse or god was the art's patron, and that it in some way served as a "mirror to nature," or "an image of the times." One may take Aristotle's remark about the "purgation" of the emotions of "pity" and "terror" as a starting point for an investigation into the nature of theatre-experience—and many a modern analyst of drama has done that—but Aristotle himself never carries his inquiry further into this field and never explains his meaning, and it is not surprising that today there should be said to exist sixty different theories on the meaning of his "catharsis."

However, things have begun to wear a different complexion. As in other fields, so here: the kind of self-consciousness that has become so characteristic a feature of modern life, is gradually making itself felt in theatre-experience. The invention and development of other art-forms very close to the theatre—the cinema, the radio or T.V.—has made us conscious of the distinctiveness of the theatre in a manner that was not possible to our forefathers. The fact that we continue to find in cities like New York, London or Paris a sufficient number of "people who undertake the trip to the . . . theatre through the worst bottlenecks of traffic in the world"¹ to spend two-and-a-half hours in its press, paying often fancy prices for their uncomfortable seats, when they could just as well go to the nearest square and see the best Hollywood stars performing on the screen or sit back in the warmth of their hearth fire and watch their T.V. sets come to life, makes one wonder what it may be that thus impels them to the theatre? And if it is in America that these new forms have been most rampant, it is from there that we get the first distinct signs of a new sensitiveness to the uniqueness of theatre-experience. It was

¹ Eric Bentley, *What is Theatre?* (New York, 1956), p. 244. All subsequent references to Bentley are from the essay in this volume "What is Theatre?: A Point of View," pp. 235-70.

this burden that inspired the late Maxwell Anderson's "Cut is the Branch that might have grown full Straight," but his purpose is rhetorical rather than analytical. He notes a distinct difference between theatre and cinema, but beyond commending the former at the expense of the latter, he was little to say. Mr Eric Bentley, perhaps America's greatest living dramatic critic, certainly carries things much further. In the little essay of his latest volume *What is Theatre?* he considers at some length what he regards as the peculiar attractions of the stage. To begin with, there are, as he says, the peculiarities of the theatre as a "place" with its locale, machinery, lights, curtains, etc. Further, "there is something too about its inhabitants," "there is something about the actor as such, about the mere fact of impersonation, there is a 'magic' in this too." Again, there is the "audience" with the psychology peculiar to a "group of people in close physical proximity, with their faces all pointing one way and their attention—their eyes, ears, hearts and minds—focussed upon a single object," a psychology whereby "an experience is changed by being shared in such company in such a manner," until "the joke I imperceptibly smile at alone in my study, we perceptibly grin at, we perhaps all 'roar' at in the theatre."

But these factors by themselves cannot account for the theatre's peculiar power, for these to some extent it shares with the cinema, which too brings large numbers together, and has its own machinery of screen and projection and sound. Bentley realizes this, and the *raison d'être* of theatre-experience, he concludes, must be found in a living relationship between actor and audience impossible to the movies or to T.V.:

No current flows from celluloid to audience—or, at any rate, no current flows from audience to celluloid. In the movie theatre we can watch a story and admire many things that actors do, but we cannot be caught up in a flow of living feeling that passes from actor to audience and from the audience back again to the actor. In the movies Shirley Booth may smile and you may smile back at her; but she can scarcely catch your returning smile and toss it back again or change it and give it back in the form of a sob or catch in the throat. But such are the dynamics of theatre.

THE UNIQUENESS OF THEATRE

Mr John Gassner, the other colossus of American dramatic criticism, approaches the problem from a somewhat different angle. The concluding sections of his Dancy lectures on *Form and Idea In Modern Theatre* are largely devoted to an examination of the nature of theatre-experience. Its quintessence, Gassner believes, is to be found in the theatre's "Duality":

As spectators in the theatre, we make use of a built-in mechanism comparable to a shuttle, which enables us to move back and forth between the planes of reality and theatre. Or this faculty may be described as a double vision, which enables us to experience a stage performance in such a way that it is both reality and theatre at the same moment. We can focus on "real life" (i.e. succumb to the *illusion* of reality), at one point in the performance and soon thereafter respond to a thoroughly theatrical effect which we *know* to be "theatre" rather than "real life." Also we can have the experience of feeling an action to be "real" and "theatrical" *at the same time*, just as we are simultaneously aware of "real" time and "theatrical" time, which may be much longer and can even consume decades during the actual lapse of minutes.²

Both Mr Bentley and Mr Gassner could have pursued their explorations much further; but their intense concern for the problems of the contemporary stage distracts them from questions of theory to those of practice. Had that not been the case, one is certain that they would have arrived at a clear and coherent exposition of the true nature of theatre-experience, its scope and its limitations—for who could have been more qualified to speak on such matters than they. But things as they stand, they give us much by way of suggestion and they leave much that is unsaid. It is this that makes their pronouncements so invaluable, for if they do not exhaust the subject, they can at least serve as a useful baseline for further explorations.

The most significant suggestion that Bentley gives is that the theatre offers some kind of *communal* experience in which everything that enters is in some mysterious way transformed by being

² John Gassner, *Form & Idea in Modern Theatre* (New York, 1956), pp. 210-11.

shared; and that this communal experience is not confined to the audience but is shared by it with the actors. Carrying this line of thought a little further than Bentley does, we could say that the fact of a communal sharing of experience between actor and audience implies that the audience is more than a spectator, it is in some sense a *participant* since its response to some degree conditions the actor's performance. Mr Gassner's chief contribution lies in his pointing out that the theatre exists for us not just as a plain glass through which we look at life: it is a magic glass that intensifies, exaggerates, distorts, whatever it images, calling attention not only to the objects it pictures but also to the fact of its picturing them. In other words, the theatre is "real" and "theatrical," a transcript of life and an improvisation; and it can be both not merely alternately but simultaneously. And here, it would be interesting to note, both lines of inquiry meet, for if, as Bentley suggests, we are tempted in the theatre to smile at Shirley Booth and she tosses back to us in some form or another our gesture of appreciation without undermining the experience if anything, intensifying it, it follows that when we are watching a stage performance we are somehow always aware of its being a performance, of the fact that the actors and actresses are deliberately impersonating before us—a sensitivity to the "virtuosity" of their art becoming a vital part of our response.

It is its "duality," then, its reality and theatricality, that is at the heart of theatre-experience—and it is this duality that is somehow related to its other vital attribute; its quality of communal experience. Other arts may attempt to "mirror" human experience, but they must transform its elements into terms other than those in which it could have occurred or be expected to occur in real life, be they linguistic, visual, musical, plastic or kinaesthetic. But the dramatist suffers from none of the constraints experienced by the narrative writer, the musician, painter, dancer, or sculptor. He can employ all the complex machinery of life; not just *translate* its varied elements into a single artistic medium, but bring them *bodily*, in fact, upon the stage: language, gesture, movement, setting. He does more than *express*, he *reincarnates* life upon the bare boards. The drama, therefore, has not only a more varied sensuous appeal

i.e. appealing simultaneously to more than a single sense, but it has a literalness, an immediacy not experienced in reading a verse or prose narrative, in watching a dance, appreciating a picture or hearing a music recital. Each of these arts attains its own intensity, an intensity beyond the reach of drama; but in each there is a certain remoteness from actual physical experience. A master of narrative may often come close to giving us all the details of incidents as they occur in life; but then there is all the difference between a description and direct perception. The theatre may have conventions of its own which are usually dictated by its physical limitations but these, and this reinforces the point, seem to matter far less in its case than in that of other arts, its appreciation being certainly more accessible to the untrained than is the case with dance or music. For the fact is that the spectator tends to see a theatre performance not so much as an attempt to translate into one set of terms experience that in life occurs in others, than as a sort of transcript from life. He is hardly aware of "convention" as such: he becomes aware of it only when he is jolted from one mode of presentation to quite another.

But this is as true of the other mimetic arts like opera and cinema as it is of the theatre; and whereas we may dismiss opera on account of the "remoteness" it introduces by virtue of its stylization of speech and gesture and its dependence on music, it is otherwise with the cinema. Its ability to mimic actuality is, if anything, more developed than that of the theatre—and here-in lies the crucial difference. Both the stage and the screen bring before us human beings moving, speaking, acting as they tend to do in actual life. But the cinema, once the lights are off and the silver screen has come into its own, creates the illusion of actuality to a much greater degree than the stage. We are scarcely conscious that the figures we see before us are deliberately *performing*; we become conscious of the fact of impersonation only when it is being defectively done, or else when the lights are switched on and the screen fades back from a living "eye" to a lifeless piece of fabric. But the theatre is always an improvisation: the stage-actor, even when impersonating at his best, remains an actor; and we are most sensitively alive to his art when he touches its highest points, not just when he fails to

master it. It was perhaps this distinction that Mr Eliot had in mind when, after his experience of seeing his *Murder in the Cathedral* filmed, he wrote: "The difference between stage and screen in respect of realism is so great, I think, as to be a difference of kind rather than degree." George Hoellering, his producer, is even more explicit: "Whatever is seen on the stage is real; everything seen on the screen is, in a sense, an optical illusion."

The cinema, in other words, offers us a photograph of human life, albeit a faked one, but a photograph nevertheless. The theatre offers us instead an "imitation" of life; and while a photograph, even when known to be faked, depends for its effect upon an illusion of literal transcription; image and object coinciding exactly, an "imitation" in the sense in which the term is used here realizes itself by coalescing our awareness of the object imitated with an awareness of the fact of imitation, object and image not only coinciding but remaining distinct. Once we have surrendered ourselves to the magic of the cinema we tend to assume that what is before us is a record, a photographic record, of something that *happened* or could happen, and the screen, that can contain within its dimensions almost anything, lends itself readily to this illusion. In the theatre, however, even after we have given ourselves up to the performance before us, the stage, the rising and falling of the curtain, the painted sets the actual physical presence of human beings not just their photographs who daily repeat the same or similar performances—in fact everything about it reminds us insistently that what we behold is not a photographic reproduction but an improvised imitation. The illusion of theatre is never an optical illusion, for it is an illusion that is actively aware of its own illusory nature.

This awareness of its being only a kind of make-believe, far from being a sign of the theatre's limitation as a mimetic art-form, is the source of its peculiar power. For if opera and the ballet tend to be too much "art" and the cinema too much "illusion," it is in the theatre that the two tendencies each with its own attractions and possibilities finally meet and are synthesized into something distinct from either, something providing multiple satisfaction at multiple levels. The theatre carries with it

the direct impact of immediate experience and yet is not bound by the limits of physical verisimilitude. Being at once actual and theatrical, it is free to strain beyond to a larger, more vigorous life and can impose upon experience a rigidness of pattern that could only seem artificial in the movies. Thus the theatre can give us life as it is lived on its surface as well as life as it surges underneath, with its dreams and aspirations, its hopes and fears, uniting into one, words, that, as Arthur Koestler suggests (*Quest* 21, pp. 9-10), normally appear distinct and even opposed. Small wonder that W. B. Yeats, while realizing his limitations as dramatist, should have devoted so much of his energy to the theatre, for he saw in it "the most immediately powerful form of literature, the most vivid image of life. . . ."

Besides, the theatre engages us as spectators more completely than the cinema, since in it we are more than spectators, we are *participants*. Our response to what is presented affects to some degree the very fact of presentation. There is, as Bentley suggested, a live chord vibrating between actor and audience, a chord that has snapped in the case of the movies. Through this sense of collective participation the theatre acquires something of the force of communal ritual, of the kind of thrill that binds together a village community at a ballad recital where, even though there may be a single voice singing, the rest join in at the refrain or beat time with their hands. Yeats surveying the Irish folk drama in 1904 aptly observed: ". . . when the theatre is perfectly alive, the audience, as at the Gaelic drama today in Gaelic-speaking districts, feels itself to be almost a part of the play." It is possible that we can empathise better with characters when they appear in flesh and blood than when their photographs are projected two-dimensionally on a screen. A speech of Hamlet or Othello may be a memorable thing indeed in the cinema, but it fails to send quite that physical thrill down our spine that we experience in a good theatre performance. One may not be amiss in saying that the theatre "in a sense" is at once *more real* and *less real* than the cinema. And when with its peculiar opportunities for participation and empathy, the theatre of a nation turns to the dramatization of the hopes and fears of its people at a time when they are collectively moved by shared anxieties and aspirations, it suddenly acquires a new

dimension and miraculous power. It is no longer a mere organ of the entertainment industry, a place for a two-hour spree of amusement and relaxation. It becomes an extension of life itself, the point where its multifarious forces converge into an intense white flame of energy that draws us out of our limited, isolated existence and thrusts us into a wider, more universal, more terrifying, and also more satisfying mode of life. The theatre of Aeschylus' Athens, of Shakespeare's London or of the Paris of the recent German Occupation had a collective vitality of impact, a quality of crystalizing the dark and festering dreams and sorrows of the audience as a single collective being, that neither the novel, read in the closet, nor the cinema, which hardly permits participation, could have ever supplied.

But we must not forget that if the theatre can afford us, at its moments of vitality, the thrill peculiar to communal ritual, it also keeps us above it. Being simultaneously experienced as "fact" and "fiction," "reality" and "art," the audience, while entering into the experience, yet retains its power of critical detachment. This dual quality of our response to theatre leads directly to many significant consequences. It means that a theatre audience is more critically alive than a cinema one. It tends to be far more sensitive to the art of the "thing," for when we see an actor as someone trying to impersonate a character, rather than as that character himself, we tend to be incessantly alive to the virtuosity of his rendering. The screen-actor's art is no less exacting, and the audience cannot be said to be entirely unconscious of it. But its consciousness of the art tends to be of a negative kind. As already observed, we become conscious of it either when the art is being poorly handled or when the show is over and the illusion broken, and we look back retrospectively and critically review what we have witnessed. But in the theatre the fact of impersonation is always actively at the back of our mind, ready to come to the forefront whenever a particular action or piece of dialogue is particularly well-rendered. The enjoyment afforded is not unlike that we experience in hearing a piece of good music exceptionally well-played, for there too we are not only conscious of the quality of the music but also of the skill of the musician playing it. And the burst of applause that often greets the descent of the curtain

after a difficult and well-performed scene is ample proof that to the experience afforded by the movies the theatre adds another, that of the conscious appreciation of "art."

This more active critical awareness on the audience's part also implies greater demands upon what is presented. The spectator at the movies, not being called upon to participate and tending to see the performance as a literal transcript, is critically relaxed and accepts whatever is presented. So long as the photographic reproduction seems faithful enough and can hold his senses he has little to say. It is not surprising therefore that the dialogue of an average film script when seen on paper should appear so much poorer than that of the normal play. What is true of language is equally true of plot. Since the audience is not mentally very active, the cinema can afford to be thoroughly episodic and yet be a success. Even if it tries to be otherwise, it may fail, for, as Eliot notes, "An intricate plot, intelligible on the stage, might be completely mystifying on the screen. The audience has no time to think back or establish relations between early hints and subsequent discoveries." In order to apprehend any complex organism as a whole, our awareness of its individual parts must be critical. But in the cinema the illusion is so complete and our critical faculties so relaxed that we are always sacrificing the whole in our submission to the part. As such it can never attain to that complexity of structure and verbal suggestion that is the chief distinction of great drama.

Another and related factor is also responsible for this difference of texture. If the cinema can master more varied sensuous effects, it can also become their slave. A strength may often prove a weakness, and if the cinema can make use of the picturesque in a manner beyond the scope of the stage, it not infrequently begins to exploit its visual opportunities for covering up an underlying thinness of substance. An ingenious photographic sequence backed up by competent music may be made to evoke almost any emotion; and when emotion can be thus easily evoked by an art-form, what is there to prevent it, under the pressure of commercialization, from generating a response that is not really justified by the experience presented. It is no accident that Indian movies should be so atrociously sentimental, or that the average film from Hollywood should tend toward the

spectacular, sensational or jazzy. The stage, by being denied the screen's opportunities, escapes from its vices. It cannot afford to shift the emphasis from the human action to the setting, and whatever emotions it evokes must be generated by that action itself and not by something else. Thus the theatre can arrive at a concentration of human experience scarcely attainable by the cinema; and the fact that since it has far fewer visual resources it has to depend very largely on language, ensures its survival as literature.³ It is a paradox of drama that while it is not constrained to translate the experience it embodies into purely linguistic terms, it yet stands as one of the most outstanding and permanent forms of literature. The cinema may often make considerable use of language, but its pervasive reliance on the eye makes it impossible for it to realize itself anywhere but on the screen. Some screen-plays may have been published, yet they only go to make us recognize that the cinema can never become a branch of literature like the drama. Once again the drama displays a strange duality: it is at once literature and more than literature, bringing to the complexity and concentration of a work of literary art the immediacy of concrete physical experience.

The most significant consequence, however, of the critical awareness generated by the theatre's duality is its amazing ability to immerse us into varied human experience and still keep us above it. The theatre, as we have seen, allows ample scope to our empathy; yet if we know that a certain actor is not Hamlet but impersonating Hamlet, we are not very likely to identify ourselves completely with the role. We are thus enabled to enter human experience in all its literalness from within and yet remain its masters, viewing it objectively from without: we

³ The drama must ultimately depend on language, for though the actor's facial expression and gestures may be made to convey a great deal, they cannot be made as expressive on the stage as on the screen, where the camera can move backwards and forwards at will. At this point I am tempted to make the rather daring speculation that human experience, in order to arrive at the kind of communicable verbal articulation essential to drama, must reach up to a higher degree of consciousness than is requisite in the case of an art-form where suggestive visual and musical sequences may be employed, in place of language, to evoke it. Is not the development of human consciousness closely related to that of language?—but, of course, I must not encroach upon a field that is the special domain of psychology.

are at once involved and free. Bertolt Brecht's theories of an "epic theatre," wherein the audience is deliberately prevented from identifying itself with any of the characters, may be extremist, but are no more than a one-sided exaggeration of a vital double-sided truth about drama. While attending a theatre-performance we are, then, not only more sensitive to the technique of presentation, but are more critically alive to the quality of experience presented. We ourselves may hardly be conscious of the difference; and yet if the plot of a play may be more intricate, it follows that in the theatre we are intellectually more alert. Complexity of plot is but another aspect of complexity of experience even though in a period of decadence the two may not go together. Denied the cinema's visual resources, the theatre has to concentrate on human experience; and by virtue of its "duality" it invites us to be more critical of it, to compare and contrast, to correlate the before and after, to distinguish its varying shades and subtle differences. It is because of these opportunities that the drama in its short-lived days of glory has displayed a boldness and intensity of exploration that rarely finds parallels among other art-forms that can deal with like material. The cinema and the novel, by being too tied up with the details of everyday life, its surface, tend to become social documents—even though some masters may have done great things with them. Opera and ballet, by their reliance on stylized movement and music, suggest rather than define and explore experience. The traditional epic and ballad, while giving literary form to the legends of the people, view them in terms of the codes and attitudes current in their time without subjecting them to any sustained process of scrutiny. *The Mahabharata* or *The Divina Comedia* may be more philosophic than any play could ever hope to be, but do they possess the kind of intellectual challenge that audiences must have experienced in attending the plays of Euripides, of Ben Jonson or of Ibsen? While being far more universal than the movies or the novel—since they are above the trivial details of life—are they not too closely bound with the thought of their times, and does not one have to cultivate a certain frame of mind for their appreciation? The drama, too, cannot escape its times—the Elizabethan "world picture" is a constant presence in Shakespeare's plays—but at

its most live moments it subjects the accepted beliefs of its day to a process of intense exploration, reaching beyond to something that is timeless, born of its own times and yet of no time. The drama is said to be the most ancient of art-forms; it also remains the most modern.

It is this exploratory quality that makes it a place of intellectual stimulation. Howsoever much Shaw and Yeats may have disagreed on other matters, on this they were agreed. Shaw in 1898 declared:

The truth is that dramatic invention is the first effort of man to become intellectually conscious.

While Yeats, less than a decade later, founding a drama the very opposite of the Shavian, was exhorting his Irish colleagues to

... make the theatre a place of intellectual excitement—a place where the mind goes to be liberated as it was liberated by the theatres of Greece and England and France at certain great moments of their history, and as it is liberated in Scandinavia today.

"Intellectual excitement," of course, does not mean "intellectual debate." The theatre becomes intellectually challenging not by discussing the "current problems" of the day—that could only ensure ephemerality—it attains that status by subjecting the presumptions and attitudes of its day as embodied in the lives of concrete and living characters to a process of sustained psychological exploration. Great drama exhibits a rare unity of sensibility, cutting at the normal distinction between intellect and emotion, for it arrives at its intellectuality not by dabbling with abstract ideas and systems, but by becoming more completely because more consciously and critically aware of human experience in all its confusion of emotion, feeling and ideas. Like other arts it brings with it the exhilaration we experience when any obscure movement of our thoughts and feelings is brought to the surface. But since it unites detachment with empathy, it greatly extends this sense of liberation by making

our awareness of experience more conscious and objective. The theatre, at its best, besides being a mode of self-expression and self-awareness, is a means to *self-mastery*. It is a two-headed Janus that looks at life simultaneously from within and without, and no other art-form realizes, perhaps, quite this balance of "inwardness" and "objectivity." To the intensity and immediacy that must accompany the crystalization of the obscure and often morbid fears and anxieties of a whole people, drama alone can bring the sense of exaltation and freedom that is peculiar to tragedy.

Whatever has been said regarding the essential nature of dramatic experience may not be equally true of all drama. The theatre, too, has its periods of ripening and decay, and it, too, is subject to the pressures of commercialization. Besides, it is very difficult to generalize about an art that has found such varied expression as the Noh plays of Japan, the religious pageant-plays of Europe and India, the drama of Bhasa and Kalidasa, or of the masters of Greek antiquity, the Renaissance dramatists of Spain, France and England, or those of our own times. Modern drama itself displays enough variety to baffle any theory. But one must try to get at the heart of an art so ancient and so permanent; and even though the elements we have discussed may not all be realized in any particular drama, yet they do, I hope, exist as potentials in every theatre.

It is its "duality" that is the drama's perpetual source of power. The difference between it and the cinema as forms of mimesis is not one of degree, it is one of kind. The cinema is not just a theatre that has escaped the traditional theatre's physical limitations: it has tended to develop into a different art altogether. Its emphasis is on the photographic and the episodic, that of the theatre on the verbal and structured. If the

It is not unlikely that high tragedy of the kind we meet with in Sophocles, Shakespeare or Racine may be quite beyond the scope of the screen whose genius may lie in the direction of the pathetic rather than the tragic. We have already seen that the "more than life" quality of the theatre is beyond the cinema, and this "extra-life" dimension is exploited by all the great tragic dramatists. Besides, by making the hero's sufferings and death too literally "real" it seems to me to introduce a certain element of morbid pain that is absent in a stage-representation—a difference in quality which I think is borne out by Olivier's film version of *Hamlet*.

cinema moves towards naturalism and the graphic arts, the drama approaches symbolic expression and literature. But unlike other literary forms, it possesses the power of immersing us directly into concrete physical experience, yet it can do this without (as often happens in the cinema) throwing our critical faculties into abeyance. It has the best of both worlds: to the actuality of the screen it can bring the concentration, order and freedom from naturalism of art, and to art's remoteness and harmony it can bring the violence and immediacy of actual life. What it offers is something unique, something distinct from either cinema or opera. And this "something" is not only unique but supremely valuable, for what other art-form can give us this same awareness of experience from within and this mastery of it from without? This is certainly not to say that the drama is superior to other forms of art—each and the cinema no less has its own peculiar opportunities and its own peculiar pleasure and value. It is simply to affirm that a healthy theatre flourishing among any nation is much more than a matter of cultural prestige and pride: it is the point where the varied strands of its people's lives are gathered into one and given a collective meaning and direction; and that the absence of this art-form among a people cannot be made good by the presence and cultivation of other arts.

Is Hindustani Music Spiritual?

by V. H. DESHPANDE

MOST of the English, American and Continental musicologists who attended the East and West Music Conference held in New Delhi in February 1964 have expressed the view that, unlike its Western counterpart, the Indian Classical Music is essentially spiritual. Mr H. J. Koellreutter of Germany said: "Western Music was concerned with emotional realization whereas Indian music with spiritual realization." Mr Manfred Junious thought, "Western musicians aim at a kind of external expansion while the Indian musicians aim at inward concentration." Mr Ernest Meyer said in a similar vein, "it is especially the inner beauty of the more quiet and contemplative examples of Indian music which could inspire musicians and music lovers in the occidental world."

I have quoted above only a few of the visitors. Others, like Lord Harewood, Mr Nicolas Nabokov, Mr Yehudi Menuhin, Mr R. Ashton, Mr Hans Stuckenschmidt, Mr Lothar Lutz, and others who attended the conference also expressed more or less similar views. All this would appear to be very flattering to us, particularly as the views come from musicologists of repute who have expressed themselves after making a serious study or practice of Indian Music extending over years and it must be said to their credit that the range of thought and the depth of study they have brought to bear on the subject is not only unsurpassed in our musical literature but not even equalled by any of the

Indian scholars so far. Although, therefore, the purpose of this paper is to examine the validity of the dictum laid down by the visiting scholars and the extent, if any, of its applicability, I must do so with the utmost respect for their scholarship. I must also make it clear that it is quite possible that the visitors may have had something different in mind from what we usually understand by the word *spiritual*, viz. something connected with divine knowledge, self-realization, mysticism, etc. or, that they may have had a very limited connotation of that word in their minds. It is also likely that they may have only described the general character of our music as it appealed to them in contrast to the character of their own music and that whatever was "meditational," "contemplative," "improvisational," etc., was according to them "spiritual." And therefore, even if we disagree with them, we must make an allowance for this possibility and avoid any strong criticism of their views. I must also tell you that only one of them has used the words "spiritual realization" and that other scholars have said different things in explanation of their individual points of view. For instance, Mr Yehudi Menuhin has observed, "Indian music tried to express the inner, elusive element in the Individual, to go deep into consciousness, and Western Music evolved by bringing in more and more of the environment in terms of voices and the complications of putting these together." Mr R. Ashton has said, "Indian Classical music was introvert in comparison with the Western Classical music which was extrovert." Professor Stukenschmidt has stated that Indian Classical Music reminds him of "the endless unfolding of primordial being" and relates it to the aspect of improvisation. Mr Manfred Junious has similarly explained, "Indian music connotes search for subjective inner values, the expression of which is contemplation and meditation." I must, therefore, put in a further reservation that it is possible that I may also have erred in including all these different connotations in one expression—viz. "spiritual," as I am now doing.

I must therefore explain why I have selected this topic even if subject to such almost neutralizing reservations. In this context, the very first thing that strikes me as most unusual is that none of the visitors, except one, talked about the artistic values of our music as if none at all existed! And the one who did

refer to them only said: "the conflict of contrasts which leads to dramatic tension is alien to Indian music"! Besides, we, as Indians, are already fond of calling ourselves "spiritual" in contrast to Westerners whom we dub as "materialistic." In the field of Indian music this is especially so because the great ones in us right from the ancient sages down to the present-day politicians, also tell us that music is the only language in which one can pray and communicate with God. Even our own people have hardly been seen referring to the artistic values of our music! If our music was indeed spiritual, as all these personages have made it out to be, it would mean that all our musicians past and present were and are "sadhakas" or aspirants for salvation! On top of all this, if even the learned foreign musicologists also tell us the same thing, we will be only too willing to treat that as the most authentic opinion on the subject and mislead ourselves thoroughly. Let us therefore investigate into the matter if only for this reason and insofar as we can.

The various points of view I have quoted above all boil down to the one characteristic feature pointed out by the visitors, viz. that our music is "meditative," "contemplative," that it expresses "subjective inner values," is "improvisational in character," that it "brings out the inner elusive element," etc. When we come to think about these matters the following questions immediately confront us, viz.

- (i) whether Hindustani Music answers to the visitors' description of being spiritual at least in some part and if so, in which part; and,
- (ii) whether to be spiritual, it is enough to be meditative, contemplative, improvisational, etc.

Taking the first question first viz. whether Indian Music answers to the description of being spiritual, one is faced with the further question namely to which of the two musical systems are we referring, the Hindustani or the Karnatic? The visitors seem to have included both these under the same label; but I shall confine myself only to Hindustani music with which I feel familiar.

While we consider this question, it is necessary to remember

that all music, be it Eastern or Western, has grown under the protection of religion whether of the temple, or of the church. Music may have originated in folk art, but the very first office it was assigned to, was the religious one, viz. officiating as handmaid in the various rituals such as yajnas, prayers, high masses, or other religious ceremonies. While therefore religion provided the protective cover necessary for its growth in the early years, music naturally took on its colour, developed in a specific channel, was cut out to the required specifications and generally conformed to the so-called "spiritual" or more correctly, the "religious" pattern, consistent with the requirements of that holy office. But the first criterion or index of the development of any art would naturally have to be, how far it has outgrown the requirements of its infantile stage and cast off its religious crutches so necessary in that stage. I suppose this is the acid test of the development of any art, and music cannot be an exception. In other words the test would be whether Hindustani music has come to stay for its own sake, i.e. whether it has established itself as a self-sufficient and an autonomous art and not been assigned a subsidiary role of handmaid to ecclesiastical or religious offices.

If, however, Hindustani music fails to satisfy this elementary condition, we must be bold enough to confess to its being still undeveloped and in a crawling infantile stage. Thus, if the word "spiritual" is taken to mean "religious," the description of our music as "spiritual" would hardly be considered a compliment.

It is, of course, true that until about two hundred and fifty years ago, Hindustani music had not yet completely come out of its religious shell, and the classical style of *dhrupad* till then in vogue, was mainly, if not wholly, dominated by its literary content which was, to a sizeable extent, in praise of god or otherwise of a devotional character. The devotional import of the literary text obviously determined its form and fashioned its style and yet even during its entire career under the Moghul emperors, we find that it was trying to cast off its ecclesiastical robes and adapt itself to the demands of the royal courts. The form of *dhrupad* which had thus evolved out of the religious or temple environment was obviously unsuited to the atmosphere of the royal courts and ultimately in or about the early

eighteenth century the *khyal*, which has obviously no religious or spiritual colouring, was evolved by the musician Sadarang attached to the Emperor Mohamedshah's Court (1719-1748). Although the *khyal* at first was looked down upon by the then traditionalists, it gradually came to stay as a full-fledged classical form of Hindustani music and stands as its highest water-mark today.

What we have now to consider is, how far the form of this *khyal gayaki* can be described as being of a spiritual nature, having regard to the characteristics as quoted earlier, viz. that it must be meditative, contemplative, in search of subjective inner values, etc. Now, as all students of music know, *khyal gayaki* is not a single homogeneous whole which can be described by one common label, but consists of various 'schools' of music or 'gharanas' functioning today such as, Gwalior, Agra, Jaipur, Patiala, Indore, Kirana, etc. each of which specializes in and elaborates or emphasizes one or more of the constituent factors of music. We will, therefore, have to consider the question with reference to each one of these *gharanas* and ascertain for ourselves which of them satisfies the visitors' description.

Let us first of all be clear in our own minds which part of a *khyal* and which particular style of music of a *gharana* can be capable of satisfying this condition. Surely it is only the *alaap* part of a *khyal* which will be able to answer to the description. Naturally, therefore, whichever *gharana* specializes in this particular aspect of music will be the one to which any spiritual colour can at all be ascribed. Again, to be able to have any claim to spirituality, the *Alapchari* also must be such as will abandon itself to meditation and contemplation of the *raga* and engage itself in the unfolding of all its potentialities such as tonal varieties, with all the subtleties and nuances, both as to the accuracy of pitch and intonation and the use of grace notes etc. Further, the abandon will have to be so complete that it will almost be a total surrender and dedication to the tonal aspect of music with its natural anaesthetic effect not only on the audience but more so on the musician himself. It must be almost a tonal trance or a tonal "samadhi," i.e. a profound ecstatic and exalted state of mind oblivious to all things in and

around, including all aesthetic or artistic considerations and rhythmic limitations.

The precise question now is which of the present-day gharanas passes this test. One is tempted to name the Kirana House founded by the late Abdul Karim Khansaheb. But I for one would like to exclude even his gharana and confine my mention to the individual name of Abdul Karim Khansaheb, its founder one might also mention Amir Khansaheb of the present day for the reason that at least for the *alaap* part of his style he can be said to have taken after Khansaheb Abdul Karim. But more of this later.

I have elsewhere analysed the distinctive aesthetic characteristics of each of the gharanas in great detail but for the purpose of the present analysis which is limited to only one specific topic, I would like to divide all the Houses of Musicians into two groups namely (i) the Spiritual and (ii) the Artistic. In the artistic group, I would include all the gharanas except the Kirana House to which as I said, reference will have to be made later. These are the Gwalior, Agra, Rampur, Jaipur, Patiala, Bhendi-bazar, etc. It is not possible in this short paper, nor is it necessary for our present purpose, to dwell upon the individual artistic merits or otherwise of all the gharanas here. But I am including them in one bracket only for the reason that all of them have a common denominator, viz. an awareness of structural beauty and an integrated form, a conception of melodic or linear design and its organization and above all a sharp sense of "drama." The organization of formal structure of an individual gharana may differ from that of another according to its aesthetic philosophy and ideals and therefore the way each one of them builds up its climax is bound to be essentially its own. But what matters here, and that I suppose is the crux of the problem, is that each one of them has a full sense of what is artistically a good musical piece. One might have one's own preferences in this matter, but one can hardly deny that each one of them has an acute sense of drama although the conception of what constitutes drama may vary from gharana to gharana. I may go a step further and say that in fact what distinguishes

See *Gharandaj Gayaki* (in Marathi) (Mouj Prakashan Bombay).

a performer trained under the traditional discipline, from a musical upstart having no traditional training or background is precisely this, that the latter lacks the sense of drama in that he is unable to highlight one musical note or phrase against its predecessor either by accent, rhythmic silence or pause, change in the pattern, either rhythmic or tonal, use of grace notes or by any other device open to him.

As said earlier, one of the learned visitors, who is also a thinker of great depth, has stated: "the conflict of contrasts, which leads to dramatic tension is alien to Indian Music." With great respect to that scholar, I must say I am unable to understand this statement. It may either mean that the conflict of contrasts or the degree of dramatic tension obtainable in Western music is far superior to that obtainable in ours or that the Western musicians have failed to appreciate the dramatic tension as operating in our system. Not being familiar with Western music, I am obviously unable to say whether the dramatic tension is superior or inferior to that obtainable in ours or whether it is of a different category altogether. But to say that the conflict of contrasts of the dramatic tension is alien to Hindustani Music is something that passes my comprehension. The fact of the matter is that all the gharanas of the artistic group have their own special method of building up their individual tensions, although the degrees of such tension may vary from gharana to gharana. For instance, the tension of one may be very mild or sober and that of another may be of an intensive kind, and in between these there may be very many variants in other schools.

I may also refer to a very important feature of our music which is not obtainable in its Western counter-part, viz. the concept of *sama*. As every one knows, Indian music is bound on the outside by the constant, regular or standard rhythm or *taal* which is of a cyclic order. The first and the most accented beat of a taal is always this "sama" which is the point of "resolution" of the "tension" built up in the preceding cycle of that tala. The very meaning of the word "sama" is "samavastha" or the state of repose and tranquility. In other words, each cycle of the taal is so organized as to build up a gradual tension which rises up to a point placed generally a small duration before

the sama beat and which is the precise point where the song commences. It is there that all the tension so meticulously built up resolves itself. Mr Lothar Lutz has correctly said that the sama is the master-key to the aesthetic enjoyment of Indian music. Then again, each individual cycle so organized is placed one after the other in such a way that the rising tension of every succeeding cycle excels the one built up in an earlier one and so on, subject, of course, to an intermittent change of pattern employed for the purpose of variety. In other words, the whole piece of a given khyal is strewn with carefully built up tension occurring in every cycle followed by its resolution at the terminus, i.e. the sama beat.

Coming back to the Kirana School which we have left out as perhaps the only one in the spiritual group, we must now consider its artistic status. It is true that the founder of this House, the late Khansaheb Abdul Karim was given to tonal meditation and contemplation in the *alaap* part of his khyal which by far was his strongest point. I must repeat what I said earlier, that I would even exclude all his disciples and followers from this category as almost all of them including the late Sawai Gandharva and Professor Suresh Babu, or the present Behere Bua, Hirabai Barodekar, Gangubai Hangal, Bhimsen Joshi, etc. have abandoned their founder's extravagant indulgence in the *alaap* part and have taken to the artistic norms of form, structure and design. They, therefore, could now very well be included in the artistic group. But Khansaheb Abdul Karim's own case was very different in the sense that he had almost completely dedicated himself to tonal contemplation and meditation which even in his own times about thirty years ago was described, maybe even derisively, as a tonal "trance" or a tonal "Samadhi." The Westerners could perhaps have been excused for treating his music as spiritual, because when he sang he used to forget everything including artistic considerations such as rhythm, proportion, balance, etc.

But his *alaapchari* had however one compelling virtue which compensated for his deficient form. It excelled in the accuracy of intonation and dazzled the listeners with its brilliance and lustre. It was this dominant factor which shaped and governed his singing style. The specialized effort which he put into his

particular way of voice-training was not only enormous, but also became his creed. The delicate tissue-like golden threads giving a sharp point to his voice, the lustre of his polish the abundance of subtle tiny nuances of grace notes or "kans" etc. had almost become his article of faith. The result was that he invariably succeeded in creating an atmosphere of tonal chastity and purity, something of the sanctity and holiness which comes of the pursuit of spiritual realization. Mr Manfred Junious would have justified in calling this "inward concentration" as distinguished from "external expansion" and a "search for subjective values." It did try to express the inner elusive element by going deep into consciousness" as Mr Yehudi Menuhin put it. His music was certainly "introvert" as Mr Ashton said and it did appear, in Mr Stukenschmidt's words as "an endless unfolding" of tonal nuances if not of the "primordial being." In other words, it had all the characteristics of whatever one would like to group under the head "spiritual"! He always had his eyes closed while singing and insisted on saying that one can never "see" the tone unless one shut his eyes. One almost wondered whether he saw Divinity in the form of Tone itself!

Given to tonal meditation and contemplation, he was obviously indifferent to the only other important factor in music, viz. the temporal or the rhythmic. It must be borne in mind that it is the rhythm which gives music its form, shape and design and constitutes its artistic substance. Of course, the existence of rich musicality in the performer is always assumed. But Abdul Karim Khansaheb insisted on covering all possible tonal nuances and refused to eliminate even the trivial variants which in themselves were again almost unconditioned by rhythm. The result was that the form of his music suffered and became lop-sided. The effect on the audience however was intensely lulling, soft and soothing. And yet one was tempted to say that it transcended the artistic norms because the listeners also were in a trance with their own eyes closed forgetting everything about the aesthetic considerations of form, structure, etc. It was as if the "form" was trying to loose itself into the "formless" and "musical time" into the "timeless."

Perhaps this is too exaggerated a picture of his art and maybe I am myself sublimating his non-artistic deviations and giving

them a spiritual colour. While I do not deny having lived under this magic spell for over twelve years until I was about thirty three years old, I must at the same time hasten to rectify the probable imbalance by stating that my emphasis has only been in contrast to the gharanas of the artistic group and that, if at all any concession is to be made to the view expressed by the learned visitors, this one style which is also now almost extinct in the strict Abdul Karim sense can alone lend itself to the description of being spiritual. I am only saying that Abdul Karim's music lacked the essential rigour of the rhythmic frame.

The substance of all my argument so far has been that Hindustani Music cannot be called spiritual as is made out by the visiting scholars or our ancient sages, barring only one single exception. If our music were indeed spiritual as all these visitors tell us it would have remained confined to the four walls of the temple, or to the prayer grounds of pious devotees and seekers. It would never have found its way to and established itself in the royal courts of the kings and emperors, or found favour and patronage with hundreds of Indian princes under whom it developed and prospered. The very fact that our music including the Karnatic style, has survived to this day and has been satisfying the aesthetic cravings of a vast number of concert-goers, including connoisseurs, musicians, and other art-lovers, means that it has high artistic qualities.

This much with regard to the first question I raised in the opening part of this paper, viz. whether our music is spiritual. We have now to consider the other question, viz. whether to be spiritual, it is enough to be meditative, contemplative, etc. In this connection one might easily concede that our music is to a certain extent meditative and contemplative, but I do not think that the other epithets such as "introvert," concerned with "spiritual realization" and "in search of subjective values," etc. are at all applicable to the bulk of the classical music that is being heard today. All the houses of musicians are sufficiently extrovert, perhaps far more than they need be. But the subject here is the spirituality of meditateness, and I do not think that meditateness or contemplativeness and spirituality need necessarily go together. One might meditate or contemplate about his ladylove for all the twenty-four hours of the day and yet be far away from

spirituality. The essence of the matter is that anything to be called spiritual has to be employed spiritually, i.e. for the purpose of Divine Knowledge, self-enlightenment, or spiritual realization, etc. as was the case for instance with the musician saints such as Haridas Swami Tansen's Guru Meerabai or Thyagaraja. Then alone it may have any claim to spirituality. In other words if one is trying to worship Divinity through the contemplation of tone or if the tone itself in any given case has assumed the form of Divinity that music can certainly be described as spiritual.

This will incidentally also explain why the ancient sages said that our music was spiritual. The reason is that all music in those days consisted of *Saman* chants, religious prayers, devotional songs or songs in praise of God. It was certainly not the classical music of today. It is now many centuries since music cast off those crutches and came into its own as an art to be studied, heard and enjoyed for its own sake and not for any other purpose spiritual or otherwise.

Postscript

Perhaps the Westerners have gathered their impressions about the spirituality of music from its instrumental aspect popularized in their countries by our eminent artistes such as Pandit Ravi Shankar, Ali Akbar and others. I have not referred to this aspect of our music as it is almost the same as its vocal counterpart. However, there is one small difference, viz. that a substantial part of the instrumental performance is occupied by the *alaap* section which is essentially unconditioned by rhythm. Besides, only the other day I heard Ravi Shankar give a talk to the Music Critics' Club of Bombay telling them what, in his recent tour, he explained to his American audiences, viz. that our very approach to music was almost spiritual, etc. In fairness to him, however, I must say that he was speaking with reference to the *alaap* section of his performances and it is possible that the Westerners have taken this description of the part as the description of the whole.

DISCUSSION

Religion and Indian Democracy The Strategy of Freedom

by A. B. SHAH

THE statements on the Intellectual in Modern Asia by Prabhakar Padhye and G. D. Parikh *Quest*, October 1955 contain two assertions on religion which cancel each other. Mr Padhye apparently believes that Gandhism or Buddhism, if revitalized in actual practice, will provide an effective answer to totalitarianism. "Whenever," he says, "philosophies of this type have arisen, communism has been put on the defensive—intellectually at least; . . . they have shown remarkable power to combat totalitarian doctrines" p. 9. Professor Parikh, on the contrary, points out that "Gandhism, which is claimed to be the inspiring philosophy of the Bhoodan movement has had some of its leading advocates preaching the Chinese way" p. 15. Earlier, referring to Professor Northrop's remarks on Eastern religions, "Their negation of *this* world destroys their usefulness for any socio-economic reconstruction. . . . Asian religions . . . may thus actually smother the will to progress, to build up a new civilization on an ethical basis" p. 14.

I agree with Professor Parikh. However, the question raised in these contradictory assertions needs to be examined in greater detail. For, as Mr Padhye himself admits, we are witnessing a recrudescence of several religious cults having surprisingly primitive beliefs and practices with growing prestige even among

the educated classes (p. 6). He could have added that engineers, doctors, lawyers and even High Court judges are to be found among the devotees of the late Sai Baba or other miracle-mongering saints. At a slightly higher level—and herein lies the tragedy of the situation—many professed intellectuals derive inspiration from the high-brow mumbo-jumbo of Hindu metaphysics as reflected in the religio-social movements of the post-war years. One cannot predict where this religious revival will lead. But one must examine critically whether in the interests of freedom such a phenomenon should be encouraged for the sake of a temporary advantage over communism.

When a democrat characterizes communism as destructive of the freedom and dignity of the individual, his criticism springs from a loathing for totalitarianism in all its forms. He is aware that in the contemporary world, communism is the most dangerous form of totalitarianism. However, a rejection of communism does not, for him, automatically mean the acceptance of a religious metaphysical form of life. Indeed, one of the main reasons for rejecting it is that communism is itself a religion with its own mystique, its own Church, and its own Holy Trinity and a host of lesser deities.

It is not merely because the Russian experiment has turned out to be a sad fraud, but also, and primarily, because such "aberrations" are inherent in communism that a democrat rejects the Marxian remedy as worse than the disease. The defect lies not in the men who work out the system, but in the system itself. Logically worked out, communism, like any other social theory based on a supra-human cosmology, must lead to the sacrifice of the living individual at the altar of an *a priori* metaphysical principle. And structurally, the religious outlook is similar to the philosophies explicitly recognized as totalitarian.

To elucidate this point, it is necessary to be clear as to what one means by a *philosophy of life*. A philosophy of life generally performs a two-fold task. Its speculative part gives man an integrated picture of the universe and Man's place in it. Its normative part is concerned with laying down how man should behave in relation to himself and to his fellow-men. Non-scientific philosophies, including totalitarian ones, have this characteristic in common: they derive their normative part from their speculative

part. In such philosophies metaphysics determine ethics, and cosmology is the source of sociology. They aim at showing that all phenomena in nature and in human society are manifestations of the working of a single universal principle. With Hegel, for example, it is the evolution of the Absolute Idea, and with Marx the laws of dialectics, which alone offer the key to an understanding of reality, and indicate the way in which the individual should act.

In either case, human affairs are intelligible only in the context of a metaphysics of the universe, and human conduct is judged by standards derived from that metaphysics. The danger implicit in all such philosophies is that, practised conscientiously, they must sanctify the total control of the life of the individual by the agency—State, Church or Party—which claims to possess a complete understanding of their metaphysics.

The religious view of life is structurally similar to that of Plato, Hegel and Marx. The difference lies in the ultimates of reference. The religious view of life is distinguished by (i) a belief in the existence of the soul and often of a divine Providence; and (ii) a belief, grounded in (i) above, that the proper end of all human endeavour is to secure the release of the soul from the fetters of the senses and the bonds of Karma. In religions which assert the existence of a Divine Being, merging in the Godhead would be the supreme end.

The values of such a view of life are those of a humanitarian asceticism. It is not possible to subsume under it some of the most cherished values of modern civilization. Such, for example, are the values of economic and social equality, expanding freedom for the creative powers of the individual, and the values of art centred in man rather than in some supra-human element. It is true that some of those who find hope in *Bhoodan*—which, according to Mr Padhye, is revitalized Gandhism—also cherish these values. That would, however, only mean that not all democrats are given to examining critically the implications of what they admire. Lest there should be some lingering doubt on this score, let us see what Gandhiji and Vinoba feel about it.

"The reason why the four-caste system appeals to me is its naturalness and its *Dharma*. Those alone are my parents to whom I am born. How can I say I do not approve of them? The

vocation of the parents naturally belongs to the son. A special feature of the four-caste system is that, unless it is immoral, one has to continue in, and carry on, the same vocation as has been pursued by one's forbears. . . . Each of us is born in a certain stream, in a certain environment, and hence to each of us has been assigned a duty in accordance with his *Dharma*. However simple, however unsatisfying it may be, this pre-ordained duty alone is good for me, that alone is beautiful to me" Vinoba Bhave, *Lectures on the Gita*, 3rd ed., 1954; pp. 133-4.

No comment is necessary, except perhaps to point out that even social mobility is frowned upon by Vinoba.

Again, "Let me explain what I mean by religion. . . . It is the permanent element in human nature which counts no cost too great in order to find expression and which leaves the soul restless until it has found itself, known its Maker and appreciated the true correspondence between the Maker and itself"

Gandhiji, *Young India*, 1921. To anyone with a slight acquaintance with the findings of modern science, especially of psychology, this statement would appear at best as an expression of the mystic strain in the mental make-up of the Mahatma. The mystic's experience is incapable of communication. To make it the basis of the good life is to mortgage the growth of a rational ethics to the whims, hallucinations and vanity, maybe of a spiritual type, of men who, by definition, are abnormal. Besides, how can a feeling which inhibits the operations of consciousness be termed liberating? Man cannot be human unless he is free not only politically and socially but also from the shackles of the superhuman.

Admirers of "revolutionary Gandhism" or "Buddhist socialism" forget that freedom is something more than economic well-being and social equality. Well-fed cows in a wild pasture are not free in the sense in which the citizen of Periclean Athens was free. In the last analysis, the consciousness of freedom is the consciousness of one's creative powers and the knowledge that the socio-economic milieu in which one functions gives one the fullest possible opportunity for the exercise of those powers.

The material and institutional aspects of freedom—economic and social equality, parliamentary institutions, etc.—are a necessity, but by no means a sufficient, condition for the growth of

freedom. Prometheus did not defy the authority of the Olympian gods to ensure the economic welfare of the mortals on earth. Nor for nothing did Natchiketa reject the splendours of the three worlds offered to him by the god of Death. To both of them knowledge was the supreme good, for ignorance buttresses evil even if it may not always beget it. Freedom cannot flourish, nor can it be complete, in the midst of ignorance and superstition.

Religion by its nature is an enemy of enlightenment. Even if, as in the case of Bhoodan, a movement based on religion works for a juster social order, it can do so only by confirming man's slavery to an authority external to himself. And if material well-being and social justice are the only concern, why complain against total planning with an egalitarian bias? Why bring in the question of freedom at all?

It would seem that the issue is clouded by two factors: a confusion between the ethical and the metaphysical content of religion, and a confusion between the short- and the long-term strategy of freedom. In a world dominated by greed and injustice on the material plane and/or by a ruthless autocracy on the cultural plane, it is easy for the bewildered individual to fall back on ideas which appear to have worked quite well in the past. If Buddha and Mahavira could win over the ruling classes of their day to a life of charity and kindness, why, the argument runs, should it not be possible for Vinoba or Jayaprakash to awaken the latent good in the heart of the landlord and the capitalist in the modern world?

The snag lies in a misconception about the role of these two religions. What Buddhism and Jainism accomplished was primarily a cultural reformation, not a social revolution. Secondly, it should be remembered in this context that orthodox Brahminism staged a come-back and, after a brief interlude, Hindu society continued to sink to still greater depths of vulgarity in superstition and social injustice.

It is not necessary to go here into a casual analysis of this retrogression. It is enough to observe that the Buddha's was a grand experiment, which almost succeeded in convincing Indian humanity that the salvation of man lay in his own hands. He almost succeeded in founding an ethics independent of God and

metaphysics. The fact that soon after his death his followers developed a metaphysics and mythology very similar to those of Hinduism would show that the time was not ripe for the rise of a religion without theology.

Even in modern times, "it is a matter of experience that all attempts . . . to spread non-Theistic religion Positivism, Ethicism, etc. have had little success, and that the Churches with the least theological element Unitarianism etc. remain the smallest" Joseph McCabe, *A Rationalist Encyclopaedia*, p. 489.

One of the chief causes of the failure of such experiments seems to be their inability to meet the average individual's need for belonging and for emotional security in a universe which he does not understand and over which he has no control. Religion, with its paraphernalia of gods in heaven and ritual on earth, could do it before the emergence of the nation-state and of modern science. It cannot do it now for the simple reason that the entire worldview of man has been changed beyond recognition by science during the last three hundred years.

That the religion of Gandhiji and Vinoba is devoid of the colour and drama associated with it in the past merely makes their experiment a pseudo-intellectual one, which can appeal neither to the intelligentsia nor the masses. For what moves the people is not the rarefied concepts of the philosopher, but the image of these concepts in reality as they understand it. This is particularly true in those aspects of life which touch the abiding instincts and impulses of mankind. As anthropology has shown, the instinctive basis of religion is, contrary to Gandhiji's belief, not the urge to know one's Maker, but man's fear of the unknown and his desire for self- and race-preservation.

It is not for nothing that the hold of religion has steadily weakened with the growth of science. And this being so, it is not possible to rehabilitate religion any more than astrology and alchemy. Any attempt to do so can only succeed by entrenching superstition all the more firmly in the minds of our countrymen.

A democratic outlook on life, which takes into account the findings of modern science, and which incorporates a rational ethics with the freedom and dignity of the individual as its central values, is yet to take root in Indian soil. Religion, even

if sterilized and rendered hygienic, is not conducive to the growth of such an outlook. There are no short cuts in the life of the spirit.

Perhaps the attribution of revolutionary potentialities to revitalized Gandhism or Buddhism results from a failure to distinguish between the principles of freedom and the exigencies of the immediate situation. Active workers in the cause of democracy are apt to lose heart over the slow process of educating the common man in a new philosophy of life. The obvious advantage both in tactics and in appeal, that totalitarians enjoy over the votaries of freedom makes the struggle look desperate enough to lend a friendly hue to every anti-Communist.

It is easy, under such circumstances, to interpret a negative agreement on the nature of the enemy as an identity of ideals among the different groups that constitute the opposition to communism. But in a war of ideas, contrasted to a war of arms, one cannot be too vigilant in keeping one's ideal immune to corrosion by the requirements of diplomatic protocol. It would be ironic indeed if, while combating communism, democratic intellectuals in India were to help revitalize an authoritarian doctrine of indigenous make.

Before the Indian Intellectual can make a significant contribution to the growth of democracy in his country, he will have to transcend the limitations of "the colonial mind." Unlike their counterparts in Western Europe, the intelligentsia and the bourgeoisie in India came into being and grew up, not in a struggle against a decayed social and spiritual order, but under the aegis of a quasi-liberal foreign rule. The cultural superiority of the British very naturally developed among our intellectuals an attitude of admiring disciples and grateful proteges vis-a-vis the imperial rulers.

Even the late Tilak, the Father of Indian Unrest, was more concerned with exposing the gulf between the Englishman's practice here and at home than with challenging the fundamental values of Western civilization. In the context of an authoritarian native culture, this was fortunate, no doubt. However, an undesirable result of this process was that Indian intellectuals, with the exception of a small heroic section in Bengal and Maharashtra, neither developed any particular passion for

the values, nor did they live up to the historical role of their class. Some of the most talented among them faithfully served the British Raj, some found fulfilment in the service of the princely states, while others confined themselves to the seclusion of academic life.

Even the liberals, who counted among themselves some brilliant minds, never went beyond passing pious resolutions at Christmas gatherings. With the appearance of Gandhiji on the Indian political scene, the intellectual withdrew still further into his shell. His isolation from the throbbing life around him was completed by the anti-intellectual, feudal-cum-religious ideas of the Mahatma and the civil disobedience movements that the Congress launched under his leadership.

This short account should explain the three major vices—in an intellectual, they *are* vices—of the Indian intellectual. In order of importance, they are: (i) hypocrisy and spinelessness, (ii) inability to meet the world on what Professor Parikh called “level terms,” and (iii) intellectual chauvinism, perhaps as a compensation for (ii).

An interesting development since Independence is the almost overnight transformation of yesterday's liberals into full-blown fellow-travellers. Men who used to pooh-pooh all talk of planning for the common man, suddenly began predicting that the future belonged to the left. A little easing of the cold war tension, and the Prime Minister's associating a few economists and scientists with the work of the Planning Commission, convinced them of the possibilities of co-existence abroad and mixed economy at home. Bhoodan, which was reactionary, uneconomic and incapable of solving our agricultural problem, now makes them wonder whether we are not wrong in copying the West without sufficient regard for the values embodied in the Indian tradition.

The performance of the intellectual is equally nauseating on the academic plane. I am not referring here to the poverty of thought, for which perhaps he can produce a plausible alibi. Worse, however, than the poverty of thought, has been his lack of integrity and for that there can be no excuse. Frustrated in the larger life outside, he has developed a perfect technique of sophistry and jockeying for position in his own profession.

He justifies and perpetuates privilege, grabs power and wins and distributes patronage—all in the name of better teaching and better research. Even ethical scruples, whose absence in politicians is so often deplored by him, are brushed aside as the fads of a few cranks who do not have to shoulder the responsibility of running a college or a university.

The inferiority complex and its reverse, the intellectual chauvinism, of the Indian intellectual need no special mention. The verbose and superficial panegyrics of what others have achieved, and the determined attempt to find, in a germinal form at least, the most recent developments of political philosophy in the *Vedas* and *Upanishads*, are evidence of an unfulfilled obligation of the Indian intellectual: he has yet to deserve the name under which he parades.

1. Historical Materialism

In Defence of Historical Materialism

by SATINDRANATH CHAKRAVARTI

MR Abu Sayeed Ayyub's article on historical materialism *Quest* 17, raises in a clear manner a number of important issues, discussion of which can only be beneficial to an understanding both of historical development and of Marxism as a method of studying that development.

Limitation of space does not, however, permit me to examine a good deal of what he says; nor to trace the new humanist/existentialist genealogy of Mr Ayyub's position.

In this article, I shall confine my attention to a criticism of some of the most glaring misconceptions in Mr Ayyub's article and to a defence of Marxian historical materialism.

It is common knowledge that historical materialism represents the *application* of the principles of dialectical materialism to human society. Lenin describes historical materialism as "an integral formulation of the fundamental principles of materialism as *extended* to human society and its history."

Mr Ayyub, however, separates historical materialism from dialectical materialism and says, "Historical materialism ranks far above the general theory of dialectical materialism."

To isolate historical materialism from dialectical materialism, is, to jeopardise the systematic unity of the Marxist world view. This is exactly the style of the platitudinists. And then again, to

say that historical materialism ranks far above dialectical materialism is like saying that the law of planetary motion ranks far above the law of gravitation. Moreover, Marxists nowhere accord this ranking order to historical materialism. While philosophically criticizing historical materialism, Mr Ayyub is, therefore, expected to state first the views of his opponent as objectively as possible, without an admixture of personal opinions and beliefs. It is obvious that Mr Ayyub has made a departure from this legitimate expectation, for reasons best known to him.

Mr Ayyub begins by posing the following premises:

(i) The material life of society is not primary; on the contrary, the constituents of material life of society, e.g. the goods produced by man, the raw materials, implements of production, etc. "come into human life only because of certain needs, desires, impulses, motives—thoughts and ideals of man—all of which are mental and not physical."

(ii) Historical materialism should be more appropriately named "the economic conception of history"; and the economic conception after all, is a "rigid theory of one-way determinism."

(iii) The non-economic factors, being higher than the economic base, cannot be reduced to or explained in terms of the latter, i.e. phenomena at a lower level.

Let us consider the above points.

(i) *First:*

Marx's historical materialism originated as an anti-thesis to the view that history is to be interpreted in terms of the self-development of the Absolute. Hegelianism today is dead. But various brands of individualist explanation are current in the field of history. Mr Ayyub has persuasively stated one such explanation.

It is not necessary that Marxists should contend that needs, desires and impulses, "thoughts and ideals" of men, have no bearing on social historical causation. But the crux of the question is—*why* these needs, impulses, ideals and not any other? Why for example, the principle of authority in the 11th century and the principle of individualism in the 18th? Why suddenly the "need" to emancipate from the restrictions of the Catholic Church during the period of Reformation? Why the "need" for

nation-states since the 17th century and not in the 11th? Marxists would argue: Given the economic situation of Europe at the close of the 15th century, it was necessary that the loose unity of medieval Christendom should be broken up, that the claims of the Universal Church should be repudiated, that strong nation-states should be brought into existence, and that the capitalist entrepreneur should escape from the restrictions imposed on him by guild and church and should take to himself an ethical and a religious outlook in harmony with the changed economic needs.¹

Mr Ayyub, however, would explain history with his "needs-impulses-ideals" theory. Has Mr Ayyub clothed his subjectivist-individualist theory in historical flesh and applied it as an interpretation of some actual period of history?

Unfortunately not. Has he reconstructed some "Age" in pre-history, so that its full meaning could be apprehended? No. His theory is perhaps an *a priori* scheme into which later he will fit historical facts.

The Marxist historical-materialistic methodology begins at the economic end of the social complex. And as John Strachey says—the economic substructure of society is the skeleton on which hang the flesh, blood, connective tissues, nerves, sense-organs and brain of the body social.² Certainly the skeleton is not the only part of human body: But Mr Ayyub has been a rash anatomist who did not begin with the bones of his subject.

Secondly:

Historical materialism as a method of historical analysis has never been a pious wish. It is based on evidences from various fields of human knowledge, especially from the social sciences. The guide to study known as historical materialism has, by common admission, shed considerable light on (a) the close of the middle ages (b) the religious struggles of the 16th and 17th centuries (c) the 17th century struggle in England (d) 1789 in France (e) the rise of nationalism and (f) the whole epoch of industrial revolution in Europe. Likewise, as most scholars accept, little, if any, sense can be made of events of the past half-

¹ G. D. H. Cole, *What Marx Really Meant*.

² John Strachey, *Contemporary Capitalism*.

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century, dominated by Imperialism, Capital-labour problem, the issue of Capitalism *versus* Socialism and War and Peace, by an interpreter who does not use the categories of historical materialism.

The fruitfulness of historical materialism as a method of enquiry has been gaining recognition in Archaeology, Ethnology, Economics and other social sciences. An eminent archaeologist says: "Marx insisted on the prime importance of economic conditions, of the social forces of production, and of applications of science as factors in historical change. His realist conception of history is gaining acceptance in academic circles remote from the party passions inflamed by other aspects of Marxism."³

Mr Ayyub, however is not to be convinced.

He would argue—if economic conditions be of prime importance, then historical materialism should be "more appropriately named the economic conception of history"—"historical economism," and historical economism is untenable. Presumably, he does not accept the legitimacy of gloves-off philosophizing. Otherwise, how can we explain the utter confusion made by Mr Ayyub in comprehending the essence of historical materialism?

(ii) *First:*

Is historical materialism "the economic conception of history"—historical economism? The answer is in the negative. The economic conception of history—economic materialism—implies a theory which holds that the economic aspect of society is the *unique* determinant, the *only* determinant, of all the rest. *vide* Narodniks & Subjectivists in Russia.⁴ Marxian historical materialism implies the conviction that the economic, political and all other aspects of society are *interconnected*—that all these *react* upon one another and also upon the economic basis, but that there is interaction, on the basis of economic necessity, which *ultimately* always asserts itself.

If, however, the economic base, the economic necessity, ultimately asserts itself, then what is the status of the non-economic factors—political, juridical, philosophical, religious, artistic, etc.? Is it not a fact that "ultimate determination" by the economic

³ Gordon Childe, *Man Makes Himself*.

⁴ Plekhanov, *Materialist Conception of History*.

base entails not reciprocal action but a rigid theory of one-way determinism? That is exactly the philosophical claim of Mr Ayyub.

Now, Mr Ayyub's confusion is traceable to the fact that what he lacks is dialectics. To him, men make several *distinct* histories—the history of “economic factors” and the history of law, the history of morals, the history of art, etc. Economic factors and non-economic factors are, as it were, discrete “forces” which drag human society, each in its own way along the path of history. From the standpoint of the materialist conception of history, however, men do not make several histories, but *only one* history, the history of their own social relations, which are determined by the state of the productive forces at each given period, the social complex comprehending various aspects—economic, political, philosophical, etc. in its inter-related unity.

Secondly:

The materialist conception of history is based on the legitimate assumption that human beings are polyatomic and that human actions take place in the world of macroscopic bodies entailing subjection to the laws of causation. In fact, the materialist conception of history is a generalization about the dominant lines of social causation.

Now, social tendencies and historical movements deal with a large number of people at the level of the group or class admitting of course, the role of individuals in history and not simply with individuals “floating upon the social tide like ambergris, cast out by Leviathan but of great perfume.”⁵ If that be the case, then, as Dobb says, it follows that social tendencies and historical movements are much more capable of being subjected to causal analysis than those who make much of “historical irrationalism,” of “the unique quality of the historical event” or “the intricacy of the world of time,” have been willing to allow.⁶ For, at the *level of the group or class* there is much greater uniformity in the response of human beings to various situations and various stimuli than can be noticed, when one is observing individuals.

⁵ B. Dunham, *Giant in Chains*.

⁶ Maurice Dobb, *On Economic Theory and Socialism*.

(iii) Once this is granted, the claim of "economic factors" to use Mr Ayyub's expression, the skeleton of the body social, to exercise determining influence in shaping the actions of social groups and classes is an extraordinarily high one; not on the ground that the skeleton is the *only*, or even in many respects the most important part of the body social, but because so much in the mode of life of man in society, his nature, habits and conventions, his prejudices and sense of values—his cultural-artistic opportunities and pursuits hang on the skeleton.⁷

Historical materialism does not deny that "ideas"—"non-economic factors"—enter into historical interpretation *both as cause and effect*; what was denied was that "ideas" could be explained entirely or even mainly, in terms of a genealogy of their own, only by their inner dialectic. Ideas are not *sui generis* reals. Moreover, within the complex *interlocking* of causal chains, within the process of "reciprocal interaction" between ideas and economic conditions, the *two-way influence* of each upon the other was not symmetrical.

For Marx and Engels a causal statement was never more than a partial truth and an approximation, a statement in a particular context, derived by isolating certain factors and certain chains of influence from the complex interacting whole of which they were part. As such they were essential for practice, in throwing into relief certain dominant influences. A situation about which one can say *no more* than that there is a reciprocal interaction or a variety of proximate causes is a situation about which one does not know very much. That the state of mind of a tuberculosis patient may react on his state of health, does not invalidate the medical diagnosis of the disease; nor does the fact that moons and planets interact make nonsense of the statement that moons go round planets and not planets round moons.

Marx's view of the relation between economic structure and ideology amounts to a statement about both the directness and strength of the influence that the former exerts over the latter. By contrast, the influence which ideas have on society is subject to much straiter limitations.⁸

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Maurice Dobb, "Marxism and Social Sciences", *Modern Quarterly* Winter, 1947-48.

Hence the conclusion of historical materialism—"the determining element in history is *ultimately* production and reproduction in real life."

Does historical materialism deny human volition, ideas, passions, deliberation and such other non-economic factors? The answer is in the negative. The following chain of historical causation exhibits in a schematic manner the premises of historical materialism:

- (a) History is the work of *men*;
- (b) *Action*, which makes history, is determined by their *will*;
- (c) The will is the expression of their *ideas*;
- (d) These ideas are the reflection of the *social conditions* in which they live;
- (e) It is the *social conditions* that determine the *classes* and their struggles;
- (f) The classes themselves are determined by the *economic conditions*.⁹ Such is the implication of historical materialism.

It is amazing that a theory which gives so much importance to the struggle of classes economic, political, social and ideological as the motive forces of history should be misunderstood as being a variant of rigid economic one-way determinism. Ideal driving forces operate in history. But the ideal factors have their origin and reflect no mirror image, nor passive social reality and are ultimately conditioned by them. A historical materialist, therefore, can readily accept that "the relation between the economics of society and its culture is very complex and the inner dialectic of an intellectual enquiry or an artistic current may supply a propulsion of no mean strength in shaping their lines of development." For did not Engels himself refer to "the fatuous notion of the ideologists that because we deny an independent historical development to the various ideological spheres which play a part in history we also deny them any effect upon history."? "The ideological factors, on many occasions supply a propulsion of no mean strength"—true, the only point to

⁹ George Politzer, *An Elementary Course of Philosophy*.

remember, in addition to this truth, is that "ideas" ultimately depend upon the economic substructure—the skeleton of the body social—and are not entities springing from nobody knows where.

Having left himself with a world constituted of economic and non-economic factors, where non-economic factors, such as intellectual curiosity, moral and religious zeal, national rivalry, racial hatred, etc. dominate, Mr Ayyub legitimately concludes: "This, of course, makes the study of history immensely complex and historical prophecy impossible." Obviously Mr Ayyub does not recognize history as a scientific discipline, accepting as he does, Russell's witty but tragic generalization—"All along in history nonsense has inspired more zeal and self-immolation than sense or good sense."

Like professional philosophers and historians, unmindful of a rapprochement between theory and practice, to whom history is a "play of the contingent and the unforeseen," Mr Ayyub too is here irresponsible.¹⁰

Mr Ayyub is an anti-materialist and consequently accepts that human history hangs upon the thread of a thousand chances but not on the production and reproduction in real life; and he believes in only *interpreting* the world. That the anti-materialist philosophy of history may cast up such precious gems as the following, may not be unknown to Mr Ayyub:

"Admitting that great forces are generated by economic causes, it often depends upon quite trivial and fortuitous events which of the great forces gets the victory. In reading Trotsky's account of the Russian Revolution, it is difficult to believe that Lenin made no difference, but it was touch and go whether the German Government allowed him to go to Russia. If the Minister concerned had happened to be suffering from dyspepsia on a certain morning, he might have said 'No' when in fact he said 'Yes,' and I do not think it can be rationally maintained that without Lenin the Russian Revolution would have achieved what it did. . . ."

"It may be maintained quite plausibly that if Henry VIII had not fallen in love with Anne Boleyn, the United States would not now exist. For it was owing to this event that England broke with the Papacy, and, therefore, did not acknowledge the Pope's gift of the Americas to Spain and Portugal. If England had remained Catholic, it is probable that what is now the United States would have been part of Spanish America." ¹¹

¹⁰ R. G. Collingwood, *An Autobiography* Chapter on "Theory and Practice").

¹¹ Bertrand Russell, *Freedom and Organisation*.

From such wonderful philosophies of history, only one conclusion can follow: "historical prophecy is impossible." Marxism, however, is a method, not only of interpreting the world, but of *changing* it; and to be an effectual method of *acting* upon the world, it must apprehend the essential truth about the nature of the world not simply the Minister's dyspepsia or Henry VIII's love-episode, even if that truth cannot be final and absolute.

Marxists have, of course, consistently disclaimed any pretensions to being prophets and have been content to study as precisely as they can "the real movement going on under our very eyes," and to undertake the most detailed study of actual situations. This quality of realism in the thought and practice of Marxism, explains, why, when idealistic and pseudo-idealistic theories have died of inanition, Marxism goes on triumphing.

2. Historical Materialism : Further Examination

Reply to Professor S. N. Chakravarti

by ABU SAYEED AYYUB

THE difficulty with contemporary Communists is that though they have mastered the physical means of blowing their military opponents of today and the earth along with them to dust and ashes, their mental equipment is good enough only for fighting their ideological opponents of yesterday. Petrification of ideas in the midst of a prolific growth of the literature of scholasticism makes the Marxists of the nineteen-fifties argue against everyone as if he belonged to the eighteen-fifties or thereabouts. What is more, their theory of class war carried to all spheres of human activity makes them assume clear-cut divisions and head-on clashes everywhere. "He who is not with me is against me" is bad enough, but to suppose that anybody who ventures to criticize me must obligingly match my naïve materialistic philosophy with a particularly naïve brand of idealism so that my thrusts may go home, is a little too much. It is amusing to see Professor Chakravarti tag on to my name such easy and long-practised targets as "there are several distinct histories, the history of economic factors, and the history of law, the history of morals, the history of art," "ideas could be explained in terms of a genealogy of their own"; "culture, intellectual enquiry, art are not

determined by social existence but are autonomous in the sense of being independent of all external constraints"; "the movement of society and the movement of culture are polar opposites" etc. I do not know if any living person believes in all these things; anyway I would not be interested in him. And if Professor Chakravarti is interested only in refuting these ghosts of the nineteenth century, he might have spared himself the pains. Of the views of his flesh and blood opponent whom he mentions by name, he shows little awareness. Far from asserting that "economic and non-economic factors are as it were discrete forces which drag human society each its own way," I had expressed myself in the following unambiguous words:

The relation between the economics of a society and its culture is very complex indeed. No doubt, economic conditions play a great part in moulding the general direction of cultural and artistic activities, still more so in presenting certain problems and suggesting certain themes to thinkers and artists. But the inner dialectic of an intellectual inquiry or an artistic current itself supplies a propulsion of no mean strength in shaping their lines of development, and in opening out new vistas for them. Marxists have rightly pointed out the importance of the economic factor in the causation of great historical events. But that in no way takes away the necessity or diminishes the importance from other points of view of other factors, such as intellectual curiosity, moral and religious zeal, national rivalry, racial hatred, etc. And if we look into the causes of these causal factors themselves, the non-economic factors will no doubt include the economic factors amongst their causes, but not exclusively. Equally will the economic factors include the mental and spiritual factors besides the economic and geographical factors amongst their causes. This, of course, makes the study of history immensely complex and historical prophecy impossible. But why must we presume otherwise?
Quest 17, April-June, 1958.

No room for misunderstanding was left; nevertheless a misunderstanding—I am inclined to call it a deliberate mis-statement has taken place. The reason is not far to seek. The litera-

ture on which Professor Chakravarti has allowed himself to be nourished provides him with some logic and much rhetoric against the views which he has foisted on me. Unfortunately, it is silent or confused about the kind of views which I do hold. Let me hope, however, that fighters on the ideological front will some day hear the story of the aspirant for boxing championship who explained his failure by saying: "I did hit hard every time, but whenever I hit him the bloke happened not to be there." Hitting hard is a good thing, provided you sometimes land your blows where your opponent happens to be, instead of imagining all the time that your opponent is where your blows fall.

My "glaring misconceptions" reside only in Professor Chakravarti's ready imagination, but I had some very real difficulties in regard to the Marxist theory of history. Professor Chakravarti has done nothing to remove them; instead he has merely reiterated and re-emphasized those features of Historical materialism which I find most incomprehensible. The proposition that the economic structure of society determines its political and cultural patterns is not a bone of contention between us, provided it is admitted—and Professor Chakravarti assures me it is—that the determination is reciprocal, also that it is multiple, meaning thereby that each aspect of society is under the combined causal influence of all the other aspects. My difficulty—and the point where we join issue—is connected with the notion of "ultimate determination," "primary determination," or "determination in the last analysis." It is perfectly clear though Marxists fight shy of stating it baldly that when these adjectives or adverbial clauses are added to "determination," then the economic factor is claimed to be the *sole determinant* of history. For I am sure no orthodox Marxist will be prepared to admit that ultimately or in the last analysis art, philosophy or religion determines the course of history, though as proximate causes their role is not denied. The implied but unmistakable assumption of the Marxist theory of history is that historical changes have an ultimate cause, and that this ultimate cause is only one single factor of the social complex. As soon as attention is drawn to this, the speculative character of the doctrine begins to strike us. It is as metaphysicians that Marxists are enamoured

of ultimate causes, and as metaphysical monists that they are insistent on the oneness of the ultimate determinant of history. Their concessions to pluralism and reciprocity are all half-hearted, superficial and easily forgotten.

What meaning, I ask, can an empirical scientist discover in the statement that although B, C, D jointly determine A, only one of them, B, is its ultimate determinant? Though near and remote, direct and indirect causes have an empirical meaning, the distinction between non-ultimate and ultimate causes is alien to the practice of working scientists. Let us take an example. An initial tangential velocity and a centripetal gravitational force may be indicated as the joint causes of the elliptical motions of planets. Is one of these only the secondary or proximate cause and the other the ultimate cause? If so, which one? Are both merely proximate causes; what then is the ultimate cause of planetary motion? Such questions sound empty in solar mechanics.

But someone may point out that it makes perfectly good sense to say and an empirical scientist need not be disinclined to speak in this fashion that the ultimate causes of all physiological or biological changes are physico-chemical. It is unnecessary to examine the soundness of such a physico-chemical interpretation of biological phenomena. For even if it is true, it gives hardly any analogical support to the economic interpretation of historical events. Let us be quite clear as to what the physico-chemical theory of biology means and what it does not mean. It does not mean that a particular physiological phenomenon has different types of causes, some of which are physico-chemical, others physiological, still others of a different kind; and that only the first are the primary or ultimate causes—all the rest being merely secondary or proximate causes. What the physico-chemical interpretation of physiology does mean to assert is something very different, viz. that though physiological phenomena appear to be different in kind from physical, the difference is only one of degree. All physiological phenomena are in the last analysis *nothing but* physico-chemical phenomena of a certain degree and a particular pattern of complexity. In other words, all the phenomena that we study in physiology can be *reduced* without remainder to physico-chemical terms. Some ex-

treme Marxists appear to be materialists in this forthright "reductionist" sense, but the majority of accredited Marxists would, I have no doubt, condemn such materialism as mechanistic and might even be inclined to call it anti-Marxist. Historical Materialists give us to understand that artistic production is qualitatively and irreducibly different from economic production. They break away from any analogical link with the mechanistic biologists when they reject I hope they do reject it the parallel proposition that although Protestant Christianity or post-impressionist painting appear to be phenomena of a different genre from the economic, they are in the last analysis nothing but some kind of a complicated manifestation of the economic structure of society. And without "reductionism" the concept of ultimate or primary determination seems irrelevant to history. I am, of course, using the term "primary" in its logical sense. Some Marxist writers, notably Plekhanov, have assigned the primary role to material factors in a temporal sense. I have shown in my previous article that this takes us beyond history to zoology. I am not interested in disputing a materialistic interpretation of zoology; my contention is that within the domain of recorded human history the application of terms like "ultimate," "primary" or "basic" to any aspect of society, material or ideal, is devoid of any proper significance.

The doctrine of Historical Materialism in its full import or undiluted form derives no support from science, and is scarcely intelligible in scientific terms. Could we find some justification for it in the domain of metaphysics proper? Stalin, I pointed out in my article in *Quest* 17, wrote as if no reasonable person can doubt the truth of the general philosophical theory of materialism expounded by Marx and Engels; and since the truth of Historical Materialism "follows" from the truth of Dialectical Materialism, that too has an unshakable claim on our acceptance. It can be argued, though this is not the place to argue it, that Dialectical Materialism far from possessing any axiomatic certainty or self-evidence about it, is full of inconsistencies within itself; furthermore, as a metaphysical theory—and it is a metaphysical theory in spite of all Marxist attempts to dress it as science—it is characterized by the same speculative boldness as its opposite number, Hegelian

Idealism, and is equally in need of an act of faith. But what I would like to urge here is that even if we fully accept the truth of Dialectical Materialism, Historical Materialism acquires no claim to validity from that, for it is not materialism in any proper sense at all. Whatever may be the philosophical meaning and justification of saying that matter is primary and ultimate and mind secondary and derivative, in the theory of Historical Materialism what is claimed to be the primary or ultimate determinant of historical movement is not a material structure at all. The economic structure of society a complex of forces and relations of productions is a human structure, in which material and mental elements organically inter-penetrate. Professor Chakravarti may object to my calling their theory "the economic conception of history" because of his dislike for its Narodnik version known as "historical economism." It does not matter what it is called; my point is that the so-called materialistic interpretation of history is not philosophically speaking a materialistic theory at all. To say that forces and relations of production, in other words purposeful human activity and organization directed to the satisfaction of economic needs, ultimately determine the shape of other types of human activity directed to the satisfaction of other needs religious, artistic, etc. is just as compatible with idealism as with materialism, and is derivable from neither.

The reason why the Marxists, nevertheless, persist in saying that Historical Materialism is an application of or deduction from the wider principles of Dialectical Materialism is that in one corner of their mind they realize the inadequacy of the empirical arguments which they marshal in support of the former principle. What they *can* justify empirically is much more modest and less inspiring, viz. that the economic factor is one amongst the many important determinants of historical events, and that in our study of cultural phenomena we would do well to pay attention to the economic *milieu* in which they arise. What Marxists claim, however, to have established is that 1 "ultimately" or in the "last analysis" economics and economics alone determines the course of history; 2 that cultural movements can be fully "explained" in terms of economic changes. The wide gap between the former set of propositions

and the latter set does not worry them as it worries those who "lack dialectics." Metaphysical support however shaky is had recourse to for the latter, while scientific evidence on the whole not unacceptable is offered only for the former, and the logical gap between the two is negotiated by means of a dialectical jump. When you trip badly in logic preoccupation with which is the mark of petty-bourgeois mentality you can always claim to have proceeded with steady dialectical steps.

Professor Chakravarti has not brought forward any fresh arguments in his "Defence of Historical Materialism." Nevertheless, I should like briefly to cross-examine his defence such as it is. It appears to me that quite central to his whole argument is his conception of the economic structure as "the skeleton of the body social." I need not remind Professor Chakravarti that simile is no argument—even though the simile or metaphor is provided by no less a person than John Strachey. But I should like to tell him that this is a particularly inept and misleading metaphor—a shade, but only a shade less objectionable than the more popular architectural metaphor of Marx in which a building with its fixed upper storeys and its normally static foundation is taken as the proto-type of the various aspects of society, each intrinsically dynamic and all reciprocally active. John Strachey's anatomical metaphor has the merit of being dynamic, but it has all the wrong dynamical properties. To specify some: 1 The animal body grows to adolescence, remains more or less stationary for a number of years, decays and finally disintegrates. 2 Apart from this normal growth to adolescence which constitutes only a fraction of an animal's life, other anatomical changes in one or other part of the body are mostly in the nature of diseases. 3 In the period of growth, all parts of the body change together and in co-ordination with each other; it is not that the bones go ahead with their development, while the muscles and other organs remain stationary for sometime in their earlier state; this lag produces a tension or "contradiction" between the new skeletal structure and the old muscular and other structures, resulting in a sort of revolutionary overthrow of them and the establishment of a higher order of blood-vessels, nerves, muscles, etc. appropriate to the developed bones. 4 The exaggerated importance which Professor Chakravarti and his Marxist precep-

tors attach to the skeleton in the total structure of the body (which induces them to compare it to the economic structure of society) betrays ignorance of the elementary facts of anatomy and physiology. The body as a whole depends upon the skeleton as much as it does upon its heart, brain, muscles or kidneys. And all these organs depend upon each other in a way in which there is nothing particularly "ultimate" "primary" or "basic" about the skeletal system. A poetic metaphor may be as fanciful as one likes; but if argument is to be based on analogy (which is in any case a weak argument) the analogy should run pretty close to facts. The architectural and anatomical metaphors, which appear to be the main props of the defenders of Historical Materialism, have the flimsiest basis in factual similarities.

Professor Chakravarti is ready to concede to his critics that ideas, needs, etc. may play some role in history, but insists on enquiring into the origin of these ideas and needs. Quite legitimately he asks, "why suddenly the 'need' to emancipate from the restrictions of the Catholic Church?," and rather illegitimately answers: "Given the economic situation at the close of the 15th century it was necessary etc." Surely, the rise of Protestantism was not necessary because of the economic situation of the 15th century alone; many other things had to be "given" before Protestantism could arise. But the point that I would like to press is: what is the meaning of this "given"? Is it some kind of an absolute datum? A little further on, Professor Chakravarti lays down: "The Marxist historical materialistic methodology begins at the economic end of the social complex." There is no harm in beginning your study of society at the economic end, provided you are prepared to grant equal rights to those who want to begin at the philosophical, religious, scientific or technological "ends" of the social complex. I would, however, substitute the term "aspect" or "feature" for Prof. Chakravarti's term "end;" for none of these features is the "end" or "beginning" of the social complex in any proper sense. All such studies will be incomplete, though none will be quite false. And each will have its importance according to the interest and purpose with which you study history, e.g. whether you are a historian of art, philosophy, technics or economics.

"The only point to remember . . . is that ideas ultimately de-

pend upon the economic structure—the skeleton of the body social, and are not entities springing from nobody knows where,” says Professor Chakravarti. Does anybody know from where the economic structure springs? Marx seems to have believed, as Schumpeter points out, that “the forms of production themselves have a logic of their own; they change according to necessities inherent in them so as to produce their successors by their own inner working”. (*Socialism & Capitalism*, p. 12.) On the other hand, Lindsay thinks that under the influence of Darwin Marx toyed with the idea of chance mutation in regard to the forms of production (Karl Marx’s *Capital*). Most Marxists at any rate seem to have such queer fancies in the back of their minds, otherwise why should they enquire twenty times into the origins of needs, ideas, science, etc. but not once into the origin of the forms of production themselves? That enquiry, leading back to the sphere of the intellect, would be fatal to their theory, and they know it.

It is rather peevish of Professor Chakravarti to think that non-Marxists regard historical prophecy as impossible because of “such (viz. Russell’s) wonderful philosophies of history.” Apart from the question of the role of the individual in history and the age-old controversy in regard to free will *vs.* deterministic laws, prophecy is practically impossible here because historical causes are so immensely complex that the total configuration never repeats itself for our observation. Consequently, it is beyond the powers of historians to formulate such comprehensive laws as will enable them to predict unambiguously (that is, not in the fashion of the oracle of Delphi) significant historical events. And at any given moment so many forces are active in the dynamics of history and in such criss-cross ways, that though the separate effects of one or more of them can be foretold with some confidence, no social mechanics is known by means of which the resultant (or resultants) of all of these can be geometrically pictured or algebraically worked out. This is precisely why the future course of capitalism as forecast in detail by Karl Marx has turned out to be so wide of the mark.¹ He had omitted to consider the effects of politics, of trade unions, or of his own

¹ How wide has been discussed with competent scholarship in an article by Herbert Luethy to be published in our issue No. 20, Jan-March, 1959.

teachings. There is nothing to get particularly excited about it. With all the breath-taking advances in the physical sciences it is still seldom possible to prophesy with any accuracy natural non-cyclic events, as opposed to cyclic events like eclipses or artificial events like the results of laboratory experiments. No physicist will risk his reputation by predicting when the next rainbow will be visible, say from the roof of the Cavendish Laboratory. And how we wish the times and places of the occurrences of floods, droughts, storms, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions of the next five years could be definitely foretold! I would not grudge Professor Chakravarti consoling himself with the thought that these scientific prophecies are impossible "because of such wonderful philosophies of science" as Russell's, or Eddington's another *bête noire* of the Marxists.

Let me, however, go back to Professor Chakravarti's contention that once it is granted that history deals with large numbers of men and that group responses show greater uniformity than individual responses, "the claim of the economic factor to exercise determining influence on the actions of social groups and classes is an extraordinarily high one." Professor Chakravarti bases this claim on an anatomical analogy, which really avails him nothing. But let us note the metaphysics which is lurking behind. It comes into the open in the leading sentence of this section: "The material conception of history is based on the legitimate assumption that human beings are polyatomic and that human actions take place in the world of macroscopic bodies entailing subjection to the laws of causation." Here the materialist has had the better of the dialectician. Men are conceived not even as animals but as just polyatomic bodies; the dialectic leap involved in the transition from inorganic bodies to animal organisms, and from animal to man has been conveniently slurred over. After this it is natural to treat human societies as a chemist would treat polyatomic bodies. It is this implied metaphysical outlook which makes the materialistic interpretation of history so attractive to Communists and so repulsive to Humanists. I have said that the materialistic interpretation of history is a misnomer, and that this theory of history is no more an integral part of materialistic philosophy than of idealistic philosophy. But I was forgetting

the "double-think" which Communists are capable of. In spite of all dialectical protests, deep in their minds they have the firm conviction that human beings are material bodies rigidly subject to the laws of causation. This is an essential import of the materialistic interpretation of history. This is what a champion of dictatorship and total planning inevitably believes. You cannot plan the lives of free individuals endowed with moral responsibility except marginally.

No doubt, Engels talks of the transition from the kingdom of necessity to the kingdom of freedom in a classless society. But Lenin, Stalin and their successors have revolutionized the old fashioned Marxist ideas about this transition. The free society is not to emerge immediately or soon after the proletarian revolution and the abolition of class society. There has to be an indefinitely prolonged era of the dictatorship of the proletariat involving, as we now see, the division of society into two new classes, based not on property but on power—the class of planners and the class of those whose lives are to be fully planned out in every department—economics, politics, education, and even leisure. The class of super-planners may sometimes shrink to a single-member class as during the later days of Stalin, sometimes expand to the entire Central Committee, or rarely, to the whole Party. But the class distinction remains. The planners of course are not polyatomic lumps of matter, for these are not capable of discovering rigid causal laws and applying them to control and guide the actions of other polyatomic bodies. With the emergence of the phase of dictatorship, the dictators, the super-planners, at once mysteriously "ascend the kingdom of freedom." The plannees remain in the kingdom of necessity, obeying the "dominant laws of social causation" and of course those who apply these laws. Till when? A millenium is perhaps an over-estimate. Far-reaching changes may take place much sooner resulting from the new industrial revolution about to be touched off by nuclear technology which is already in course of development. This revolution will enormously increase the amount of material goods available to all. Will it increase or decrease the amount of freedom available to the vast majority of men? That is the 64,000 dollar, or shall we say the Stalin-prize winning, question.

Engels' notion that a certain future date in history will mark "the ascent of man from the kingdom of necessity to the kingdom of freedom" is, to my mind, fraught with mischief and danger. It is to be contrasted with the usual philosophical conception contemptuously dismissed as "bourgeois philosophy" that man is essentially and always a free and responsible moral being, though the full expression of his freedom may be more or less circumscribed by his economic and political environment. In Indian idealism freedom *mukti* is described as the goal of the human endeavour *sadhana*, but that is just a way of speaking. What is sought is only the removal of a veil *maya* behind which the freedom of man already real is hidden from himself. The paradox of freedom, or rather one of the paradoxes of freedom, is that it is only the free individual who can seek freedom, not a macroscopic body of complex polyatomic structure. If as materialists you believe that man is hitherto unfree a denizen of the kingdom of necessity totally subject to causal laws but can be made free only when "anarchy in social production is replaced by plan-conforming, conscious organization" Engels, *Anti Duhring*, p. 392, then first of all, you assign to a small section of society who will consciously form the plan the task of leading the great majority of men who will have to conform to the plan from the kingdom of necessity to the kingdom of freedom. In a totalitarian society it is preposterous to talk of everyone or even the entire working class participating in the dictatorship, which in effect amounts to the power to draft the over-all plan and have it executed at all costs. Secondly, you put the planners in the greatest and most irresistible of all temptations that history records—the temptation of controlling and guiding from one plan-period to the next, and then to the next, the destiny of millions of men supposed to be creatures of "necessity." If fond mothers could at will keep their children all their lives young, tender, helpless and dependent upon them, few would let their children grow up and grow out of the need of their loving care. I doubt if any planner would by an act of self-abnegation ever let his charges ascend the kingdom of freedom, though he might be perpetually helping them up the ladder. The period of transition from the one kingdom to the other for the vast majority of men must

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unfortunately be long everywhere, for an enormous vested interest is bound up with its prolongation—a vested interest which is noticeably greater in the Communist than in the Capitalist countries today. And there is no reason to believe that vested interest in the possession of naked and unashamed power would be easier to dislodge than vested interest in the possession of wealth, which today is at least beginning to be ashamed of itself. The Capitalist upper classes are hypocrites; the Communist upper classes do not even see any need for hypocrisy.

On Caged Chaffinches and Polyglot Parrots

by JYOTIRMAY DATTA

Bird Song—Experiments are being made in various parts of the country to find if birds inherit or learn their music. The method is to keep the bird, generally a chaffinch, in isolation from the time it emerges out of its egg and to make a graph of its song. These isolated chaffinches have songs without the characteristic final flourish, but they improve when tape recordings of the natural song are played to them. Groups brought up in isolation evolve slightly different songs of their own. But no captive bird has the full range of sounds of the wild songster. . . . Dr H. Kalmus, Reader in Biology at University College, who has taken a leading part in the experiments, thinks it quite possible that there are bird dialects varying from place to place, and that nightingales may sing more beautifully in Provence than elsewhere. . . .

THAT, I exclaimed as I hit upon this gem hidden in that ocean deep, Whittaker's Almanack, 1960, is true of our Indo-English writers too! Marooned in this sea of 360 million people, they are like isolated chaffinches—or, maybe, even nightingales. It is possible, I thought, these nightingales do not sing as well as those in Provence Great Britain but how can they help singing, and singing in their natural language? Granted, being isolated these songsters have a stiff task and, the opportunities for learning being limited, they cannot help being repetitive. But no nightingale can, nor should, sing like chaffinches, nor chaffinches like nightingales—though by changing places Cs could go one up in the social ladder of birds.

If English comes naturally to a person, no threat nor lure should be able to deter him from writing in English. There could be no dispute about it and yet, I was surprised to notice, there was. And, strangely, writers in English joined in the debate, writing long letters to editors of magazines in the fashion of the outraged taxpayers of Dum Dum or the members of the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Otters.

The attempt to give reasons for their writing in English seemed strange to me because I felt that a poet or a novelist did not choose a language; if anything, it was the language that chose him. One can argue only when from among many alternatives he selects one; then his judgement, if questioned, can be defended with reasons cogent or false. I had supposed that all who wrote in India did so because they had to; it might be a misfortune for them but it was unalterable. Therefore, I thought, while those who asked them to defend what was none of their doing were being unfair, they themselves were guilty of irreverence towards English. No language is too poor for those who are born to it because it is possible to write a masterpiece in whichever language that comes naturally to one. But the Indo-English writers seemed to say that it was not enough for English to be one's own language, one had also to prove that it could do this or that which served the cause of Indian unity and world culture before one could write in it. Poor English!

If any one asks—hybrid as our culture is, some do—why do I write in Bengali, all I can do is to stare at him. It seems to me the questioner has never written a line of verse or prose himself. My experience is that one does not first have a feeling or idea waiting to be translated into whichever language is best suited to it, but the feeling or idea takes shape as the words arise, suddenly and unbidden, in one's mind, words that seem to have been dictated to one at the unlikeliest time and place. That is the genesis; of course there is scope for planning and contrivance later. But be the genesis in Bengali, or English, or Swahili or any other language, I fail to see how one could switch on later to another language. The inner voice dictates to me in Bengali and therefore I write in that language. I admit no possibility of choice. I do not tell my tormentor that Bengali

is a more musical language than most; it may be, but that is not why I write in it. I do not tell him that as most Bengali words end in vowels, it is a language so rich in rhymes that I am saved from rhyming "blood" with "brood" and "freezes" with "Jesus"; I recognize that though rhymes are of the utmost importance, great poems have been written in rhyme-short English, and, anyway, Hawaiian has even more vowels than Bengali and yet I do not even dream of trying to write in Hawaiian. The market for Bengali books is bigger than for those in Oriya. True. But Chinese books should sell even better. Bengali is an international language spoken in two countries. Fact. But Hebrew is spoken throughout the world. Bengali is a more developed language than, say, Pustu? Bah No language is more developed than another for writing good poems. There is absolutely no reason for writing in one language in preference to another except that the language of imagination is part of one's basic makeup; it precedes—not follows—choice. So, all that one can do is to accept one's fate and try to make the best of it silently and alone. There are many burning issues which need collective action, many bad choices H-bomb, totalitarianism, the Beat cult of which men must be warned, and good ones free love, A.I.D., referendum for Algeria which people must be persuaded to accept, but the language one dreams in can hardly be the subject of controversy.

Surprised by the reaction of my fellow writers in English, I did a little bit of research. The results were startling. There were few Eurasians, very few, indeed, on the list of Indo-English writers. Some, just a few more than as many as one would call very few, though born of Indian parents, spoke no language but English. Many spoke English only just as well as one, or two, other Indian languages. But most knew an Indian language better than English. And, most of them being dextrous in the use of more than one language, *Had Actually An Opportunity To Choose!* They may have chosen wrongly; their judgement may have misled them; maybe they were not good at reasoning, but we must admire them for daring to plan their destiny, to choose what their reason told them was the language best fitted for their aims.

Bastilled by 360 Million

Before going into the reasons for their choice, I would like to pay tribute to their heroism. They chose the most terrible sort of exile; the walls of their Bastille were 360 million people; like the fires of Dante's hell, these 360 million gave them no feeling of warm comradeship but intensified their sense of isolation. If only they had chosen silence too, they would all have been ideal Joycean heroes. But they could not be silent because they yearned for companionship; their attempts to persuade others to join them, their attempts to prove how Indian they were, their little booklets—miniature masterpieces of the book-maker's art—through which they communicated with one another over the heads of the separating millions, did show they were uncomfortable in their role of lonely heroes. But they were heroes all the same, and in our India ruled by the unlovely god, Demos, who can repress his admiration for them!

But Demos is a god who extracts his tithe even from unbelievers. The Indo-English writer claims he is the most Indian of us all. How? Because, says he, since English is the language of no particular Indian group what about the Eurasians? , it is equally close equally distant? to all the groups and hence is the only language which is capable of expressing the spirit of all of India. English is today, claims the Indo-English writer, what Sanskrit was centuries ago: the language of the cultured elite throughout India. While Tamil poetry of the eighth century gave expression only to the Tamil spirit, Sanskrit poetry has influenced all the later vernacular writers. A similar role could be played by English, a most necessary role since India never had a greater need of unity than now.

I hope the Indo-English writer had not looked up the dates before advancing such an argument else he would be guilty of suppressing damning facts. The glorious age of Sanskrit poetry was simultaneous with the existence of Sanskrit as a living language; when the period of glittering decadence set in, Sanskrit was being gradually replaced by the vernaculars; Kalidasa is not the first of the great Sanskrit poets but the last; in the millenium between the sixth and the sixteenth century—when Sanskrit at

last became the language of only the elite—no great poem was written in Sanskrit. English is today what Sanskrit was during that arid millenium. With the rise of the vernaculars Indians became once again unilingualists—as were the contemporaries of Valmiki and Vyasa and the Upanishadic sages—and once again could create great literature which would not be mere treatises parodying the style of the ancients, mere mummies wrapped up in rules of grammar and rhetoric.

I cannot imagine writing in any language which I do not hear from living lips. Bengali is spoken in its purity by people all around me, purity which each moment is becoming impure—that is, archaic—and changed by the people and poets. It is an exciting experience for me to feel that through my efforts, and those of others, it is being continually changed. There is no use of my language which is too daring for me because what I write today need not be modelled on past usage but is likely to be a model for the future just because I have written thus. Nothing is too sacred for me to change; nothing too profane for me to use. It is my language, my very own, and no one can dispute my use of it.

Song of the Printed Page

English is not even the language of the educated few in India; it is used only to describe facts, figures and things, to give commands; not to suggest feelings but chart courses of action, not to explore new ideas but to communicate readymade ones. In schools and colleges children are taught dead formulas for the use of certain words in set situations, but rarely do the students hear English spoken. As for English as a spoken language, there is not one but many such lingos because on the lips of Tamils it sounds like Tamil and when spoken by a Bengali, like Bengali. The Indo-English poet, even if he speaks English as it is spoken by those whose language it is, is locked up within himself, and though the inner music may sound enchanting to him, what a struggle must he put up to shut off those barbaric sounds that ceaselessly bombard his eardrums! And it is not only hard on his nerves, it deprives his imagination of the stimulus of living speech. The characters in his fiction

seem wooden because the dialogue is dull and literary; the music of his verse too obvious, the lilt brazen, because his ears have been trained to listen only to the printed page, or, at best, to gramophone records of other poems. Novels feeding on past novels, poems springing from other poems—what a nightmare of sterility have our writers in English created for us!

"But our works have no relation to the language and literature of Great Britain," protests the Indo-English writer. "We do not wish to speak or write like Englishmen. Our language is new; only that it happens to share certain words with English but the way we use them is entirely our own. Ours is not an offshoot of English but as independent and autonomous as American literature. It is *Indian* literature. Our poems and novels should not be compared with English literary models but with the *Indian* reality, with the life of educated *Indians* living in towns, the all-*India* reality which only an all-*India* language can express."

But is there any such thing as Indian English? Many examples of bad English, debased English, ungrammatical English, and baboo English come to mind but I have yet to come across a single specimen of Indian English. There is of course that magnificent example of baboo English, the autobiography of Onokool Chandra Mukherjee, and the stories by Mr Hamdi Bey with their eccentricities of grammar. But the grammatical lapses of Onokool Chandra and Mr Bey's delightful juggling with the tense are literary curiosities and have nothing in common with the way English is spoken or written in India, their style is as individual as Joyce's.

Maybe, I am misinterpreting the stand of the Indo-English writers. Though their language may not be distinctively Indian it need not be, the content of their poems and novels may be so. If the sonnet can be used by a Bengali poet to express sentiments unknown to Petrarch, why should English be incapable of expressing Indian themes? Of course English can. Bengali too is capable of expressing feelings and ideas not yet grappled by its poets and novelists. But the question is not whether an English poet living in India could describe our tropical landscape and write good English poems about Indian problems, but whether the Indian who speaks a different language can and should do so.

The answer to this question given by the Indo-English writer seems so perverse to me that I am afraid if I give it in my own words, people will suspect me of having invented it. I have not. One who is perhaps the most talented Indo-English poet, P. Lal of *The Parrot's Death*, declares in *Writers Workshop* No. 2: "Without trying to be facetious, I should like to suggest that only in English can real Indian poetry be written; any other poetry is likely to be Bengali slanted or Gujrati biassed, and so on. Only the Indian writing in English can hope to attain the Indian flavour which is a cosmopolitan flavour. I cannot imagine a Punjabi writing Bengali poetry, or a Maharashtrian writing Hindi poetry. But there are Tamilians, Bengalis, Punjabis, Gujratis, Jews, Goans, Sikkimese—all Indians—writing in English on Indian themes for Indian readers."

Fact. There are many such people. It is also a fact that during the nineteenth century many Bengalis wrote in Hindi on Hindi themes for Hindi readers. These facts have never been disputed. The dispute is over whether those Bengalis were able to use Hindi creatively and whether the "Tamilians . . . Punjabis . . . Jews . . . Sikkimese" who write in English have created good poems and novels. Mr Lal cannot imagine "a Punjabi writing Bengali poetry." I can conceive of such a miracle happening. I would not say that a Punjabi can never, never, never compose good poems in English but the chances seem to me negligibly small. They should appear infinitesimal to Mr Lal who cannot even imagine "a Punjabi writing Bengali poetry," but I am not sure whether he would be willing to apply to English the laws he has framed for mere Indian languages.

But be the chances one in a billion, or none at all, why should a Bengali or a Tamil write in English instead of his own language? "Since Bengali literature is Bengali-slanted," answers the IEW, "and Gujrati literature Gujrati-biassed, we cannot write in these 'regional' languages. We want to write not about the limited reality that is Bengal or Gujrat but India—which is the bigger reality." One cannot but sympathize with this desire to bite off as large a slice of reality as possible. That

The Indo-English writer must forgive me if, for brevity's sake, I call him IEW from now on. IEW is inelegant, I agree, but so is "Indo-English Writer," or "Indo-Anglian Writer," or "Anglo-Indian Writer."

is what philosophers have been, and physicists are, trying to do, but such a desire is bound to remain unfulfilled in a poet because in literature the only way to express the universal is through the particular and the universe through the tiniest possible grain of sand. A poet writes to express neither the Bengali, nor the Indian, nor the Afro-Asian, nor the world, mind. If he wishes to realize any flavour, it is the flavour of himself. If he tries to express anything, it is himself. If he wants to be true to anybody, it is himself. If he tries to write about the *Bengali*, or *The Indian*, or about *Man*, he would be true to no man. These are so obvious as to be platitudes and yet I am forced to jingle these old but gold coins because the IEW does not seem to realize how true they are. The IEW's attempts to snatch the largest possible slice of experience is most likely to end in no genuine experience at all. And, anyway, if the IEW is really after universality, why must he stop at the borders of India? Why not Afro-Asia? Or Afro-Eurasia? The world? Or even the solar system for how can we forget the poor Martians?

IEW and Universality

And what is this all-India "flavour" that the IEW is after? If someone asked me what was Europeanism, I would reply that though Europeanism was difficult to define, it was a real quality. There is a group difference—what exactly I cannot say—between Chinese, Japanese, Persian and Arabic poetry and poems in Latin, English, German, French and Russian. The "European" quality is not the monopoly of Latin literature; if at all, it is more marked in, say, modern German poems than in medieval Latin lyrics. German poetry has a German-bias, but I have yet to hear—even Ph.D.s have not made this accusation—that its Germanic qualities take away from its Europeanism. If Goethe, with his "world-hunger" and universal mind, had acted according to the IEW's beliefs, he would have written in French, the then pan-European language which he knew at least as well as our IEW's know English, and robbed his poetry not only of its Teutonic qualities, not only of its poetic qualities, but also of its Hellenic and European "bias." No one was a better European because no one was a truer German. Similarly, if Pushkin had

written in French, or if Turgenev also had—whom the Russian nationalists damned as a westerner—they would not have been better Europeans but only no artists at all—as Pushkin's school-boy effusions in French prove. And which of the IEWs, I ask, which of the IEWs are more Indian than Madhusudan Datta who wrote his first poem in English or a better citizen of the world than Rabindranath Tagore?

The assumption that because English is spoken by a number of people in many Indian towns and all the Indian cities, it must be more representative of India than the "regional" languages is quite as false as it would be if someone claimed that Hebrew, which after the Dreyfus affair became the international Jewish language, is more of a "world" language than French because it is spoken in all major commercial centres of the world. Hebrew literature, if it exists, is only the literature of the Hebrew-speaking people. The literature written by English-speaking Indians will be representative of only such people and—if it is good—indirectly also of India and the world. Many Tamils, Punjabis, Jews, etc. would, of course, be able to read IE literature, but how could the number or the geographic distribution of its readers affect its own nature? Many Britons and Germans read Valery in the original; all that this fact could indicate would be that these people might have been changed by having read Valery, but the poems themselves remain unalterable and immortal and are only as representative of the all-European reality as, say, the poems of Rilke.

Underdeveloped Languages

What other reason could there be for an Indian to write in English? One reason was suggested to me at a Writers Workshop meeting which I remember with both sorrow and pleasure. Pleasure, because the host was gracious, the beautifully furnished room a delight to and the soft light soothing to the eye and the Workshop members not only well-informed and intelligent but such eager defenders of their cause and so sure of conquering the world that I felt grey and withered in face of their innocence. But why sorrow? Sorrow, because these very likeable persons were contemptuous of most of the Indian languages.

One of them remarked that it was all right for me, a Bengali, to say that an Indian need not write in English but most Indian languages were not as developed as mine was, and, therefore, those who spoke the less developed languages were forced to write in English. Can anyone blame me for being shocked?

If there is one lesson to be drawn from the history of literature it is that the quality of writing does not depend upon the "development" of the language. Rather, the early masters have an advantage over those who follow them. If the worth of works of imagination increased with the growth of a language then Homer would have been a lesser poet than Eurypides, Dante than Unagaretti, Shakespeare than Eliot, Goethe than George and Pushkin than Akhmatova. Greatness comes easier in the infancy of a people and its language. What the Indo-English poet thinks as a disadvantage is the best bit of luck that one could wish for. If only the Anglo-Hindi, or the Anglo-Punjabi, poet realized what a tremendous opportunity he was throwing away! If, instead of staking his all on an impossible 1-to-1,000,000,000 gamble, he had accepted what a kind fate had thrust upon him, he could have been what Dante was to Italian, Pushkin to Russian and Madhusudan to Bengali. It would be a great day for themselves, for their own "underdeveloped" languages and for English when the IEWs who, it is obvious, are very talented people returned to the languages they have treated so shabbily so far. Good for themselves because instead of being the darlings of their own insignificant coteries, lioncels of little literary cells, they could be true poets, initially read only in limited regions of India but later—it is not impossible—translated into all the languages of the world. Good for their own languages because no language can develop unless it has its Dante. And good for English because . . . well, the reasons are obvious.

There is one overwhelming reason for writing in English I have avoided mentioning so far. That supreme reason is—money. I have heard it said that an IEW got \$2500 for a single novel in English. An even luckier IEW got almost as much from *The New Yorker* for writing 10,000 words of filth about India, and these 10,000 words being only a twentieth part of a book he is supposed to have written. Imagine how much he will get for his entire garbage bin! To one like me who is paid

no more than 25 rupees (not dollars) even if he manages to get into *Desh*—and that is princely for a new writer—the amounts that the IEWs get are astronomical. Never before did so many tourists visit India, never before were so many Western glasses focussed on this “key-area in the battle for bread with ballots,” never before did the West ask for so little in return for so much. Therefore, Indian “material” fetches fabulous prices in the U.S. book “market.” The right to make money through legal means is guaranteed in our Constitution, and I do not see why it should be denied to writers. Least of all can it be denied to the IEW who regards language as merely a tool—and a tool is merely a tool, valuable not for what it is but what it does.

But are there not just a few among all the IEWs who write not chiefly for money, nor recognition abroad, but because they must? Of course there are. There must be some, just a few more than as few as one would call very few, who cannot but write in English. They are the caged chaffinches who have all my sympathy in their stiff task. There is of course no way to tell the chaffinches from the parrots because the only test that one could propose is such that its results could never be known. But the IEWs themselves could carry it out in their imagination. It would convince no one except themselves, but, then, the true poet has no need to prove to others why he must write in the language he writes and in that alone. The test is to imagine oneself marooned on an island far off the sea lanes. There is no hope of rescue. The poet broods gloomily for he lacks a pencil to put down the lines that rise in his mind. He totters down to the beach and writes on the sand. He does not care if the tide washes it away. He knows that even if he wrote on parchment no human eyes would be able to read his poems. Fame? The poet shrugs his shoulders as the thought—too, too familiar to him in the past—flits across his mind. Money? A faint smile crosses the face of the poet who is of course an introvert and therefore cannot climb coconut trees. “Could money buy me those nuts in the trees, quite as far, as unattainably far, from me as the moon?” He still writes. He writes because there is a strange disturbance in him that cannot be got rid of except by writing. And whichever language he writes then is the true language of his soul.

Indian Writing in English

A Reply to Mr Jyotirmoy Datta

by P. LAL

BEFORE I settle down to a discussion of the points raised by Mr Jyotirmoy Datta (*Quest* 28) in his broadside against Indians writing creatively in English, I should like to record a sense of real regret at the tone of his article. Healthy discussion cannot exist in an atmosphere of innuendo and lampoon: if we must argue, let us respect each other's bona fides and discard the unpleasant (and, when you come to think of it, unnecessary) gimmicks of catchpenny journalism. Facts elevate, opinions only corrupt; and giving an ounce of sympathy does greater wonders than demanding a pound of flesh.

Mr Datta gives four reasons—he describes them as reasons—why the Indian writer in English (his codeword: IEW) “chooses” to write in English. These are preceded by a few interesting (but not always, it seems to me, related or coherent) remarks in general about such writing. It is better that we clear up the preliminary confusion before we proceed to the hard core of Mr Datta's thesis.

1. In the first paragraph Mr Datta draws a distinction between chaffinches and nightingales (a “gem,” he says, he discovered in “that ocean deep, Whittaker's Almanack, 1960”). No nightingale can or should sing like chaffinches, he suggests, and

vice-versa, but "by changing places chaffinches could go one up in the social ladder of birds." This is surely hitting below the belt, for it implies that the Indian writes in English because he is a climber. Some, of course, are climbers; most, bless them, are just plodders. The slightly malicious imputation sets the tone of what follows—and it spoils, I think, one's case if all the time one casts doubts on the intentions of one's adversaries. This kind of googly is not cricket.

2. Mr Datta proceeds to remark: "The Indo-English writers seemed to say that it was not enough for English to be one's own language, one had also to prove that it could be this or that which served the cause of Indian unity and world culture before one could write in it." I cannot admire either the syntax or the sentiments of this sentence. The Workshop's principles and views must be very poorly expressed indeed if such a gross misinterpretation is possible. We have never tried to "prove" anything about English, but we have tried to use it and later think about how we have used it, how it has affected our readers, and how best we can use it in future. The Workshop is neither a factory nor a laboratory: just a group of people who do things because they have certain beliefs, and who like to examine what they (and others) have done, so that the quality of their writing might benefit from judicious doses of sympathetic criticism.

3. "I fail to see how one could switch on later to another language," says Mr Datta in connection with what he describes as the "choosing" of English for the purpose of creative writing. "I admit no possibility of choice." One wishes it were quite so easy really. Mr T. S. Eliot, to an interviewer in *Paris Review* recently, confessed that *he* once faced a choice. "That was a very curious thing which I can't altogether explain. . . . I hadn't written anything for some time and was rather desperate. I started writing a few things in French and found *I could*, at that period. . . . That went on for months. The best of them have been printed. . . . I had at that time the idea of giving up English and trying to settle down and scrape along in *Paris* and gradually write French. . . . I don't think one can be a bilingual poet. And I think that the English language has more resources in some respects than the French. . . . I've probably done better in English. . . ."

How one chooses is another matter. For the first time in India the possibility of such a choice being *real* and *meaningful* in terms of creative writing has concretized as a result of a fortuitous blend of historical circumstances. One might disagree with that, but to say that a choice cannot exist won't do. "You pays your money and you takes your choice; aint freedom grand?" And if you loses your money, well. . . . Time's pretty ruthless anyway: look what it has done to Barrett Browning, the idol of the nineteenth century, and is doing to the *Gitanjali* translations in the West.

4. "Bengali is a more developed language than, say, Pustu? Bah! No language is more developed than another for writing good poems." I am tempted to say "Wah-wah!" and "Shabash!" to this pretty splutter of good old-fashioned spleen, but we must not descend to the level of irrelevance (or, worse, irreverence). But humbly, very humbly, I should like to suggest that a language shows its mature quality in terms of the emotional spectrum it can successfully communicate without blurring the nuances of refined feeling. There are always over-reachers who will take up crude dialects and inject them with a range of subtleties that dazzles even a sophisticated reader. Such geniuses are rare; most of us have to make-do with what we have and, as the Workshop letter to *Quest* said, we are lucky "to have English rich." This is not to say that it is the *richest*—there is no such language. New dimensions are always being added, new directions constantly being given. Our belief is that English "has proved its ability as a language to play a creative role in all-India literature." Beliefs impel actions; and we shall continue to believe in this as long as we write in it. If Mr Datta believes that English is *not* more developed than Swahili or Pustu for the purposes of creative communication in the context of the contemporary literary milieu, that, in other words, it cannot communicate—other factors being equal—a wider range of ideas and sentiments and appeal to a more cultivated sensibility than Swahili or Pustu can, why, he is entitled to his belief as much as we are entitled to ours. But for God's sake, let's both of us hold our tongues, and get down to work—and to love—and to everything that's connected with this "damned business of

writing," as Pound called it, where one has to use one's heart all the time.

5. Mr Datta commiserates with the Indian writers in English because they are "bastilled by 360 million people" (this needs correction: population's up by another 60 million since the last Census). They are "Joycean heroes," he declares, "they chose the most terrible sort of exile." We don't think this is true: India is still a pretty big country, and the world still bigger. But which creative writer isn't "bastilled"? Don't Bengali publishers bring out poems in 500 copies an edition, and think themselves lucky if it sells out? *The Criterion*, under Eliot's discerning editorship, never collected more than 800 subscribers; Auden's *Poems*, as Julian Symons notes in *The 30s*, appeared in an edition of 1000 in 1930, and it took three years to exhaust the lot. Not very encouraging sales by any standards, but modern culture being what it is, what better can we expect? The alternative is sponsorship and dole. Give us state subsidy, and we won't be bastilled any more. But that isn't the kind of patronage one goes in for. Let Mr Datta note that the creative writer does not think of how many people are going to read him when he begins writing. He writes; and that's that.

6. Finally—so far as the preliminary confusion is concerned—Mr Datta makes certain allegations which are, to say the least, mystifying. He feels that "a poet or a novelist did not choose a language; if anything, it was the language that chose him." Some language, that!—but Mr Datta presumably means that a creative writer is born and nurtured in a specific linguistic milieu, or, as he puts it, "I cannot imagine writing in any language which I do not hear from living lips." He alleges further that most Indian writers in English "knew an Indian language better than English," and that certain expedient, even artistically dishonest, reasons (enumerated below) made them take up English. I have met many Indian writers in English, some with established reputations, others not, and I can assure Mr Datta that only the hacks and quacks adopt English as their "chosen" language or they know an Indian language better—they are the rejects, the sad exhibits of the profession, misfits, failed-creative-writers-turned-journalists, guilty things surprised who nibble at sour grapes. The real writer in English not only

thinks, but makes love in English. English is at the tips of his senses.

These misreadings and misconceptions form the prologue to Mr Datta's enumeration of the four *real* reasons why some Indians have chosen to write in English. First, the Indian writer in English deliberately aims at what he describes as an "all-India" audience and hopes to capture an "all-India" flavour by virtue of writing in English, "since Bengali literature is Bengali-slanted, and Gujrati literature Gujrati-based." Secondly, he is "contemptuous of most of the Indian languages" because he does not consider them "developed" enough to be able to write creatively in. . . Mr Datta mentions a Workshop member telling him "that it was all right for me, a Bengali, to say that an Indian need not write in English . . . but those who spoke the less developed language were forced to write in English. Can anyone blame me for being shocked?" (What is shocking is the twist given to what is really an innocuous remark, as I shall just show.) Thirdly, the "one overwhelming reason I have avoided mentioning so far . . . the supreme reason," in fact. Money. Dollars. Oodles of it. "I have heard that an IEW got \$2500 for a single novel in English. An even luckier IEW got as much from *The New Yorker* for writing 10,000 words of filth about India. . . . Imagine how much he will get for his entire garbage bin! To one like me who is paid no more than 25 rupees (not dollars) even if he manages to get into *Desh*—and that is princely for a new writer—the amounts that IEWs get are astronomical." Finally, the fourth reason: the Indian writer in English is being dishonest to himself because he writes not out of inner compulsion but for utilitarian (and other sordid) reasons. Mr Datta proposes a test: maroon the writer on a desert island, and let us see what language he writes in. "Whichever language he writes then is the true language of his soul." The implication of course is that the Indian writer will not use English but his mother tongue. But in tests such as this, where hypothesis and fancy gallop on the backs of gay dolphins, the knife cuts both ways, and it's a fifty-fifty chance anyway. There is no answer really, unless we trust the honest voice; and Mr Datta will be "surprised"—and "shocked"—to find that all *creative* writers in English who matter will plump

for English. I stressed in the very beginning the importance of bona fides in a controversy of this nature. Mud-slinging, muck-raking, suspicions, envies, sour grapes and bitter lemons; these will take us nowhere.

The creative writer in English in India takes his stand on certain principles. Some of these were embodied in the form of a manifesto appended to the Introduction to *Modern Indo-Anglian Poetry*, which Raghavendra' Rao and I edited two years ago. It is absurd to suggest that we aim at an all-India audience and think we only can provide the "all-India flavour." It just so happens that English is, at present, a pan-Indian élite language. That involves certain responsibilities—and is in its own way rewarding and encouraging. But we do *not* write in English because it is a pan-Indian language of the educated; we write because we cannot write as well in any other language. We are not "contemptuous" of Indian languages. God forbid, even if Mr Datta doesn't. Their development is taken for granted, their contribution is mightily significant. Critical standards in these languages are, sometimes, lacking, deplorably so; but that is another matter. We are speaking of creativity. There are many plots to till; English is one. We have chosen it; or, if Mr Datta would prefer a pretty chiasmus, it has chosen us. If we are left free to cultivate this little garden, we'll be most delighted. But mockery—the hose-pipe flooding our bougain-villaea, the locusts settling on our brinjals—we do not like. We care for sympathy and encouragement: and if these can't be given, just leave us alone, for heaven's sake. We can look after ourselves and our art.

We do not all get \$2500 for "a single novel." Some do. The Sahitya Akademi has awarded prizes to various works in the Indian languages, but ignores English. Publishers outside India are more helpful: and we don't sniff at money when it comes. Besides, even in India, the English language papers and magazines have higher rates of payment than their vernacular counterparts. This is the result of a historical situation. It may well change. If it does, if English loses its position as an élite language, and we start getting the "princely" sum of Rs. 25 for an article or story, we'll take that in our stride too. One doesn't quarrel all the time, and mope, and self-pity. One just goes

ahead, doing what one values; if the money comes, good; if it doesn't, that's just too bad. We are not the first to have sat in tea-shops while the tempest hurled, and cursed our fate for what we got. And if Mr Datta is so cruelly kind as to maroon us—he has bastilled us anyway—on an island, we'll write sad lyrics on the sand, alas in English, and send out carrier pigeons and/or parrots loaded with free verse (in English), even if they get shot *en route*.

About this there should be no doubt—we write in English because we feel we are “doin” what just comes “natcherly.” In our letter to *Quest*, which sparked off this controversy, we had said that “the writer is not an ambidextrous man, who can switch from one language to another at will. Many factors combine to make him write in the language he does write in. Zofia Ilinska is Polish, but writes in English; Koestler writes only in English now, though he is Hungarian; and Nabokov's decision is another on the list. What should matter is the quality of writing turned out, not the hows and whys of the choice. What I can suggest, therefore, is that we discard pettiness and petulance, and stress good faith and honest purpose.

Cultural Unity and the Unity of Religion

by AMLAN DATTA

IN his article on the "Cultural Unity of India," Mr Asaf A. Fyze quotes approvingly T. S. Eliot's statement, "religions cannot be reconciled," and adds that "all that can be done is for these divergent beliefs to settle down with one another in peaceful co-existence" (*Quest*, Spring 1964, p. 11).

This is not altogether an unusual position to take. But it does go against the life's mission and deeply considered opinion of some of our greatest thinkers from Rammohan onwards, not to mention Akbar, to whom Mr Fyze makes a bow in passing, or the medieval saints. It is possible that this earlier point of view is wrong, in spite of the eminence of its sponsors; but Mr Fyze does not present it in any depth and does not argue enough to show that it is really wrong.

The purpose of this brief note is to indicate this other point of view, with special reference to Rammohan. I choose Rammohan for two reasons in particular. Monier-Williams described him as "probably the first earnest-minded investigator of the science of comparative religion that the world has produced." Whether or not one concurs with this tribute paid by one who was himself no uncritical admirer of Hinduism, Rammohan certainly studied the major religions of India and the world

so assiduously and with such power of discrimination as to make his ideas worthy of the highest consideration. Secondly, he was concerned as much with the problem of the unity of Indian society as with its modernization. In other words, he saw the problem in a perspective that should command Mr Fyzee's sympathy.

I

Rammohan made a distinction between the dogmas, rituals and forms of worship associated with any particular religion and its central ethical message. There are certain features of a religion which arise from the particular cultural milieu ("habits and training," as Rammohan called it) of the community in question; and in respect of these features different religions differ greatly. But there is also in every religion an ethical message, a message of good neighbourliness among men; and this, Rammohan thought, was part of the common core of all great religions. It is this approach to religion which he brought equally to bear on Hinduism, Christianity and Islam. Thus, in his introduction to the translation of *Ishopanishad*, he wrote that he was laying before the Hindus "parts of their scripture, which inculcates not only the enlightened worship of one God, but the purest principles of morality" (*The English Works of Raja Rammohan Roy*, 1906, p. 74). Similarly, he made his compilation of the Precepts of Jesus "by separating from the other matters contained in the New Testament the moral precepts found in that book." Earlier, in the introduction to his Persian essay *Tuhfat-al-Muwahhidin*, he had written that "the inclination of each sect of mankind toward certain peculiar forms of worship or devotion is an extraneous attribute resulting from habits and training," and in the body of that essay declared that only love of fellow-creatures was "a pure devotion acceptable to God" (*op. cit.*, p. 957).

Nor was this a very singular position to take in his time, though it was certainly a "radical" position which the more orthodox never ceased to oppose. Among Rammohan's contemporaries a similar position was adopted by one of the greatest Americans of all time, Thomas Jefferson. "Reading, reflection

and time have convinced me," wrote Jefferson, "that the interests of society require the observation of those moral precepts only in which all religions agree and that we should not intermeddle with the particular dogmas in which all religions differ." And he too made his own compilation of the precepts of Jesus, leaving out those parts of the New Testament which he thought were inessential, and retaining what he considered authentic, "as easily distinguished as diamonds in a dung-hill," thus producing what is now known as the Jefferson Bible.

Some of the most cherished beliefs of different religious communities are of the nature of dogmas. Such, for instance, is the idea that Christ is the "only begotten child of God; or, that Mohammed is the latest and greatest messenger of God; or, that Krishna, delivering the message of the Bhagavadgita, is none other than God himself in human form. Yet all is not lost either for Islam, or for Christianity, or for Hinduism, when these dogmas are pushed to the background. Nor is it difficult to show a certain similarity—even a striking one—between the basic ethical teachings of the great religions of the world.

"All men are brothers," Fyzee quotes from the Koran, and the stress on brotherhood is, indeed, one of the salient features of the teachings of Mohammed. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," preached Christ. And, again, "whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law" (Matthew, VII. 12). A strikingly similar idea occurs in the *Mahabharata*:

This is the sum of all true righteousness
Treat others, as thou would thyself be treated. . . .
A man obtains a proper rule of action
By looking on his neighbour as himself.
(Monier-William's translation in *Brāhmanism and Hinduism*,
1891, pp. 547-8.)

II

The objection that such precepts do not correspond to the actual practice, and even as ideas appear in juxtaposition with others that are less worthy, is not quite fatal to the Rammohan-Jefferson

thesis. For they themselves admitted as much. The Church in the middle ages sanctioned feudal hierarchy; and at various times, it played a politically reactionary role. Yet in the eyes of the believer it always represented something more than the sum of a series of compromises: it never ceased altogether to represent the idea of human* brotherhood and the equality of all men in the love of God. While discussing "the conflict between the Islamic way of life and the Hindu view of life," Fyzee quotes Amaury de Riencourt on Alberuni. In my humble opinion Alberuni was at times slightly unfair to the Hindus; but he was very learned and painstaking and on the whole much more balanced in his views than the passage quoted from de Riencourt might make one suppose. It is true that Alberuni was struck forcibly by the "xenophobia of the Hindus, their exclusiveness and hatred for all mlechchas"; but he was fair enough to add, "we must confess that a similar depreciation of foreigners exists not only among us . . . but is common to all nations towards each other" (*Alberuni's India*, English edition by Dr E. C. Sachan, London, 1888, p. 20). Again, while Alberuni made some acute observations on the caste system in India and came to regard it as a source of deep division between Hinduism and the Islamic way of life, he did not fail to notice that there were different points of view on this question even in Hindu society of the early middle ages. While some would admit the possibility of deliverance only for the upper castes, "according to the Hindu philosophers, liberation is common to all castes and to the whole human race." (*Alberuni, op. cit.*, p. 104.) The main point to note here is simple. No religion as practised or professed by most people is all of a piece. Yet, as Rammohan would have it, there is something in all religions, without which they would not perhaps quite qualify as religion, which is common and universal, and it may be profitable to emphasize this as a way of unity among men and as the basis of an exalted ethics.

With the position outlined above many believers will have reason to feel uncomfortable. For it might be objected that one would not remain an adherent of one's particular faith unless one regarded it as superior to all others. Now, I do not intend to deny that some of the precepts and practices of one religion may indeed be more open to criticism than those of another.

To deny this is in a way to deny the value of all reform. But it is not essential for one to argue the absolute superiority of one's religion to remain attached to it. All that one need maintain is that with one's particular cultural background or situation in life, the form in which one's own religion presents the truth is the most appealing. But one tends to claim much more for one's faith. Most people are prevented by modesty from saying that they are personally more excellent than others; but no rule of social decency seems to stop them from claiming absolute superiority on behalf of their religion. More often than not, the pride of superiority that we take in our religion is similar to the coarser pride that some people take in their race. For the truth is that most of us do not come to our religion as a matter of deliberate choice: we are simply born to a faith, and make no more than minor adjustments within the limits imposed by it. The greater satisfaction that one may derive from one's own religion is a result of richer associations from childhood and more intimate acquaintance with it. It should be possible to express this satisfaction without a sense of superiority.

Much of what has been stated above is consistent with Mr Fyzee's thesis up to a point. In India the idea of the unity of all religions is often a little too glibly accepted. Where assent to the idea of unity has become mechanical, it is useful to demand a recognition of diversity. To a certain extent variations are necessary and they will persist. In part, they are an inevitable result of the diversity of inherited languages and myths and social situations of different communities. There are some differences of small intrinsic value; for prides and prejudices are superimposed on the essential creed. But there are other distinctions of deeper significance. Religion has different moods, sometimes looking out and sometimes looking inward, and its utterances are coloured by these moods. These differences cannot be totally obliterated. But their importance is perhaps best appreciated when they are seen in relation to the common theme of religion. This is as true of different religions as of different sects within the same religion. In this sense, there is no contradiction between an appreciation of differences and the recognition of unity.

III

A deeper cleavage lies elsewhere. It is arguable that the so-called "ethical core" of all religions has, in fact, nothing religious about it. The search for common precepts in all religions must end up in the abandonment of religion itself. Earlier religions to the extent they had anything of value to communicate, expressed in mystic language, in language touched with exalted emotions, an ethical insight which one can now sustain and uphold in more rational terms. And it is better to uphold it in these terms. The ethics of universal brotherhood is only obscured when it is surrounded by the haze of religious mysticism. This is the way of thought that leads to "scientific humanism."

But there is also a second way.

There is a deep difference between religious and non-religious ethics. Those who accept the former would argue that it incorporates what is best and useful in the latter and goes beyond that. At this point of transcendence religious ethics becomes more than what can be reasoned out. There is in religion an idea of unconditional love and forgiveness, and a certain delightedness about the universe as God's creation, irrespective of the contingencies of individual existence, which make it different from what is purely scientific and ethical. It is possible to make a rational and persuasive plea for justice; but, within the ordinary meaning of reason, it is not easy to rationalize unconditional forgiveness such as Christ's on the cross. It is easy enough to argue for peace, mutual aid, or what have you; but it is a different matter when it comes to the Vaishnava "ahetuki priti," the love that transcends practical reason. Religion, at its purest, aims at the unconditional and erects it as an arch over the conditional goods of justice, mutual aid, and the rest of man's ideals. This is yet another and a most important meeting point of all religions, that they attempt to provide a timeless frame for all the changing morality in time. This is what religion symbolizes by joining the idea of God to its ethical message.

As thorough-going rationalists we may decide that this quest for the unconditional and timeless is a mistake. We may then try to reason our way to a conception of justice and "funda-

mental human rights." Or we may accept the need of marrying the conditional of justice to the unconditional of forgiveness and love. Then, again, we cannot be satisfied with the mere "recognition of difference of outlook" among different religions. For while we can be indifferent to other religions (as to other systems of thought), we cannot have genuine respect for them without discovering in all of them a common value. There might have been a time when nations looking at one another across distant boundaries could be indifferent or simply curious about the differences, "the peculiar forms of worship or devotion," sanctioned by different religions. But with the increasing pressure of social proximity, a more positive principle of mutual respect becomes necessary. With it, there is a chance of real fellowship. Lacking it, the best one can hope for is a kind of cold co-existence, occasionally erupting into active animosity.

The major religions of the world had once a unifying role binding together large masses of people. By the time of the crusades, they were already seen as a divisive force. But the need for a wider basis of unity remained and was all the more urgently felt wherever people of different faiths were destined to live together. If religion failed to provide this basis, one would have to turn elsewhere in search of it. After the wars of religion the idea gained ground that while dogmas divided, reason, as a universal principle, might serve to unify. Some opposed reason to religion; others argued that there was in religion itself an idea of transcendence which could complement reason and provide the basis of living together and understanding among mankind. But religion could not be restored to its unifying role so long as it remained bounded by that essentially sectarian mentality which confuses purity of faith with a one-sided stressing of distinctions. This is the background of the broadened outlook of the "friends of humanity," as some of the radical philosophers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries loved to call themselves. As Rammohan, and not he alone, keenly felt one has to go behind the differences of dogmas in search of something valued and held in common. This we need, and one who cannot find it in religion had better give up religion than give up the search.

REVIEW ARTICLES

The Naked God*

by ELLEN ROY

THE title of Howard Fast's latest book carries association with an old folk tale in the collection of Hans Christian Andersen. The story goes that a king had been taken in by a jesting or fraudulent tailor, who had offered to make for him a set of such fabulous clothes as only the righteous people could appreciate, while bad people could not even see them at all. Now, the fact was that the tailor was a cheat, and the king wore no clothes at all. Because, what the tailor spread out before the king as precious garments was entirely invisible, for the very good reason that there was no such thing. But, having trusted the boasting tailor and actually made himself believe his miracle-mongering claims, how could the king admit that he was not a good man? So he donned with all the gestures of make-believe something that was in fact non-existing. But when he walked through the streets thus attired, followed by his admiring subjects, none of them would admit that they saw no clothes on the king's person. For, they either shared the general superstition and were horrified to discover that their bad thoughts and deeds were thus found out; or even if they did not doubt the evidence of their reason and their senses and began to suspect the deceit, they would yet not admit it for fear of what the others might think of them. The

* *The Naked God—The Writer and the Communist Party* by Howard Fast (Praeger Inc., New York, 1957).

effect was the same: both types of people shouted loud their admiration for the king's beautiful clothes, perpetuating by their pretence, cowardice and stupidity the scandalous swindle. The story ends with a little child calling the bluff by mocking the king and laughing out loud that the king was going about naked.

Why did Howard Fast choose this title for the book in which he explains his break with communism—or, at any rate, with the Communist Party of America—and why it came so late in the day? The answer must be found in the analogy with the Andersen tale; otherwise, there would not seem to be any special significance in the nakedness of gods, which the Greeks took wisely for granted, as any type of garments would have subjected the Olympians to the undignified vagaries of fashion—a deity of much later vintage. The substitution of a god for a king, on the other hand, is in analogy to *The God That Failed*, to which earlier book Howard Fast's is a sort of elaborate postscript. It is significant enough that in both cases ex-Communists refer to the object of their disillusionment as to a god or a creed, something super-human, transcending reason, a faith betrayed and at last abjured. There is implied in the choice of naming the object of their former faith an element of the irrational and religious. And while this may have been in the case of the earlier book rather a literary device of sophisticated intellectuals to avoid such old-fashioned naïveties as "ideals" or "causes," Howard Fast makes it explicit that this irrational and religious element plays a prominent part in the cult of communism. He has a whole chapter in this book on the use of magic, including sympathetic magic, divination, thaumaturgy, incantation, etc. in the ritualistic practices of the Communist Parties, which is a not unrewarding intellectual game that could be spun out entertainingly to any length, if not to much purpose. But the most irrational of all is the deep-rooted superstitious belief in the infallibility of The Party and the consequent fear of excommunication, which makes the biblical hell fire appear as child's play in comparison. The "god" is the Communist Party, and the infallibility of the party is like the king's clothes—deceitfully claimed, passionately pretended, and non-existent—superstitions

both and hence both surrounded with magic ritual and irrational fears.

The Naked God has not had a very friendly reception from those who precisely could most sympathize with the author, having themselves gone through similar experiences before him. Howard Fast has left the Communist Party not in anger, but in despair, very much with a whimper, full of regrets for the past and not as if he felt now free to make up for error and time lost with something better to do in the future. Hence the book leaves one with a sense of depression and even disorientation. He has broken with the Communist Party. But he leaves one in doubt if he has yet broken with communism—not with that communism which was a bright white hope forty and still thirty years ago; but the communism as it has come to be known and practised since then. Howard Fast had been aware of the clay feet of his god almost since he became its devotee in the thirties and an initiate in 1943. But he “refused to see,” refused to let the awareness penetrate his rational consciousness. He actually said so himself in an interview with Martin Agronsky, an American radio and television commentator, after the publication of *The Naked God*. This interview is very significant for Howard Fast’s whole attitude. Agronsky asked him how he, a writer deeply concerned with freedom, could join the Communist Party as late as in 1943, when men like Ignazio Silone, Stephen Spender, André Gide and others had left it disillusioned already by 1939.

“Well,” said Howard Fast in reply, “in 1943 we were in a war against Fascism; also, I did not come to Communism in 1943 as a stranger. I had been close to this, known Communists, read communist literature, ever since 1933.”

“And believed it?” asked Agronsky. “Believed it and disbelieved it. Because in 1939, I broke with all my communist friends over the Soviet Pact with Hitler. In 1941, I thought otherwise, I saw the whole world joining with Russia. . . . By 1943, I felt that the next step was to join the Communist Party.”

Thus, Howard Fast joined the Communist Party deliberately, after believing and disbelieving for full ten years. There is a lack of spontaneity in his joining as in his break with commun-

ism. Yet he was not half-hearted. Once in the party, he went wholehog; he did not spare himself, was always in the forefront of all struggles, went to jail and sacrificed a good deal, professionally, as a writer, and as a human being by violating his conscience and his self-respect, and probably also his style. He traces in this book the whole sorry tale of the party bureaucrats trying to break, shape and utilize for their purposes a public literary figure—one hesitates to call him an intellectual, one of those whom Communist Parties are always specially keen to exploit, while full of contempt for intellectualism and intellectuals as such. One hesitates, firstly, because Howard Fast was one of the few leading figures in American Communism with a pucca proletarian background; and secondly, whether to be an intellectual is considered a good or a bad thing, Howard Fast did not behave like one, so that the party could have rightly been proud of him. For, whatever other definition may be given to the intellectual, one of his characteristics, and for which precisely he is suspect in Communist Parties, is that he thinks independently and insists on judging everything by his own scale of values, and in the light of reason and intelligence. But Howard Fast, having "believed and disbelieved" for ten years what the Communist Party said and did, joined it when he "saw the whole world joining with Russia," and stuck to it in spite of everything.

In spite, for instance, of Silone's break with the Communists, and in that connection, he says:

I, will admit that for years I pondered over the case of Silone, the proof of Silone. But Silone himself was willing to work closely with the Italian communist leader Togliatti, and there was an enormous respect between these two men in the post-war years. I said to myself: "Well, there's no open and shut case here. This is a question of movements, of beliefs, of disbeliefs, of accusations, of lies, of slanders."

Silone did not convince him. He believed and disbelieved, but he was not sure, not of anything, not at least for a long time. But were there no facts? were there no standards in his mental and moral world by which to judge his politics also? Did he never feel that "here is the limit"? His answers are revealing:

When Russia declared a thing was a slander, I believed it was a slander. Because I rested on the fact that total proof was lacking.

But:

Total proof came for me entirely at the moment when the General Secretary, the nominal head of the whole communist movement on earth and the actual head of the Soviet Union's Communist Party delivered a secret report in which he not only swore upon his oath that every slander and accusation made in twenty years against the Soviet Union was true, but in addition dragged out a series of crimes, a record of terror, of bestiality, of bloody murder and torture, that even the worst enemies of Communism had never thought of.

Howard Fast believed the facts known to all the world—and he had more access to such knowledge than most—only when he got, so to say, the green light to believe, to see the truth, by the High Priest of communism himself. He admits that too:

What I have done today, I did on the testimony of the Soviet leadership.

Why did he not see before? The question must indeed go on his nerves by now; it is so obviously the first to rise in everybody's mind. In reply, he oracles:

You ask why I didn't see. You must accept that there were deep reasons why I refused to see.

Agronsky pounced: "You used the phrase: I refused to see. Did you not go through life, Mr Fast, with blinkers, self-imposed?"—"Of course I did."—But he weakens this frank and brave statement by enlarging on it with heated generalities. "The horror of our time is that everyone does. You too. Everyone does. We all wear a set of blinkers. What a wonderful world this would be if we had the ability to see, to look around us,

to practise some sort of broad understanding and tolerance. I had my blinkers, other people had their blinkers. Today it's incomprehensible to me that I could go on year after year accepting these things."

This being so, Howard Fast need not be surprised that others find it at least as incomprehensible as he does, if not more so, which explains the reserved and even cool and critical reception of his book by those whose ranks he has now joined—as it were, awkwardly and reluctantly, "a captive not quite freed," as one reviewer put it.

By way of further reasons why he made up his mind so late to break with the Communist Party, he explains that he is slow to be convinced and equally slow to be unconvinced, and having believed for so long that the Communist Party was the only means to all the good ends, to leave it was as good as the end of everything. "That has always been the greatest weapon of the party," he told Agronsky, "this exclusiveness—that only through the Communist Party could the goals of brotherhood, of understanding, of social progress and advancement be reached or achieved—this exclusiveness which you begin to believe; you find yourself trapped in believing and then are unable to shake loose from it."

Again the analogy with the religious, the irrational, the comparison between Communist Party and Popish bigotry; no salvation except through the Church, and the only alternative to blind belief is ex-communication.

The Communist Party is a pseudo-religious organization. The terror which it exercises, where it has power with execution, torture and death as in Russia, is exercised in countries where the party is not in power, with a fear of excommunication. The Communist Party says in effect: When you leave, or when we expel you, we will destroy you and your reputation, your standing, your mortal soul—for your life time, for your children's life time and for generations.

Just like the jealous and wrathful God of the Old Testament. And elsewhere:

You cannot leave the Communist Party and remain a decent human being.

Howard Fast was indeed trapped in this belief, trapped for thirteen years of his party membership. Has he been able to shake himself loose of it the moment he ended that membership? The question might appear unfair, but for the spontaneous outburst in reply to Agronsky's question how he felt now after the break:

"I feel rotten," was the reply. No doubt, the decision to break with the party must have been agonizing—Howard Fast's "own purgatory" (again!). But once made, should he still feel "rotten"? In the two-hundred pages of this book he makes it clear that he must have felt rotten all throughout those thirteen years: "the day one enters the party one begins to leave it," he says somewhere. But does he himself perhaps still wonder after all whether he can remain a decent human being after the break? Is there perhaps still left an unconscious element of guilt, of the fear of hell fire? Or is it only what others will think and say of him, those others who were his friends till yesterday and who still are today enmeshed in the error from which he emerged only the day before? The self-righteousness of the right believer is still fresh in his memory, and the calculated hurts and insults of which he will now be the recipient must be well known to him. Perhaps he was not one of the worst to inflict them on others when he was still in the fold. He should be given the benefit of the doubt, because some of his own doubts certainly date back a long time. Ten years before the break, in 1947, he quotes himself as saying to two friends who were "Communists many more years than I: Then, how does one remain in this movement? How does one go on?" And again on some other occasion he asked his friends: "What does one do when he is part of a movement the leader of which is either an idiot or a madman?"

And what do you call one who does remain, to allow himself to be led, knowingly and deliberately, by "idiots or madmen"? Till at long last came the day when he read the Khrushchev report at the Twentieth Congress, and:

at long last I was released. I came awake. The fear stopped. I had left the Communist Party, and I had awakened from a long and terrible nightmare.

Yet, why then should he still have felt "rotten"? Is it because the fear has not really and altogether stopped? That fear of which he says in the beginning of Chapter 23.

In the end there is fear—the kind of fear that could not possibly exist if the Communist Party were only an organization . . . the deeper, more awful fear of one who has given himself to false gods, and given himself too well. When a communist walks out of the Communist Party, he must travel through a special purgatory that no one other than he who has come through before can possibly understand.

That is of course the trouble with men who, like Howard Fast, instead of pursuing their ideals rationally and purposively, give themselves to some gods—and all gods are false. Nor is it the fault of the gods, since gods are made by men. Nor, without belittling the wrench of a torn loyalty, of the break with an organization as exacting and self-exalted as the Communist Party, is it quite such a mystic-mysterious horror. A not inconsiderable number of other not inconsiderable persons have gone through it before without dramatizing the emotional aspect quite so much.

That is what leaves one with the impression that the spell and the fear of the false god is not all over yet for Howard Fast and that there remains a lurking, sneaking sense of guilt. That is bound to happen in the case of people "who, having lost sight of the end, dedicate themselves to the means," which is Howard Fast's own definition of a fanatic, and might be a fair description of what he himself must have been like during his thirteen years of party membership. Because those who stayed on with an unquiet conscience were, as a rule, the loudest and fiercest against those who said earlier what Howard Fast now writes in *The Naked God*. And this may also explain the element of irritation found in a number of reviews of this book. Howard Fast is certainly right when he says that it is not all that simple—

the decision to leave the party and the cause of that decision and the process by which it was arrived at, and why so late. But it adds to the irritation when he says:

Truly the simpletons say, "But we have always known the truth about the party; why did it take you so long?"

Of course, nobody has "always" known the truth about the party; but why is he a simpleton who points out that others have seen the truth twenty and thirty years earlier? When Howard Fast now says what they said with a time lag of so many years, who would then appear as the greater simpleton?

"What truth?" anyway, he goes on to pose a counter-question. "Even in this brief book," he says, "I have put down a picture that few people outside actually understood and in the party it is overlaid by a complex of hundred thousand threads." Why this mystification about the truth about the party? This whole book describes in detail why no self-respecting and freedom-loving human being could and should remain in a Communist Party; no mortal born, potentially rational, should admit the need to be humiliated, slighted, broken, insulted, brow-beaten and hurt in all his natural human sentiments, instincts and reactions (condemned as subjectivism) in order to achieve the ideals of human brotherhood, equality, justice, progress and freedom, or whatever it is for which people join Communist Parties. This is absurd; and that is *the truth*. That is what happens to most people of the more developed kind who join Communist Parties. The cases, in fact or literature, of men debasing themselves for the greater glory of their ideal, disowning their reason and better knowledge, falsifying facts and distorting truth, betraying their friends, their dignity and their conscience for the sake of The Cause, The Revolution, The Party—they are morbid exceptions of a perverted heroism. The truth is that this is a violation of human nature and a rape of reason, and if a cause demands this of a man, it is not a good cause.

Howard Fast has escaped this fate just in the nick of time. Although he had his share of the neurotic fears and compulsive blinkered loyalty that Communist Parties inspire, he is not really

the type that makes tragic heroes. From these pages he emerges rather as a pathetic figure. And that is not said to belittle him or the act of his break with the Communist Party. But it is pathetic to face the fact that one was fooled for so long, to have shouted in ecstasy about the king's wondrous clothes when all the time he went naked for all to see; and the book comes too late to allow Howard Fast the role of the bright young thing blurting out the truth in naïve revelation. Of course, it is never too late for the truth about communism and the disfigurations which a great ideal underwent in the logic of its own inherent fallacies and on becoming galvanized into a creed. But what is perhaps most pathetic about Howard Fast is that he nowhere comes to grips with the creed itself. He says somewhere that it is not his task in this book to argue with the theory of Socialism—the word communism does not appear once, he being still under the magic spell of the word-taboo. Throughout he wrestles only with the Communist Party—not with the creed, not with the “god” itself, but merely with the priesthood. The ideals for which he suffered so much indignity for so long are vaguely enumerated here and there as brotherhood, understanding, progress and social advancement, etc. These may be the things for the sake of which Howard Fast became a Communist, but that is not what communism is about. If he remained for thirteen years in the Communist Party, he must have espoused and expounded the whole doctrine: Marxism-Leninism, dictatorship of the proletariat, economic determinism, class war and all the rest of it, and nowhere in *The Naked God* does he confront these basic issues and attempt to clarify his position towards them.

The god, the target of his attack, the devil of the whole drama—it is not the creed, not a system of ideas, a doctrine: it is always only the Communist Party, and more particularly its leadership, and that too mainly only at the top. Also pathetic (and very endearing) is the *esprit de corps*, the truly affectionate loyalty he displays, and obviously feels, for his former colleagues and friends in the lower ranks of the Communist Party. He pays them the handsome compliment that

knowing intimately only the Communist Party of the United States, yet, of this tiny organization I can say honestly and forthrightly, and under oath if need be, that never in so small a group have I seen so many pure souls, so many gentle and good people, so many men and women of utter integrity.

And he continues:

Unless you are ready to accept this as the truth, coming from a man who has broken with them and cannot call them comrades again, you will not even begin to understand the most complex and incredible situation of our time—and perhaps of any time in all human history.

Here Howard Fast touches a very profound, intriguing and disquietening problem. There are these people than whom there are none gentler and better, and in the name of all that they hold sacred they go and connive at and defend, and would probably commit themselves, in discipline and dedication, the most inhuman and unworthy acts. This is indeed a symptom of the malady of our time, from which not only Communists suffer, this lack of wholeness and integrity of the human personality, this disharmony between man's thoughts and actions, this discrepancy between his ideas and his behaviour. But even though Communists are not alone to suffer from this malady, they probably suffer from it worse than others.

This is due to the excessive magnification of the Communist Party as the indispensable, the one and only, and hence infallible means to the end of communism, and of communism as the *summum bonum*, the end in itself, exclusive, immutable, the final truth, the product of Marxism exempt from the operation of the Marxian logic and doctrine of dialectical change. Again, in this it presents itself like any other religion, indeed more Popish than the Pope. In fact, even the Vatican is said to have officially recognized communism as a kind of religion, though of course of wrong believers. But when end and means are so indissolubly identified as are communism and the Communist Party as instrument to its achievement, and when that instrument is totally condemned, then one is justified in saying that

there must be something wrong with the end also which is unattainable except through such a means. Howard Fast evades this issue in *The Naked God*. I think that is the greatest defect of the book. Nowhere does he say so, but the conclusion might easily be drawn that, if only the Communist leadership of the party was a better leadership; and indeed, if perhaps only a better man had been in the place of Eugene Dennis, may be in the end, after all, communism might yet be alright. But it so happens that in the ever changing internal set-up of all the known Communist Parties, the only permanent features are precisely those Eugene Dennises, the Ulbrichts, the Duclos, the Rakosis—the imitation Stalins. The conception of the Communist Party and its role as laid down in Marxism-Leninism-Khrushchevism demands this type, makes room for no other type of leadership. The defect is basic and it must be faced.

It is not suggested that Howard Fast refuses to face it even now, or evades it on purpose. But even if he could not possibly say everything about everything in this first book after the great break, it is a serious defect and significant lapse, more significant than the "shoddy language" in which it is written and the lack of structure and coherence which have been adversely commented on by many literary critics. The structural defect of the book may be due to the fact that it was not originally conceived as a book, but started with one essay and went on growing by way of answering more questions and remembering more arguments. As regards the language, I have to make a confession: though Howard Fast's books went into best-selling printing figures, I have never read one of his books except the *Citizen Tom Payne*, and that too only in search of some historical data; and hence I don't have a standard of comparison for his style of writing, before and after. Incidentally, he has some very definite ideas about language: "The same numb, senseless, tired language," used by Communists in their discussions, is commented on in one place; and in another he writes:

Communists who have both a sense of their own language and an affection for it have long bewailed the mammoth string of wooden clichés used to preach Party dogma. . . . They are fostered out of the laziness and pervading sense of magic that

underlie Party ritual. The pages of Party publications are filled with the word "hence," an outmoded form almost never used in modern speech or writing, hallowed by tradition into a meaning beyond that of the words "therefore" or "consequently." Take this from "whence" it comes, which is all I can do.

The last sentence is clearly not a piece of art, and I for one find nothing wrong with the short word "hence" used in the flow of an argument. But then, Americans find so much of English archaic. At the same time, Howard Fast himself uses in one place the word "forsooth" for "surely" which is too archaic even for my taste and really sounds a bit silly.

However, if I have not read Howard Fast's earlier books, that is partly because I seldom get to reading novels at all, though I would like to, and largely because of my own set of blinkers which I wear against ideological *belles lettres*. And since Communist writers, unless or until they cease to be Communist writers, must always write with a view to the approval of The Party, they all conform to the monotonous pattern of a General Line and of a philistine theory of art, and after having tasted some samples of approved Communist novels, I gave it up. I like my novels apart and my ideologies apart. Of course, a writer's ideas will always find expression in whatever he writes; but in Communist literature they put it on too thick and leave nothing unsaid to allow scope for the reader's imagination or to draw his own conclusions. Still, now I shall want to read some of what Howard Fast has written before, because, even though he wrote so obviously in terrible earnest and out of a revolutionary soul, the Party played such hell with him for what he wrote. That is one of my reactions to reading *The Naked God*, even if I do find its language gawky in places and in others declamatory. But then, the writer was severely handicapped by having to express passionate and unhappy emotions, too fresh, too raw and seething to be dealt with in artistic detachment. As a matter of fact, though lack of humour is one of the mortal sins, his very earnestness and engagedness make the author more sympathetic. He is so patently sincere, and there is nothing slick and smart about him. He is not sophisticated

and gives himself no airs. If he has not thought out his thoughts to the end by a long way yet, at least he nowhere tries to whitewash or disown his responsibility as an influential writer or the harm done by his awakening having been so belated. The occasional attempts at mystification are surely ("forsooth"?) due to the whole thing being as yet none too clear in its implications to himself, and still looming too big and too painful.

The mere reading of the book is painful. It is painful for good Communists and bad Communists, for fellow-travellers and anti-Communists. But it is necessary to read it for all of them. Because Howard Fast is scrupulously fair and honest and does more than justice to the God that failed him even while abjuring his faith. And it is precisely this decency of his which makes the book such painful reading: There goes that big, lumbering, good-natured fellow, already a recognized author and joins the Communist Party, lends his name and prestige to it and is found in the forefront of every fight like a plain party volunteer—and gets treated like mud for his gains by the most boorish bosses I have ever heard of in any of the world's Communist Parties. "If any reader imagines," he writes on page 14:

that out of the act of joining the Communist Party there comes either eternal peace or happiness, he is mistaken. In all truth, one sells his soul, accepting the proposition that thus will mankind be redeemed . . . neither individual indignity nor hurt is of any importance. . . . The pride, passion and independence of the individual are described as "bourgeois baggage," and it becomes an important admission of a lack of "proletarianism" to admit to them. My entire background of the working class, of poverty and hunger, did not help to make me "proletarian." Only the ignominious retreat of my spirit could prove my faith.

And again: "I may have been a fool not to have known of the terror," he writes in a letter to a Russian friend after the excommunication, "but I did not know." That was the experience of the man Howard Fast. The writer, if possible, fared even worse.

No one in the party leadership . . . ever showed the slightest interest in what I was writing or in reading any manuscript of mine. . . . Interest came only when my "bourgeois literary sins" were unearthed by the specialists in the field and brought to the attention of the leadership. By accident the manuscript of a play of mine fell into the hands of a petty party functionary. After he had read it, he called me on the telephone, demanded that I come to a certain place to meet him, and there, arbitrarily, in terms of savage vindictiveness, ordered me to change the third act of the play. He told me quite bluntly that he was very close to the then General Secretary of the Party, Perry, and that, unless I made the changes he demanded, he would see to it that Perry expelled me from the Party. He also let me know that Perry would in no way be displeased to have an excuse for taking that action. I made the changes.

And why not? When Khrushchev danced the Gopak!? For one of his novels he was charged by the party leadership with "anti-party action" because he depicted an Irish worker as getting himself drunk in the face of overwhelming personal problems. For another novel, he was accused of "Jewish bourgeois Nationalism." For yet another novel, *Freedom Road*, he was accused of "white chauvinism" because he let someone refer to a Negro as a nigger, which was the realist thing to do; but in party literature that word had to be spelled n—r, which again fits into the picture of the taboos and superstitious practices which communism shares with primitive magic, and the spirit of mediaeval bigotry and the Inquisition, which denoted the name of the devil with three crosses.

But the limit is the fate that the Party reserved for what Howard Fast himself believes to be his best book. "Only another writer can understand what went into the making of 'Spartacus', a book I had dreamed of writing for years," and a theme that has appealed to many revolutionary writers. Howard Fast's *Spartacus* was so revolutionary that seven publishers refused to publish it.

"Unable to endure the humiliation of further rejections, I decided to publish it myself," he writes, "and finally the miracle of a book published by myself—editing, printing, packing, distributing—turned into a bestseller of 35,000 copies in a few months. . . . For two years and more I had laboured to produce a book that would be an epic of the oppressed, a paean to liberty and the high conscience of mankind. . . . But the lashing tongue of the Commissar informed me otherwise: I had written a study in 'brutalism' and 'sadism,' and he said: 'I think it is a bad book, an evil book, a rotten book!' Another charge against 'Spartacus' was that it 'contained psychoanalytical words.' The phrase 'inner struggle' in particular was seized upon. And the following is quoted from the 'definitive' review of the book in the party organ, 'Daily Worker,' of 7 February 1952. 'Fast's conclusion is not believable. . . . It is true that individuals from a decadent class can press beyond their class into the higher realm of the advancing class. . . . What we have here is a reverse from the class theme. . . . Can we imagine a Nazi pleading for the love of a Russian Woman? (Can't we?). . . . We get something very close to the sexual reconciliation of the classes. . . . The incursion is felt here of the destructive influence of Freudian mystification concerning the erotic as against the social basis of character. . . ."

This is surely hard to beat. In the end, says Howard Fast:

they could not destroy "Spartacus"! The petty shame of party periodicals rejecting reviews they had asked to be written because these reviews praised the book, was drowned in the excitement of Communists who read it—and it sold through edition after edition. Yet, that night I could hear only one thing—that my life and work and talent, as embodied in that book, had to be destroyed. I had sinned, disobeyed: I had created as I thought I should create—and all that was criminal. The commercial book publishers hustled me out of their offices because I was a Communist. The Communist Party had established its discipline because I was a writer. In the life of every writer, there is one work that he will some day write out of the bottommost(!) wells of his passion. . . . For me,

"Spartacus" was such a book—the book of my being. . . . I sat down that night and wept, because it was the end.

Poor wretch. He not only wept, he even says he did. He is not even bitter, he only feels rotten. This attitude is almost great, greater for that he broke so late, having to regret and to confess to so much more condoned and connived at, as time went on. Some of the more plausible explanations he gives for why:

My learning was so hard and slow—too hard and too slow for an explanation of why I remained—were pride: you could not run away when the movement was under fire; and stubbornness too, for I hate those who push me around, outside the Party as well as inside of it!

But the most important point, I believe, to explain how he could bear so long this standing violation of his conscience and self-respect, are the hard facts of his own social background and early experiences, which were much like those that gave rise to the ideas of Socialism and Communism themselves. Describing how he came to communism, in the early thirties, he writes:

"At the age of eleven, pressed by the need of utter poverty, I went to work as a newspaper delivery boy. The fact that thereby I gave up all the joy and laughter of childhood to embark upon long years of physical and mental weariness, the particular weariness of doomed children—is important only in its very broad social sense. . . . The reader must comprehend the full meaning of the surrender of childhood that poverty still imposes on millions of children the world over. . . . I was lucky. I always found work. . . . I was large and strong, iron-muscled, youthfully indestructible, for I had already survived and made my peace with every bestiality and indignity that poverty exacts. I was the product of the gutter and the gang, the lousy, bedbug-ridden railway tenement, the burning streets and the empty lots. I had carried brass knucks and used them, and in my animal world, I was beaten and beat others. I had no mother and my father was unemployed for months at a time, aging, his back broken. . . . To this day I cannot pass a

beggar, a broken man, a homeless wretch crouched on some side-walk without saying to myself: "There—but by the grace of God. . . ."

Most writers know this stark side of the reality which has produced communism only from hearsay, and become communists only after they have already been writers, and when their conscience as writers drives them to a position where they want not only to reflect and describe the world as it is, but influence its shaping with their art. But for Howard Fast, this was part of his own life; he became a Communist because of it and a writer in spite of it. That makes a difference. Because of this difference I felt reluctant to review this book. Because, unless a reviewer confines himself to express his like or dislike of a book, by implication he sets himself up as a judge, as one who may or may not be able to write a book himself, but who knows all about it and knows it better than the author himself. I hate to do that, and would hate it more in the case of Howard Fast's *The Naked God*. Because this book is not a piece of literature. *It is a piece someone has torn out of himself*. The morale of the story is, when we remember why we are against communism, never to forget why people become Communists. Communism is incompatible with freedom—individual, social, political and even economic. But so is injustice and poverty. And there is a disquietening reluctance or inability on the part of the progressive democratic Left to evolve a new and better alternative. Without that, the most passionate declaration of love for freedom is not enough to offer a new orientation, to evoke purposive dedication and to remove the causes that drive men like Howard Fast to communism—and then to break with it at the cost of so much disorientation and suffering.

The Intellectual on the Dissecting Table *

by DAYA KRISHNA

EVER since the rise of *Wissens-*
sociologie, the intellectual's creations have been subject to analysis and scrutiny not for what they said but, rather, how and why they came to say what they were saying. The interest lay not around the validity of what was being expounded and maintained but in uncovering and unveiling the hidden forces that led to the exposition. The creator, however, could not for long escape the attention of curious minds. The probing fingers might be crude or gentle, but there they were—insistent, not to be taken away. The disputes, if any, were between those clamouring to be near the dissecting table—the sociologist and the psychologist pulling in different directions.

The intellectuals form a social class among other classes and they are human beings among other human beings. So, it is but natural that they be the object of attention to the sociologist and the psychologist. Recently, they have attracted attention from another angle. The traditional societies of Asia and Africa are changing before our very eyes and the role that the intellectuals are playing in this process is so much there for everyone to see that even the most superficial observer can hardly miss it

The Intellectual between Tradition and Modernity: The Indian Situation
by Edward Shils (Mouton & Co., the Hague, Netherlands, 1961).

Edward Shils, the noted sociologist from Chicago, brings all these interests to bear in this monograph on the study of the Indian Intellectual in the contemporary situation. An acute observer, Shils masks his ruthless exposure with a gentleness which is deceptive. His clear, easy, flowing style with the rather un-American and the so, so British quality of understatement and muted irony helps in the misleading impression.

The theme of Shils is a manifold theme, though most of the monograph is confessedly concerned with the denotation of the character and situation of the Indian Intellectual. He poses the problem of the relation between provincial and metropolitan cultures, the characteristics of the intellectual situated between two cultures, the role of the intellectual in the creation of modern nations and the eternal problem of creativity which troubles every person whoever becomes interested in this realm at all.

These problems, of course, are not in the centre of discussion. In fact, the average reader may miss them altogether. Still they are very much there, always in the background, raising their heads like submerged icebergs here and there, hovering around the whole work, appearing and reappearing like themes in a piece of music. And it is this aspect which gives to his work a larger interest than the one deserved by a mere case-study, however well done.

The case-history and the theoretical framework are closely related. But as the relation has not been clearly articulated, nor the data investigated in response to questions *explicitly* asked, the reader is left with an impression difficult to assess in theoretic-scientific terms. It is difficult to imagine that a sophisticated sociologist of Shils' reputation would have undertaken the study without any questions in his mind whose answers he was seeking by the field investigation he has reported in this monograph.

The work, then, can be examined at three levels: the first, and the most obvious one, concerns the adequacy of the analysis of the Indian intellectual and his situation as presented in the monograph. The second concerns the theoretic framework one seems to sense behind the work and the third concerns the inter-relationship between the framework and the case-study presented in the main body of the book.

The examination at each of these levels suffers from a serious handicap. The author explicitly warns in the *Foreword* that this is not a full report of his studies and that for greater detail and differentiation the reader should wait for his forthcoming book *The Indian Intellectual*. As for the theoretic framework, one has to discover it for oneself out of the stray remarks scattered throughout the book, and thus it is quite possible that one may be seriously mistaken about the central theoretic orientation of the work. There is only one clue which the author has explicitly stated in the *Foreword*. He writes: "I have attempted here to consider the Indian intellectual in the light of the general problems which arise when ancient traditional societies, long without their own sovereignty, seek, as sovereign states, to transform themselves into modern societies." This is not only inadequate but, if taken too seriously, is a false clue to many of the perspectives in terms of which the material is analysed and discussed in the main body of the book. The uncertainties at these two levels are bound to affect the third, as it is merely concerned with the interaction between the two.

The case-study concerns a class that emerged in the nineteenth century in this country under the impact of British contact and education. The members of this class invariably knew a foreign language, i.e. English and through it became aware of a foreign culture which was also the culture of the people who happened to rule India. These people became the spokesmen of the ideas, institutions and values of the Western culture as embodied in Great Britain and it was in their minds that the issue between the traditional culture in which they had been born and brought up and the alien culture of which they had become aware was formulated, fought and provisionally resolved. It is this class which formed the spearhead in most fields of change and innovation during the last hundred years and it is this class which at present rules India.

The membership of this class is not inordinately large. It is supposed to consist, according to rough estimates, of about sixty thousand productive intellectuals and about one hundred thousand of those who, in some sense or other, are consumers of intellectual production. The term "productive" is to be taken with tons of salt, for it is supposed to cover almost everybody

who opens his mouth or lifts his pen or administers or does anything with the world of letters, learning and culture. In fact, anybody who reads or writes may be supposed to be a member of this class—a criterion not too irrelevant in a country where most of the persons still happen to be illiterate.

The class, though seemingly so inchoate and disparate, has a hard core of 35,000 college and university teachers, persons in scientific and scholarly institutions outside the universities, 2,000 journalists and perhaps an equal number of writers, administrators and artists in and outside the government establishments. The average income of this class is somewhere around Rs. 350 per month and it functions in an institutional structure which was primarily a creation of the British.

These are the persons who are the agents of modernity in India and it is with their characterization that Shils is primarily concerned in this monograph. The agents, however, are members of two worlds, the world in which they were born and brought up and the world they want to bring into being. Both the worlds involve their heart and mind and soul and, thus, they are perpetually in the situation of the person who has two loves, each opposed to the other. Shils insists on this opposition and draws the contrast between the modern intellectual tradition which is open, empirical, experimental, primarily cognitive, emphasizing and valuing individuality and seeking *new* truths as against the older Indian tradition which assumes that all that is to be known has been known, that one's task is merely to understand this as best as one can and then not merely to rest satisfied with this knowing but to try to lose one's separative individuality by dissolving in whatever is discovered as the ultimate principle in the universe.

It is in the background of this basic cleavage in the soul of the Indian intellectual that Shils builds his picture further. Almost everything is derived from it. The indifference towards the empirical and the concrete; vocational apathy, the feeling that ultimately it does not matter, the inclination to charismatic leadership in all fields including politics, the muting of individuality in domestic and personal interrelationships, the lack of interest in day-to-day work for the achievement of limited objectives, the enthusiasm for "causes," the ambivalence towards

power, the looking outward to the West—all these and many others have been delineated with a sensitive perceptiveness that cannot but amaze the Indian reader. The intellectual life in the universities, colleges and institutions of research, the intellectual's role and function and behaviour in journalism and civil and political life is depicted with truth and a revealing insight is displayed on almost everything the author has touched.

Yet, it seems to me that a basic lack of clear theoretic formulation makes the work suffer almost at its very foundations. For example, the author nowhere clearly distinguishes between "modernization" and the "modern intellectual tradition" and assumes throughout that the latter is necessarily related to the former. The "modernity" in the sense of "industry, rational administration, applied science and modern education" (p. 12) is in no sense identical or closely related with the "modern intellectual tradition" in the sense of something "open, empirical, experimental" "seeking to discover hitherto unknown principles which govern the universe" (p. 22). The example of closed, totalitarian societies has proved that a society may modernize itself and yet discourage the open, empirical, experimental approach in large areas of its experience and study. The field of intellectual activity itself is differentiated to a remarkable degree and the empirical-experimental approach may not be made all along the line. Further, the empirical approach itself is not of one kind alone. In the traditional intellectual life of India, there was a strong empirical approach to empirical matters but mostly of a descriptive, classificatory kind. There is even a very strong experimental element in Indian spirituality which few have noticed. Of course, the hypothetic-deductive-verificational method of modern science, specially in its mathematical aspects, was conspicuously absent, but it was so everywhere in the world till the revolutionary break-through was made in modern times.

To see the same point in another way, we may ask ourselves how much genuine creativity is required for the so-called modernization of a society? Certainly, one does not need to make one's country a creative centre in all fields of modern research to become an industrialized modern country. Similarly to become creative is not necessarily to become creative only in one way or in one manner or in one realm

only. Also, creativity or lack of creativity is not necessarily linked with the metropolitan-provincial polarity around which much of Shils' thinking revolves. Equally, there is the problem of differentiated stringency of criteria in fields which were discovered and developed in the West and others where no such primacy exists. If one were really to distinguish between physical sciences, social sciences, humanities and the field of cultural creation one will discover a far more variegated picture than the one Shils has painted.

For example, in fields like classical music or dancing, neither the appreciator nor the creator looks to the West or feels provincial in relation to it. Similarly, in poetry and literature in general Shils is very much wide of the mark if he thinks that the educated intellectuals in India are more steeped in English literature than in that of their own language. The appreciation and response to the poetry of one's own language is far richer and deeper and more continuous than to that in the English language except among some university teachers of English literature. For one stray stanza that someone may recite from Keats or Shelley or Wordsworth, there will be a hundred from Ghalib or Pant or Tagore depending on the language to which one happens to belong. Perhaps, Shils has never seen the rich gusto of an Urdu Mushaira or the usual pastime of friends who recite to each other the verses they like and love and remember. I wonder how he could have missed the remark made so often by enthusiasts in each language, "Oh, were so and so to be translated, he would get the Nobel Prize."

The looking towards the Metropolitan West is equally a stereotype which, unless one is careful to qualify, may be extremely misleading. Tagore, for example, received the Nobel Prize for literature and thus won international recognition from the so-called metropolitan centre, yet most of his countrymen are not prepared to rate him higher as a novelist than Sarat Chandra Chatterjee who won no such recognition. Not merely this, even an adverse judgement by the metropolitan critics fails to reverse the judgement held by the Indian reader. The case of K. C. Bhattacharyya is remarkably instructive in this respect. From the beginning he has been regarded as a profoundly original thinker without anyone waiting for what they in the West would think

and today, in spite of the adverse reviews of his and his son's work in the most prominent philosophical journals of the West, their reputation continues to increase as before.

The problem, then, is to distinguish between fields which have a continuing tradition from the past, fields where Western criteria are rather irrelevant, fields where creativity is present, and the fields where none of these is present. Shils' complaint about the lack of a real build-up of a continuing tradition of creative research in most areas of modern studies is undoubtedly true. But, then, how many are the countries which are genuine centres of creativity in these fields? Even advanced modern nations with high per capita incomes are not necessarily so. Many countries of Europe together with Australia, Canada and South Africa, though economically highly developed, are hardly centres of creative research in the fields of the sciences. In fact, unless we draw a distinction between cultural creativity, scientific creativity and modernization, we will not make much headway in the analysis of the problem.

This brings me to a consideration of the leading dichotomy between Tradition and Modernity around which Shils has organized his whole work. Which modernity and what tradition are the obvious questions that spring to one's mind. Modernity in the sense of industrialization and scientific research is not the same as the whole value-complex known under that name. The difference between the two is clearly shown in the fact that one may accept the first two and actively reject the latter. The point that I wish to make is that the conflict between tradition and modernity as value-complexes is not specific or peculiar to the Indian intellectual or to the intellectuals of scientifically and economically underdeveloped countries alone. Rather, it is a far more widespread phenomenon found at the heart of the most advanced countries themselves. The continuous protest of the artist, the humanist and the religious men against the scientific-technological value-complex of his own civilization is found in the Western world at each turn of its development. *The Two Cultures* controversy and Colin Wilson's *The Outsider and Religion and the Rebel* are only the latest witnesses of that conflict in the soul of Western Man. Shils seems too innocently to assume the superiority of the modern value-complex for all

aspects of individual and social life, forgetting that the debate has never been closed even in the West.

At a still deeper level, Shils does not seem to have been able to overcome the value-preferences of his own personality and culture. The lack of individuality which he so often notices and bemoans is just the type of individuality which appears to the Indian so superficial, adolescentist and immature. It is something to be overcome, rather than cultivated. Similarly, "the hiding behind the Saris" is very genuine and most Indians are shocked at the way old people are treated in the United States. There is a genuine element in the desire not to hurt the feelings and sensibilities of the family, if it can be helped. The author tends too much to assume that these attitudes stand in the way of the creation and perpetuation of a modern intellectual tradition. I am afraid the thesis needs a lot of proving before it can be accepted.

Shils has other minor inconsistencies, reconcilable perhaps, but not reconciled in his book. For example, on p. 20 the Indian tradition is supposed to render a favourable opinion of the intellectual while on p. 41 and later it is just the reverse which is held to be true. Similarly, while it is asserted on p. 97 that perhaps there is no other country where so many intellectuals are in the public life, at other places the alienation of the intellectual is itself traced to his divorce from the civic life of his country.

However, in spite of these major and minor limitations, the study has a solid foundation of truth, breathes the feel of intimate acquaintance with facts, reveals insight at every page and suggests the strategic areas where problems are to be dealt with. The formation of a creative intellectual tradition is Shils' challenge to the Indian intellectual. It is time that the challenge be accepted and responded to with the seriousness and intensity of purpose that it fully deserves.

POEMS

CAINSMORNING

HAVING ELIMINATED HIS dear brother
He wandered slowly through the springhung street,
Angry with Cain, his heart, and not another.
He sighed. My life runs past on rivered feet.

The wine the Law forbade me I have swallowed.
Still (understand me) I did this for good;
Though I am sorry now that I have hallowed
My thirst for freedom with my brother's blood.

The day grew luminous and cold like starshine.
He looked so odd that people stopped to stare.
Shopwindows rich with Cadillacs and Rheinwine
Poised their glazed questions on the lightfilled air.

These things, he thought, do happen; what surprises
At first palls later, hocused by the eye.
The soul and after life are still surmises.
Being for my bettering, let my brother die.

Suburban houses sneered. The stones said, Slayer!
He felt a saraband start in his brain,
And turned his face to heaven, and saw his prayer
Melt in the cold, the grey, the faceless rain.

DOM MORAES

THE RENUNCIATION OF THE DOG

TELL ME WHY the night before we started
Dogs were vainly
Barking at the waves;
And while we slept in an unknown temple
Days and waves away
A black dog dumbly
From out of nowhere of ourselves yawned and leapt;
And leaving us naked
And shame faced,
Tell me why the black dog died
Intriguingly between
God and our heads.

ARUN KOLHATKAR

THE SERPENT MAIDEN

TWO GREAT EYES outlined in black—
A long sleek black body—
Across her bodice a twisted braid winds down.
She bears on her head a basket of snakes.

Two great eyes outlined in black—
Girl, do you make your serpents dance?
Does a snake swing in the braid across your breast?
Does it sway across your body?

A serpent is tattooed on your arm.
Blue glass bracelets are on your wrists.
Does your serpent take blue kisses from your lips?
Will you open the hamper for me?

A cold black snake is on your breast,
A long sleek body—
I see the lifted hoods of serpents dancing in your eyes
And snakes are at play in your heart.

ASOKE VIJAY RAHA

LOVER'S NIGHT THOUGHT

LIKE CHRIST on the Cross
You lie on the bed
Nailed by suffering,
(He suffered for others,
But you for yourself)
Crying:
'O Lord, You have forsaken me!
Not knowing
The Lord is more merciful
than Love.

R. PARTHASARATHY

MADURA: TWO MOVEMENTS

IN MADURA I saw,
enamelled in the corrosive paint
of ailment
the clench of a leper's crab-like claw.

It moved
as nothing in life can move.

But behind him a statuette, a dancer
roused in rock; her lips atremble on the margin
of a smile; the anklet over the lyric foot a virgin
bound in a world of sounds, a question bedded in a well-known
answer.

Unmoving, she moves
as nothing in life can move.

A. K. RAMANUJAN

A POEM ON LOGIC

I BURNED and burned; but one day turned
abruptly, and caught
that thought
by the screams of her hair,
and told her straight:

"Stranger, beware.
Do not follow a gentleman's morals
With that absurd determined air.
Find a husband, however poor,
he'll give you a house of legitimate sons.

"I have no reason to know your kind.
Bred in the rigour of a Hindu home,
I shudder to the bone at hungers
that roam
the streets beyond the constable's beats."

But there She stood
upon that dusty road
of a nightlit April mind
and gave me a look.
Commandments crumbled

in my past. Her tumbled
hair suddenly known as silken
in my hungry hand,
I shook a little and took Her,
behind the laws of my land.

A. K. RAMANUJAN

I, A STRANGER

He feared; so, alone we fear. He created Another, he feared;
so we fear company.

I, A STRANGER wandering in this human jungle,
I speak face to face, but unshakable walls stand before my eyes.
An alien traveller, due to the primarily ordained blunder
I've come to this Hall; a refugee, I cannot follow their language.

Into Nature's boudoir I, a barbarou stranger—
The barbarian does not know and offends at every step
And at each wrong step reptiles hiss up their heads.
Fear flung over earth and water shakes me without rest.

It has been always like this, the days ever unfulfilled
And nights without peace—my Trishanku heart ever hanging
in mid-air.

BISHNU DEY

*Translated by the author
from his Bengali.*

WHY?

THIS DOES NOT involve the fate of nations,
Nor answer the daily headlined cry
For food, justice, freedom. Wars and coronations
Were not the work of Valmiki or Sappho. But then, why?

Is it rage and lust engaged in thwarted crime?
Vanity's vengeance wreaked in fancy dress?
Or a mere pretext to cheat whiphanded Time?
. . . Say, why! The question grows in pressingness.

None replies. Least, the poet's tongue.
Bound to a shy, bewildered reticence,
He has never questioned his obedience,

But, while the forward bells were being robustly rung,
Consumed his tallow in an ancient flame
That lighted him alone, without cause or name.

BUDDHADEVA BOSE

*Adapted by the author
from his Bengali.*

IN MEMORY OF ONE WHO DIED IN AN ACCIDENT

HE JUST strode across:
Did not become the slow
Spluttering lamp at dawn,
Nor suffer a sland'rous dawn
To chill and foul the cup
When all the lovely wine
Had been drunk, drop by drop.
He did not fend or fear,
But, as stormy-eyed
As an emperor who turns
With half an eyelid's flicker
The whole banquet-hall
With lights and dancing girls
And strange trophies of war
To a mere painted scene
That must be put away
Because he's changed his mind—
Even so, without
A word of ruth or pity,
Or a moment for courtiers'
Or queens' despair or pity,
Proud, unquestionable,
All in tact to the end,
Suddenly he rose,
Left everything behind.

BUDDHADEVA BOSE

Adapted by the author from his Bengali

ENTERPRISE

IT STARTED AS a pilgrimage,
Exalting minds and making all
The burdens light. The second stage
Explored but did not test the call.
The sun beat down to match our rage.

We stood it very well, I thought:
Observed, and put down copious notes
On palaces and peasants' lot,
The way of serpents and of goats,
Three cities where a sage had taught.

But when the differences arose
On how to cross a desert patch,
We lost a friend whose stylish prose
Was quite the best of all our batch.
A shadow falls on us—and grows.

Another phase was reached when we
Were twice attacked, and lost our way.
A section claimed its liberty
To leave the group. I tried to pray.
Our leader said he smelt the sea.

We noticed nothing as we went,
A straggling crowd of little hope,
Ignoring what the thunder meant,
Deprived of common needs, like soap.
Some were broken, some merely bent.

When, finally, we reached the place,
We hardly knew why we were there.
The trip had gnawed at every face,
Our deeds were neither great nor rare.
Home is where we have to gather grace.

NISSIM EZEKIEL

POET, LOVER, BIRDWATCHER

TO FORCE THE pace and never to be still
Is not the way of those observing birds
Or women. The best poets wait for words.
The hunt is not an exercise of will
But patient love relaxing on a hill
To note the movement of a timid wing;
Until the one who knows that she is loved
No longer waits but risks surrendering—
In this the poet finds his moral proved,
Who never spoke until his spirit moved.

The slow movement seems, somehow, to say much more.
To watch the rarer birds, you have to go
Along deserted lanes and where the rivers flow
In silence near the source, or by a shore
Remote and thorny, like the heart's dark floor.
And there the women slowly turn around,
Not only flesh and bone but myths of light
With darkness at the core, and sense is found
By poets lost in crooked, restless flight,
The deaf can hear, the blind recover sight.

NISSIM EZEKIEL

THE POET

FOR ALL HIS wild hair like an aureole,
Stammer at parties, slipping from a tram,
Putting off the mending of a sole,
And putting on a mock heroic *Damn*,
He notices the spider's intestines
Claim windy harlot and black marketeer,
And in the clicking grin his eye divines
A moody world of artifice and fear.

Above all, this: When a woman turns
Black clouds of hair, with a rhythmic hand
Weaving their silk in the possessive sun,
He sees her common eyes stretch to a land
O lost, lost; as when repentance yearns
For hope, and love, and finds that there is none.

P. LAL

IN THE GARDEN

IT SEEMED TO me so much like you,
To find the planning of the garden
Faulty, and the birds too few.

Your walk was slow, informal there
Among the trees whose names you knew,
And flowers commonplace or rare.

The elephant of broken stone
Deserved, you said, a closer view
Than animals of flesh and bone.

THE spacious lawns with sand defined
Where children shouted, breezes blew,
Or water like a lucid mind

Negotiates obstructive rocks;
And bridges modesty designed;
Were better than the tower of clocks,

And hedges ruining every view—
At which I felt your kindness harden:
It seemed to me so much like you.

NISSIM EZEKIEL

THE FEAR IN THE NIGHT

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

GEORGE KEYT

LOVE

HER EYES WERE crushed bluebells
Seeking ground, late,
To flourish again or fade
In their spent grooves.
I offered her cracked rock,
Thistles, wildthorn, grit,
A desert without shade
And called it love.

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

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

ADIL JUSSAWALA

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

SUMMER IN CALCUTTA

WHAT IS THIS drink but
The April sun, squeezed
Like an orange in
My glass? I sip the
Fire, I drink and drink
Again, I am drunk,
Yes, but on the gold
Of suns. What noble,
Venom now flows through
My veins and fills my
Mind with unhurried
Laughter? My worries
Doze. Wee bubbles ring
My glass, like a bride's
Nervous smile, and meet
My lips. Dear, forgive
This moment's lull in
Wanting you, the blur
In memory. How
Brief the term of my
Devotion, how brief
Your reign when I with
Glass in hand, drink, drink,
And drink again this
Juice of April suns.

KAMALA DAS

THE SIRENS

THE NIGHT, dark-cloaked like a procuress, brought
him to me, willing, light like a shadow,
speaking words of love
in some tender language I do not know.
Aniruddha, dream-lover, hide from him
this kind night's deceit, for I know too well
that he loves me not.

With the crows came the morning, and my limbs,
warm from love, were once again so lonely.
At my door-step I saw a pockmarked face
a friendly smile and
a rolleiflex. We will go for a drive,
he said. Or, go to see the lakes. I have
washed my face with soap and water, brushed
my hair a dozen
times, draped myself in six yards of printed
voile. Ah . . . does it still show, my night of love?
You look pale, he said. Not pale, not really
pale. It's the lipstick's
anaemia. Out, in the street, we heard
the sirens go, and I paused in talk to
weave its veil with the sound of his mirthless
laughter. He said,
they are testing the sirens today. I am
happy. He really was lavish with words.
So happy, just being with you. But you,
you love another,
I know, he said, perhaps a handsome man,
a young and handsome man. Not young,
not handsome, I thought, just a filthy snob.
It's a onesided love,
I said. What can I do, or you? I smiled.
A smile is such a detached thing, I wear

it like a flower. Near the lake, a pregnant
girl bared her dusky
breasts and washed them sullenly. On the old
canon-stand, crows bickered over a piece
of lizard-meat, and the white sun was there
and everywhere.

I want your photo, lying down, he said,
against those rusty, nineteen-thirty-four guns.
Will you? Sure. Just arrange my limbs and tell
me when to smile. I
shut my eyes, but inside eye-lids there was
no more night, no more love, or peace, only
the white, white, sun burning, burning, burning. . . .

Ah, why does love come to me like pain,
again and again and again.

KAMALA DAS

SPRING

FLOWERS or no,
it is spring today.

On the pavement,
digging its roots into the stone,
a saples(s) tree,
through its split sides,
laughs into fresh green leaves.

Flowers or no,
it is spring today.

The days which once put
black blinkers on light
and then took them off,
the days which placed men
in the lap of death
and picked them up again,
and then went away along the road
—let those days never come back.

And that mimic-boy
who went about
in the yellow-smearing
afternoons,
playing the cuckoo for a penny or two
—the days have taken him away.

The sky above
looks like a yellow letter
printed in red ink,
as the ugly, dark, unmarried girl
who lives down the lane
thinks of all these and things,
her breast pressed against the rails.

Just then,
a shameless butterfly*—oh, damn the wretched thing!
alights blindly on her.

She bangs the door to.

But still that gnarled tree stands
tittering in the dark.

SUBHASH MUKHOPADHYAY

Translated by Ashim Chowdhury

Among the Bengali Hindus, wedding invitations are usually printed in red ink on yellow-paper. Prajapati is an ancient name of Brahmā who as the lord of creation is regarded as the presiding deity of marriage. Prajapati also means a butterfly, and the picture of a butterfly is commonly seen on wedding invitation letters.

SHORT STORIES

The Discovery of Telenapota*

by PREMENDRA MITRA

WHEN Saturn and Mars come together, you too, may discover Telenapota. That is, when you, an indifferent angler—never had a catch larger than a “punti”—find, after weeks of slogging, a couple of days’ leisure; and someone comes and tempts you, saying that somewhere there is a magical pool in which the world’s most simple-minded fish are anxiously waiting to swallow any bait—well, you are already on your way to discover Telenapota.

Discovering Telenapota, however, is not as easy as all that. Late in the afternoon you will have to board a bus packed to its roof with men and things. Once inside, you will be pushed about by fellow passengers, get drenched in sweat and coated with dust. After two hours of such clammy misery you will be suddenly dropped, without any warning.

Before you collect your wits and look around, you will find that the bus is disappearing over a bridge across the low swampy puddle in front. The thick jungle around is dark, as if night was already there, though the sun has still not set. The air is damp and stifling, and the place is eerily quiet. There is not a soul in sight. Even the birds have left the place, as if in fright. Your mind will be filled with strange fancies and you will

Translated from the Bengali by Kironmoy Raha.

imagine that from out of the marshy morass below some sinister curse is slowly rearing its ugly head.

Leaving the main road and getting to the side of the swamp, you will find that someone has cut a narrow muddy path into the jungle. But even that unformed path gets lost amongst the thick groves of bamboo and big, leafy trees.

To discover Telenapota you should have a couple of friends with you. You, yourself, will be going there for fishing, but what induced your two friends to go, you will not be able to tell.

Your most immediate problem will be mosquitoes. They will come in hordes and you will try to drive them away by stamping your feet on the ground. Not quite knowing what to do next, the three of you will stand there and look enquiringly at one another's faces. Soon it will grow quite dark, and you will not be able to see clearly the faces of your companions. The buzz of the mosquitoes will become louder and louder and their attacks more insistent. You will start wondering whether you should not try to get to the main road and catch a bus back.

Just then, a weird noise will startle you. It will seem to originate at the point where the mud track gets lost in the jungle. To your startled nerves, it will appear to be an inhuman cry forced out by someone wringing the dumb wood around. You will become tense, with expectation and waiting. Mercifully, you will not have to wait for long. Presently, you will see, through the darkness, the gentle swaying of a faint light and a bullock cart will come out of the wood with a slow, rocking gait.

It is a tiny cart and the bullocks are no bigger. You will wonder whether they did not come out of Lilliput. However, you will not wonder for long and the three of you will get inside the covered awning. The space available is small, and you will have some difficulty in accommodating three pairs of arms and legs where there is room for only one; but you will manage it.

The cart will return along the path it had come. The wall of darkness in front of you will appear impenetrable. But, much to your surprise, the thick dark jungle will yield a narrow tunnel-like passage, a little at a time, for the cart to pass. The bullocks

will go unhurriedly forward, as if creating with each step the path they slowly thread.

For a while, you will be acutely bothered by having to sit anyhow in the narrow space available. Gradually, however, your limbs will get benumbed. A feeling of being drowned in the deep darkness around will fill you. You will feel that you have left the world you knew far behind and have entered another that was full of mists and empty of all feeling. Time will appear to have stopped.

You will have no idea how long you have had this feeling. Suddenly a racket of beating drums will jerk you into a wide wakefulness. You will find that the driver of the cart is furiously beating an empty can. You will also see that the stars have come out.

You will ask what the matter was. The driver will reply, most casually, "Oh, just to drive those damned tigers away." You will be about to ask how it is possible to drive tigers away by just raising a racket, when he will add reassuringly, "No, not real tigers. Only panthers. Ah, yes. Unless they are really hungry, a can and a stick are all you need to keep them at a safe distance."

Tigers! Within thirty miles of the big city! Before you have had time to wonder about it, the cart will have crossed a wide moor. The late moon will have, meanwhile, arisen. By its pale light you will see that you were passing through an area full of ruins of deserted palaces and mansions. A solitary column here, a broken arch there, a wall of a courtyard and a portion of a temple further on—there they will stand like litigants, waiting in futile hope, for the recording of some evidence in the court of Time.

You will try to sit up and a tingling sensation will go all over your body. Once again, you will be overwhelmed with your former feeling of having left the world of the living behind and of having entered a misty world peopled only by memories.

You will have no idea how far gone the night was then. Indeed, it will seem to you that night never ends here and everything lies submerged in a stillness that has no beginning and no end: The whole thing will remind you of those speci-

mens of extinct animals they keep, immersed in acid bottles, in museums.

After a few turns the cart will stop. You will collect your benumbed limbs and get down, one by one—stiff, like wooden dolls. The first thing you will notice is the strong rancid smell. You will guess—rightly—that the stink is of rotting leaves in the pond right in front of you. By its side, stand the ruined remains of a big mansion. With its caved in roofs, fallen sides and frameless windows, it stands there like the battlements of a fort, in guard against the moon.

You will learn that you will have to spend the night in this house. You will find for yourself a habitable room—comparatively speaking, that is. From somewhere the cart driver will fetch a broken lantern and a jug of water. It will seem to you that ages must have passed since a pair of human feet stepped into the room. Someone had tried to clear the room and rid it of the accumulated dust and dirt, but not very successfully. The musty stench will show that it was done long ago and was even then not welcomed by whatever spirit it was that lived there. On the slightest movement, little bits of plaster and mortar will fall on you from the walls and the roof, like curses from the angry spirit. A few bats will be all the time shrilly questioning your right to be there for the night.

Of your two companions one is a toper and the other would have slept through a storm. You will have hardly spread your bed when the latter will fall upon his and start snoring, and the other begin to seek the consolation of the bottle.

The night will wear on. Soot will slowly accumulate on the glass of the broken lantern and soon it will shut the light out wholly. As if in response to some mysterious broadcast, all the adult and able-bodied mosquitoes of the region will come out to greet you. If you are a knowledgeable person, you will know from the distinctive manner in which they sit on the walls and on you that they belong to the blue-blooded aristocracy of mosquitoes—the anopheles variety, the carrier of malaria. By then, both your companions will have become oblivious, for different reasons, of their surroundings.

It will be oppressively hot. Taking the electric torch with you, you will try to escape from it into the terrace. At each

step, the danger of a brick of the stairs giving way will try to dissuade you from climbing further. But something will draw you on irresistibly. Ignoring the danger of falling down, you will keep on and finally get to the top.

On arrival, you will find that at most of the places the parapet has come off in bits. Into every crack and hole in the walls and the roof, small trees have taken firm root. It will seem as though they were fifth columnists, already there, making things easy for the inexorably advancing jungle.

And yet, by the pale light of the declining moon everything will appear transformed and beautiful. You will fancy that if only you looked long enough, you could find in which of the secret chambers of this sleep-drenched palace, the captive princess has been sleeping through the ages with the golden and the silver wands beside her.

Even as you will be wondering about this, you will notice a faint light in one of the windows of what you had taken to be a totally ruined house, across the street. After a while a mysterious shadow of a figure will come and stand by the window blocking the light. Who could she be? Why should she be awake when everyone else was asleep? Try as you may, you will not be able to know the answers. Looking after a brief moment, you will see that the figure was no longer there and the faint light had also gone out. Was it real, or did you fancy the whole thing? It will seem to you that from the bottomless depth of this world of sleep, a dream bubble had floated silently up for a moment into the world of the living and had as silently melted away.

After a while, you will come down the stairs carefully and fall asleep by the side of your companions.

Getting up, you will be surprised to find morning there already and the place full of the chatter of birds.

You will not forget what you had primarily come here for. Before long you will complete your preparations and find yourself a seat on one of the broken moss-covered steps by the pond. You will throw your line into its greenish waters and wait patiently.

The day will wear on. A kingfisher from the very branch of the tree across the tank will swoop down, now and again, in a

flash of colour. Each time it will return to its perch with the successful catch and, as if to ridicule you, will burst into a frenzy of babble: giving you quite a turn, a fat and long snake will come out of some crack in the steps and get unhurriedly into the water: it will swim across and get out on the other side: two grasshoppers, their glass-like wings fluttering, will go on trying to land on the float of your line: a dove will call intermittently: its lazy notes will fill you with lassitude and your mind will wander.

You will be startled out of your mood of reverie by the sudden sound of ripples. The still water is no longer still and you will find your float gently rocking. Looking sideways, you will find a woman pushing away the floating weeds and filling up her shiny brass pitcher. There is curiosity in her eyes and her movements are easy and free from any awkwardness. She will look straight at you and at your line. She will then pick up her pitcher and turn away.

You will not be able to guess her age. Looking at her face—calm, reserved and sad, you will think that she had already traversed the pitiless road of life; but if you looked at the thin unnourished lines of her body, you will think that she had never grown out of her girlhood.

Even as she is going away, she will turn and say, somewhat suddenly, "What are you waiting for? Pull hard." Her voice is so mellow and sweet that you will not think it odd that she—a stranger—should have spoken unbidden to you like that. Only the suddenness of it will make you flustered and when, eventually, you get the hook out, you will see that the bait is no longer there. You will feel a bit of a fool and will not be able to help looking at her. She will also look at you and then turn and go away with slow, unhurried steps. As she is going, you will think that you saw the suggestion of a bright smile light up her sad and peaceful face.

After this, nothing will disturb the loneliness of the place. The kingfisher, perhaps realizing the uselessness of trying to shame you, will have flown away. Even the fish will ignore you, apparently in contempt for your angling skill. Once again, you will have a feeling that the happening of a moment ago was

not real at all. How could there ever be a woman like that in this land of sleep?

After sometime, disappointed, you will collect your tackle and start back. On returning, you will find that news of your fishing skill has reached the ears of your friends. Slightly peeved at their cracks, you will ask how they came to know about it.

"Know about it?" the toper will reply. "Why, Jamini saw it just now with her own eyes." Feeling curious you will ask who Jamini was. You will learn that she was the person you had seen at the pond and that she was distantly related to him. You will also learn that you were having your lunch at her place.

Looking at the falling ruins across the street—wherein the shadowy figure had caused you such wonderment the night before—its wretched condition will give you something of a shock. You could not have imagined that the veil of night, now stripped rudely by the harsh light of day, could have concealed a nakedness so ugly. You will be surprised to learn that that was where Jamini lived.

It will be to one of the rooms in that house that you will go for your lunch. It will be a simple meal and Jamini herself will serve it. As you had noticed before, there was nothing awkward or ungainly about her demeanour. Looking at her now at such close quarters, you will also be struck by the sad immobility of her face. It was as though all the mute agony of this forgotten and deserted place had cast its shadows across her face. Her eyes will seem to be submerged in a sea of infinite tiredness. It will seem to you that one of these days she herself will dissolve slowly, very slowly, into these ruins.

You will notice that even while she was serving, Jamini seemed to have something on her mind. Maybe, you will also hear an occasional faint voice calling from a room upstairs. Every now and then Jamini will leave the room rather hurriedly. Each time she returned, the shadow of suffering in her face will appear to have deepened and her eyes will betray a helpless anxiety.

After finishing your meal, you will sit down to rest awhile. Jamini will hesitate a few times, and then call out, in desperation, from the other side of the door, "Manida, could you

please come over here once?" Manida is the toper. He will go to the door, and the conversation that will follow, will be loud enough for you to overhear.

Jamini's voice is greatly troubled. "Mother is being troublesome again. Ever since she learnt that you were coming with your friends, she has become quite unmanageable."

Mani will reply somewhat irritably, "Bother! I suppose it is that old notion of hers? She believes Niranjan is here?"

"Yes. She goes on repeating—'I know he is here. He hasn't come up to see me only because he is embarrassed. Go, fetch him. Why are you keeping things from me?'—Manida, I really don't know what to do. Ever since she became blind she has become so irritable. She won't listen to anything. Flies off the handle all the time. I am sometimes frightened that she will die in one of her fits.

"What a mess! If only she had her eyes, I could have shown her that Niranjan was not here with me now."

The shout of the shrill, angry ghost of a voice from upstairs will be clearly audible this time. Jamini will say in a pleading voice, "Do please come with me once, Manida—see if you can make her understand."

"All right. You get along. I'll be there."

Mani will get back to the room muttering to himself. "Why in heaven's name doesn't this old crackpot die? She can't see, she can't use her limbs, and yet she is determined not to die."

You will ask him what the matter was. Mani will reply in an annoyed tone, "Matter? Oh, nothing very much. Years ago, she had fixed Jamini's marriage with Niranjan—the son of a distant cousin of hers. The last time the chap was here, was about four years ago. He told her then that as soon as he returned from abroad he would come and marry Jamini. And ever since she has been waiting."

"Hasn't Niranjan returned?" you will ask.

"Why, of course not. How should he return when he never went at all? Of course, he was lying. He had to, seeing that the old ruin wouldn't let him go. And why should he bother to marry this rag-picker's daughter. Oh, yes! He is married all right and rearing a family. But who's to tell her all this? She

won't believe you, and if she did she will straightaway die of shock. Who's going to take that risk anyway?"

"Does Jamini know about Niranjan?"

"Oh, yes. But she can't speak about it to her. Well, let me go and get it over." Mani will turn to go.

Almost without being conscious of it, you will also get up at the same moment and say, "Just a second. I'll come with you."

"You? With me?" Mani will wheel round, plainly surprised.

"Yes. Do you mind?"

"No, of course not," Mani will reply, a trifle taken aback, and proceed to show you the way.

After you had ascended the dark and broken stairs, you will get into a room that looked more like an underground tunnel than a room above. There was only one window and that too was shut. Coming from outside, at first everything will look blurred to you. After a while you will see that in a large, decrepit wooden cot a shrivelled up woman, wrapped in a torn rag, lay still. By the side of the cot Jamini stood motionless like a statue.

At the sound of your footsteps, the bag of bones will show signs of animation. "Niranjan? My child! So you are here at last! Could spare a thought at last for your poor wreck of an aunt! You know, I have been keeping death at bay, hoping that you'll be here some day. You won't slip away again like last time?"

Mani will be on the point of saying something but, interrupting him, you will suddenly blurt out, "No, Auntie, I promise you I won't."

You will not look up, but you will feel the bewilderment of Mani and the stunned surprise that will break out in Jamini's immobile face. You could not have looked up even if you wanted to. Your eyes will be riveted to the sockets of the old woman's sightless eyes. It will seem to you that two tongues of darkness issued from those empty sockets and licked every inch of your body—to test, to know. You will feel that those few still moments were dropping like dewdrops into the ocean of time.

You will hear the old woman saying, "My son, I knew you would come. That is why I am still living in this house of death—counting the days." The effort of speaking so many words

will leave her panting. You will look up at Jamini. You will fancy that somewhere, behind the steely mask of her face, something was slowly melting away, and it will not be long before the foundation of a vow—a vow made up of boundless despair, a vow taken against life and fate—will give way.

The old woman will speak again. "I am sure Jamini will make you happy, my son. She surely will. There's none like her, even though I, her mother, say it. I am old and ill and out of my senses most of the time. I try her beyond endurance. But does she snap back? No, not once. This graveyard of a place—you search ten houses and you won't find a man—it's only the likes of me, more dead than alive, that you'll find here—and here, Jamini, a slip of a girl, carries on and manages everything."

Even though you will want to, you will dare not lift your eyes lest someone might discover the tears that have been welling there. Sighing, the old woman will say, "Promise me you will marry Jamini. If I do not have your promise I will know no peace even in death."

Your voice will have become nearly choked. You will be able merely to say, "I promise you. I will not fail you."

Soon it will be afternoon. The bullock cart will appear once again to take you back. One by one, the three of you will get inside. As it leaves, Jamini will look at you with those sad eyes of hers and merely remark, "You are forgetting your fishing tackle." You will smile and reply, "Never mind! Let them be. I missed the fish this time but they won't escape me the next."

Jamini will not turn her gaze away. Her eyes, you will see, were lit up with a smile that was full of gratitude and tenderness. Like the white clouds of autumn, it will float across your mind and suffuse it with an ineffable gladness.

The cart will rattle along. The lack of space will not bother you this time; nor will the monotonous creak of the moving wheels sound harsh. Your friends will, perhaps, discuss how a hundred years ago, malaria, like a relentless flood, carried off Telenapota and left it here, in this forgotten borderland of the world of the living. You will not be listening, for your mind will be elsewhere. You will have ears only for your own heartbeats and hear in them the same words, echoed over and over again—"I will come back, I will come back."

Even after you reach the city—with its hurrying crowds and harsh lights—the memory of Telenapota will be bright in your mind like a shining star—distant yet intimate. A few days will pass with their petty vexations and troubles. If, in your mind, a slight mist had begun to form, you will not be aware of it. Then, just when you have overcome the obstacles and start preparing to return to Telenapota, you will, suddenly, feel the shivering touch of the oncoming fever. Soon the headache and the fever will be on you and you will lie down with a lot of blankets. The thermometer will register 105°F and the last thing you will hear, before falling unconscious, will be the doctor saying, "Well, well! Where did we pick up this malaria?"

It will be days before, weak and exhausted, you will be able to come out of the house and sit in the sun. Meanwhile, unknown to yourself, your mind will have undergone many changes. Telenapota will have become an indistinct dream, like the memory of a star that has set. Was there ever such a place as Telenapota? You will not seem to know. The face that was hard and serene, and the eyes that were far away and sad—were they real? Or, were they, like the shadows of Telenapota's ruins, creatures of the misty realm of your imagination?

Telenapota, discovered for one brief moment, will be lost again in the timeless immensity of night.

A Martyr*

by KA NAA SUBRAMANYAM

THE old man said, "Don't you know that blood is thicker than water. . . . You know that—Don't you?"

Rajamar¹ replied: "Father, look here; at your age it is time you stopped putting up with so much in life on my account. I don't think it's fair. You'd better be on your own. The Government is kind enough to grant you your pension; that will suffice for your needs."

"Why bring up my fat pension . . . just a sum of Rs. 28," remarked the old man.

"Fat or not, it will do for you. Moreover it was for me you accepted this attenuated pension. For me you had part of it—that is Rs. 20—commuted to a lump sum and paid it to me, which I spent soon enough. And when I think I have been a wash-out and failed in all my ventures. . . ."

The old man continued, "why talk of the past?" His tone did not betray the least sign of the deep displeasure that raged in his mind.

"I think it is better that you live away from me, by yourself. At your age it is not proper that I should demand that you share the trials and tribulations of my life. Might our lot not

* *Maha Thyagem*. Translated from the original Tamil by T. K. Doraiswamy.

change? When there is a change for the better, we can live together again!" Thus Rajamani.

"What are you saying? I was sixty-four, last year. I don't know whether I shall last till the year is out. . . ." So the old man.

"Really, you seem to be in love with Death, the way you talk."

"In love with Death! But I'm sixty-four. I've had my share of life's troubles. Always thinking of dying? Does one willingly depart from the World? One would like to live like this for ever and ever," said the old man.

Rajamani had a good look at him. His father was an able man. No doubt about it. Or rather, he had been an able man once. But now his brain had lost its original nimbleness. But all the other senses were still active; his eyes had not lost their power of vision; his teeth were quite sound; he could still quite easily cover four miles on foot. If Providence willed it, he might well live for another ten years.

But his son was the cause of all the troubles he had in life. Rajamani himself did not deny it.

"Don't begin counting the months like Margazhi and Thai, Father. That will be much more hard to bear than all that I have borne hitherto," said Rajamani.

In truth, it would be too hard to bear. To begin with, he would lose what he was getting through his father's pension.

The old man Krishnaswami Sastri went on, "I've lived a pretty long time. Now nothing can touch me—neither trials nor tribulations. You are my sole support in the world. Where else could I be so comfortable? How can I live elsewhere? Why should I? When you have a hard time of it, could I bear to be away from you? Could I expect to be happy like that?"

Rajamani did not give him any reply. The old man could not think of any other place of refuge. True enough. That really was the hardest blow. How could you order him out, with absolute indifference, without any concern whatsoever?

"For good or bad, my place is with you. That is good enough for me," said the old man.

Rajamani thought to himself: "Till you leave there will be no end to the hardships that I undergo. I believe once you leave, there will be a change for the better in my life. Whether

that will be for your good* or mine, how can we be sure?" Aloud he said: "Surely your life with me has not been one to boast of; God only knows, in future too, whether there will be a change for the better." There was a trace of tears in his voice. His eyes grew blurred. He felt depressed. He was badly shaken. He cursed himself aloud.

Before his mind's eye there unrolled his father's life, spread over a period of sixty-four years and his over a period of thirty-five years.

Krishnaswami Sastrigal had himself narrated to him the story of his past many a time. From low beginnings he had raised himself to a high position. But he could not maintain that position for long. For this, Rajamani had to be blamed. Instead of being a help and an incentive to him to raise himself to a still higher position, Rajamani had helped to bring about a rapid decline in his status.

"His son Rajamani's life . . . pooh! What kind of a life is that." So thought Krishnaswamy Sastry.

In his sixty-four years of life, he could reckon only about seven or eight years as a period of unclouded happiness. Only the memory of this brief spell of well-being gave him the sustenance to carry on for the rest of his life.

He had talked to Rajamani many a time about his father. "My father was not a bad sort. But he had a single blemish which spoiled not only his life but also mine. He went after women. In those days he was earning a tidy sum. But he raised a good amount and he spent the whole of it on women. After his death, I had to discharge his debts out of my twenty years' earnings. And in those twenty years you could take it from me I led the life of the poorest of the poor in this poor country." So Krishnaswami Sastrigal talked about his past.

"In my life of hardship and poverty in these days it was my mother who taught me the resolve and the spirit to face and deal with the harsh reality of life. She was Mahalekshmi incarnate. How else could you describe her? The only legacy she got from her husband was the curse of an incurable disease. To

think of her powers of Endurance! the way she managed things. . . ." So Krishnaswami Sastrigal reviewed his past.

Rajamani used to say, "incurable diseases or not, Granny could forget in you all the troubles she experienced with her husband—you were a good son to her."

Krishnaswami Sastrigal himself felt proud on that score. Thanks to his wife, it was possible for him to please his mother. She was that rare person—a daughter-in-law who won the approval of her mother-in-law. But Krishnaswami Sastrigal had no time to waste a grateful thought on her. Rajamani could not remember her, by the very nature of things. For she died, when he was only a boy, when he was ten years old.

She had so ordered her life that her husband, mother-in-law and her brother-in-law had nothing to complain about her; apart from that, there was nothing striking about her. She bore seven or eight children. Of them, only the eldest girl and the last boy lived. Krishnaswamy Sastrigal married off his daughter at the proper age in the proper manner. But the girl was ill-fated.

Both the husband and the mother-in-law, both of them extremely self-centred, sent back the girl to her parents, making a false charge against her that her morals were loose. Could any greater calamity befall a mother?

The mother, whose health was none too good at any time, died of a broken heart, within two years of her daughter's arrival. The girl too, as if she did not want to add to the troubles of her father and younger brother, died soon after (about four years later). This end of hers affected neither her father nor Rajamani so much. They thought that she did well to die rather than continue to live and bear the cross throughout her life. Still at times they could not but recollect her wasted and unmeaning life.

In one sense, Rajamani's weak fibre could be traced to this. From his boyhood, his sister had always been with him. Then came first the death of his mother—and close on its heels his sister's death. All this taught Rajamani the quietistic doctrine of shedding one's responsibility. He had no instinctive urge for any vocation except a taste for endless and inconclusive philosophical speculations.

Krishnaswamy Sastry's two younger brothers formed a complete contrast to their elder brother and his son, in their character and attitudes. They had not the cares and responsibility that went with the elder brother's family. Without entangling themselves with its fortunes, they thrived under its sheltering care.

They were in the North in different places and were quite well off. The eldest chanced to see either of them but rarely. The cares and worries of the eldest brother's family hardly affected them. It was no exaggeration to say that they viewed the affairs of their eldest brother with the same air of detachment with which they regarded the affairs of a stranger.

This attitude infuriated Rajamani. Since coming of age he had never been friendly with any of his uncles. But all this had no effect on Krishnaswamy Sastry. "What does it matter, if they don't care for me; what matters is they should be all right somewhere." So Krishnaswamy Sastry used to say. But in his heart of hearts he too felt the insult. At times Rajamani himself used to remark, "If they identify themselves with us, they too may become like us unblessed. Let them be as they are, so that they at least may be happy, and comfortable."

In all his sixty-four years of life Krishnaswamy Sastrigal had not even once slipped. He had a clear conscience, which gave him great relief.

"From my father's life I learnt but one thing. It came to me naturally that a man who could not trust himself with women, could not run a family properly. I realized that a man who went after women not only spoiled his own life but also that of his descendants. So I resolved even then that I would guard myself against temptations as far as women were concerned."

This was true not only of his relations with women. Throughout his life he had led a blameless life in all his thoughts and actions. Nobody dared to criticize him. He did not tell tales against anyone; he never coveted another man's wealth; he never did harm to others either in thought or deed. He did not involve himself in other people's affairs. He led a sheltered sort of life, busying himself with his own affairs.

His life proved that the good men on earth lost most of the good things of life.

"While I have lost everything else, I still have Rajamani left. He will come up in life and make me a happy man. Why should I despair, so long as he is alive." So thought Krishnaswamy Sastrigal. He was not to be blamed for thinking like that! The whole day is not given over to total darkness.

But this is just the point. Not only is the whole day given over to total darkness but the next day too dawns in darkness.

Rajamani was good at his studies; he passed his examinations creditably. And he wasted no time in getting a job. And Krishnaswamy Sastrigal became very happy thinking that his period of trouble and distress was over.

But this happiness proved to be shortlived. Rajamani lost his job when he least expected it. He was made a scapegoat for another man's fault, who chanced to be a rogue. He only escaped being sent to prison.

But within a few days, Rajamani got another job. In a mood of passivity, crippling his spirit, he carried out his duties with a foreboding that Fate would deal harshly with him again; days passed; consequences which he dreaded never followed. But he lost his job all too soon. He was cashiered on the score of incompetence.

By now all the hopes and aspirations which Krishnaswamy Sastrigal had for Rajamani had suffered a gradual decline. Krishnaswamy Sastrigal was preparing to bear his final burden.

In the interim Rajamani got married. This made it seem that both father and son would grow optimistic again. It so happened that it was a good match. The bride was good-looking and came of a rich family. After the marriage even Rajamani appeared to develop a robust and healthy confidence. After the lapse of many years, Rajamani appeared decided to play his part as a man. He appeared to make a little progress too, thanks to the added incentive in the shape of a wife.

But this incentive and source of strength did not last long. Two years after the marriage his wife had an attack of typhoid. She died leaving Rajamani, a prey to despair and distress.

After this Rajamani did not revive at all. He accepted that he could not fight against Destiny. He tried to bypass the challenge of existence. One could say that only his old father served as a frail link which kept him alive now.

And how could Krishnaswamy Sastry summon strength enough to supply the incentive to carry on, after he had undergone so much. Once he tried to make his son marry a second time. And he could not banish from his mind even now, the way his son had looked at him when he had broached the matter to him.

He was counting the days as to when he could make his final exit. That appeared to have become a preoccupation with him. But still the thought of Death shook him. Even at sixty-four he was not prepared to welcome death.

The old man's voice shook Rajamani out of his reverie. "Get busy. Take your bath and we can have our meal." So said the old man.

Rajamani got up. When he was ready to depart after taking the towel from the hanger Krishnaswami Sastrigal said, "I go on counting the months like Margazhi and Thai, instead of getting ready to meet Death with courage this very day."

Rajamani paused. "Father why do you talk in this vein today?"

The old man did not give him a straight reply. But the thought came to his mind that his misfortune dogged his son's footsteps also and that, once he was dead, his son's lot might improve. This appeared quite probable to him. The thought grew obsessive.

Krishnaswamy Sastri found his son standing there still looking at him. "Hurry up; have your bath and come soon; I feel hungry," he said.

Without giving a reply, Rajamani went, with a mind at peace. Only after emptying four buckets of water while taking his bath, was he reminded of what he had thought just a moment before. He thought: only after his father's death his lot might improve. Supposing the same thought had occurred to his father also. . . .?

Leaving the vessel suspended in the well, he dried his head with his towel hurriedly and rushed to the central hall, with water still dripping all over his body.

In the centre of the central hall Krishnaswamy Sastrigal was

lying on his sheet, spread from South to North. There was a smile over his face.

"Father" called Rajamani. He did not expect him to reply; and there was no reply.

Rajamani had no need to assure himself that he was dead. Covering the face with his wet cloth, he leant against the pillar, in the central hall. From his wet back, water streamed along the floor.

"First he had his mother—then towards the end he had his son. And for their sake he could play the martyr. But who is left for me? Who is there for me to live to be a martyr for?" So Rajamani asked himself. He could get no reply to this question.

"I am only thirty-five. But if I too were to live to his age. . . ."

This question too remained unanswered.

When he woke up from his reverie, the shades of night had begun to fall.

The Sapling and the Rock*

by UPENDRA NATH ASHK

GREY clouds had covered the evening sun and darkness descended over the valley before its time. Foot-sore and weary Shanker reached Gagrait—a half-way halting station—where two or three smoky tin lamps were ineffectually trying to dispel the darkness.

Shanker felt starved. He sought out a cheap cook shop, huddled among half a dozen non-descript stalls, which passed for the local bazaar. Hunger appeased, his next worry was to find shelter for the night.

Both the inns were crammed full with pilgrims. Countless more pilgrims had spilled over onto the maidan, where they lay under the open sky, cooking their meals over improvised brick hearths. A sharp wind had arisen; it licked the trembling flames. In the valley below, the pines sighed in the wind and the pilgrims shivered.

Shanker looked around helplessly. The cold seeped through his body, making him acutely conscious of the fact that he had no warm clothes on. He knocked about aimlessly for some time and then made his way down to the valley.

Luckily, he chanced upon a big mountain hut. It belonged to a school teacher who ran an ashram with a village school and a small dispensary for the benefit of the poor hill folk.

Translated from the Hindi by Jai Ratan.

He gave Shanker a straw mat and a blanket. Shanker could not have asked for more; he lay down on the floor hugging the warmth of the blanket, but he could not sleep. Perhaps he was too tired or still hungry or the place was unfamiliar. When sleep still defied him, he wrapped the blanket around him upto the neck and moved into the window. As he sat there the events of his life flitted past his mind, one by one.

He had come all the way to the Punjab, hundreds of miles from home, where the University provided facilities to acquire the highest degree by passing the Sanskrit examinations and then appearing only in English. It was cheaper, but hard going. He starved, took up tuitions to pay his college fees, and even demeaned himself by begging money from more fortunately placed friends. Perhaps it was the result of these hardships, and the painful awareness of the gulf that always yawned between him and the regular students who were lavish in their spending that he lost interest in wealth and women and toyed with the idea of turning a sannyasi. Or perhaps the sense of their being out of his reach had turned the grapes sour. Whatever the reason, without taking the highest degree, when he left the portals of his Alma Mater after doing his B.A. he was already somewhat of an anchorite, in spirit at least, if not in body.

Like so many countless other young men, he began hunting for a job. It was in those days that he came across a volume of Swami Rama Krishna Paramahansa's sermons. The book influenced him so powerfully that whatever vestiges of materialistic interest still lingered were extinguished.

Sometimes, it occurred to him that he should concentrate all his energies and make a final bid to do his M.A.; that would secure him a position on the faculty of a college. Thus entrenched, he could disprove those who despised him as an insignificant creature. But then, he read in the book of sermons that acquiring wealth was the lowest of pursuits—not worthy of being made the supreme goal of life: "We feel proud of our prosperity, till we realize there are thousands of others in comparison with whom we are no better than paupers. Wealth can buy everything in the world, but not peace of mind."

The words still echoed in his mind: "After sunset when glow-worms come out and skim over the waves of the west wind, they

think it is their sparkle that sheds light on the dark world. Then the stars come out and the glow-worms feel their worthlessness. The moon in its turn smiles at the arrogance of the stars and drenches the world with its light. 'I illumine the world,' the moon boasts, till the sky is streaked with the glimmerings of the dawn heralding the arrival of the sun, before whose effulgence the moon is humbled."

And women . . . Sometimes he thought he would get a job in a college and marry a beautiful, educated girl and show the conceited college girls, who flitted about like butterflies and did not deign to cast a glance at him, that he had made the grade and was worthy of a much better girl than they.

But the book said—woman tempted man. Her spell clipped his wings. She multiplied his wants and before he knew it, he was finished, caught in his own net.

And Shanker resolved not to be ensnared by a woman; to lead an independent life, like a bird soaring in the sky, and bursting into song.

Outside the window, the valley was dark. Sometimes in nearby huts, faint points of light flickered and pricked the darkness. Shanker stopped gazing outside and sat down with his back against the wall. His mind rambled: his search for peace was tortuous; he had been wandering for a long time, his goal nowhere in sight. He covered his face with the blanket and lay down on the mat.

Above him, in the bazaar, he could hear the creaking of bullock carts. The more enterprising pilgrims, determined to take rest after reaching their goal had already taken to the road, braving the cold. Shanker sighed. Had he set himself any goal? He was still groping; he had neither acquired the highest degree nor learnt to sing like a bird.

It is one thing to make up one's mind to renounce worldly desires, but another to put the resolution into practice.

Instead of becoming a sannyasi, Shanker took up a teacher's job in a newly established high school in the Doab. Due to mismanagement the school closed down within a year and he was left to fend for himself as best as he could. He had no mind to pursue his studies and he lacked the firmness of mind to take the path of renunciation. As a last resort, he decided to return

home, and seek a guru who could initiate him into the ways of renunciation. Before leaving for home he could not resist the urge to visit the Chintapurni Fair. His feet were sore, his legs ached, and a strange restlessness had come over him.

He got up again and started looking out.

The clouds were spread out in the sky like the feathers of a partridge. From behind, the moon vainly struggled to shed its wan light on the tired world. In the distance, Shanker could see an intermittent line of hurricane lamps—some in the hands of pedestrians, others under the bullock carts—steadily moving forward till they were swallowed up by the darkness. As the carts receded into the distance, their creaking emanated like faded memories from a far-off land. And then new carts and new lights. . . . But the valley below was still plunged in darkness and the moon smiled wanly through feathery clouds.

Shanker sighed. Startled by footsteps he recognized his host, the school teacher, as he came into the orbit of light filtering through the window. Perhaps he was returning after billeting the other pilgrims.

"Still awake?" he asked Shanker sympathetically. There was something in his voice which commanded respect.

"Sleep doesn't come easily to me," Shanker said averting his head.

The teacher sat down by his side on the mat. His attitude was so sympathetic, his talk had such a ring of sincerity that before he knew it, Shanker had already poured out his heart to him like a simple innocent child.

His host consoled him. His words were a balm to his distraught mind.

He told Shanker that he was himself the son of well-to-do parents. In spite of his father being a rich man, he had decided to cut himself loose from the family and steer his own course through life. He had been in turn a government servant, a teacher, an accountant, and in the end, he had decided to dedicate his life to the service of mankind. He had acted as the secretary of many social institutions, worked among the peasants, lived for some time in Mahatma Gandhi's Ashram, had twice courted imprisonment in the struggle for the country's freedom.

After that he had realized that while he served mankind he could also simultaneously strive for his own spiritual elevation.

"It's my conviction," the teacher said, patting Shanker on the back, "that life has no meaning unless one has something to live for; one must have an aim in life, a goal to achieve. And could there be a greater aim in life than to merge one's soul with the Supreme Soul?"

"But this is possible only if one transcends worldly temptations, if one renounces the world," Shanker said struggling with his doubts. "What if everyone became a sannyasi. . . ."

"I know what you have in mind," the teacher said, giving Shanker an understanding look. "I don't for a moment suggest that one should become a recluse. All that I say is, be in the world, but not of the world—like the mountains: it has its roots in the earth but its peaks shine with transcendent glory."

"But . . ." Shanker fumbled for words, not knowing how to express his thoughts.

"Perhaps you think it's not easy," the teacher said trying to read Shanker's thought. "Of course, it's not easy. It requires the rigours of harsh self-discipline, which like the magic touch of the philosophers' stone converts dross into gold."

Sleep deserted Shanker that night. The teacher's words kept echoing in his mind. When he dozed off he dreamed that he had become a rock. The rains of temptation beat down on the rock, the winds of desire lashed it in all fury. But the rock remained firm, the nails of hunger struck it and became blunt. Then he dreamed that he had become impervious to joys and sorrows, ate insipid food, slept on the bare floor, and spent his time teaching adults. He found himself making a round of the villages, medicine bag in hand. Next, the scene shifted to a jail, where he had gone on hunger-strike to defend the rights of the prisoners. He was threatened, beaten up, even whipped. But grim in his purpose, he neither whined, nor stirred. He had become a rock!

Suddenly he saw the rock hurtling down the steep mountain, with lightning speed and falling into a vast bubbling cauldron—the sea.

He woke up, a sweat had broken out on his forehead. Outside, the rustling of the pines had become louder, and the moon

tired of its night-long vigil had gone to sleep. But Shanker was still awake.

This steep mountain was Bhabi and the bubbling cauldron his own sensual desires.

Bhabi was Bhai Saheb's wife. Shanker had now started staying with the teacher and addressed him as Bhai Saheb—elder brother. He had accepted him as his mentor.

In the beginning he was at peace with himself. Bhai Saheb's talks—an ocean of peace—soothed his mind and he drank deep of them. What happened later is, of course, a different story.

Bhai Saheb was addressed as Masterji, because he had opened a small school with his own funds, for the benefit of the children. For that matter, he could as well pass for a doctor, and some people had honoured him with this title. His real name though was Deen Dayal. Bhabi had told Shanker many things about her husband:

His father had been the headmaster of a government high school—influential and prosperous. Bhai Saheb had then been studying medicine, but he was already imbued with the idea of serving humanity. When the Congress launched the non-cooperation movement, Bhai Saheb gave up his studies. After much difficulty his father was able to persuade him to take up a job in the Accountant General's Office and also had him married much against his wishes. But Bhai Saheb did not hold on to the job for long.

"Do you know how he tendered his resignation?" Bhabi once said while cooking the meal. "He did it just like that—without warning. And do you know the reason he gave for giving up the job? That he was not prepared to be a cog in the administrative machinery of a government which kept his country in slavery. When Lalaji—that is how we addressed his father—came to know about it, he was furious and beat his head in despair. Himself a government employee, his own job was at stake. He might have been branded a traitor by his officers. But Bhai Saheb was not the type who would swerve from his course. He left home and joined Gandhiji's Ashram."

After this Bhai Saheb had put himself heart and soul in the service of humanity. His father tried to bring him round to his own way of thinking, but Bhai Saheb was obsessed with the

idea of doing public good. To fight for the country's freedom became the sole object of his life. From political independence to salvation of his own soul was just one step. His father died in the meantime. He put his patrimony in a bank, sent his children away to a boarding school and he himself came to Gagrait, where he opened a small Ashram to practise Yoga. The interest that he earned from the bank was mostly spent on the Ashram. In course of time he also opened a school and a small dispensary. "He wanted to leave me 'at home,'" Bhabi said, "but I insisted on coming with him."

Not that Bhabi was happy at the new place. Shanker had rarely seen her laughing and when she did, it was a rueful laugh, tinged with sorrow. Shanker also learnt that she had a weak heart, and headaches were her constant companion. Sometimes she had fits! A sort of yearning, an unsatiated desire, lay in her eyes. Shanker felt sorry for her.

But he rarely looked into her eyes. Bhai Saheb had said that a man should keep his eyes down in the presence of a woman. According to him that was the only way to escape the snares of a woman's charm. "See every woman in the role of your mother," he had said. And Shanker had followed his advice to the letter. Bhabi was to him like a mother. But sometimes he faltered. . . .

Bhabi was preparing chapatis and he was sitting by her side with downcast eyes. As he started eating the talk casually led to fried "parathas" and chapatis rubbed with ghee. Bhabi told Shanker that her digestion had been ruined by dry chapatis which Bhai Saheb advised her to eat. There was a time when she had been terribly fond of "parathas" but now she could not even digest dry chapatis.

She told him she was an only child. Her father had been an Executive Engineer. Tears came to her eyes when she told Shanker how after her father's death, her uncle whom her father had sent for education to England at his own expenses, usurped a major portion of her father's property and how even her grand-mother sided with him. They harried and harassed her mother. This was when Bhabi had her first fit.

Shanker looked up at her face. She was wiping her tears with the end of her *dopatta*. He immediately lowered his eyes.

"I was not always like this—morose and taciturn." Bhabi said one day. "I was a gay child and the house rang with my laughter so much so that mother often reminded me that unless I learnt to be sober, I'd have a hard time when I went to live in my father-in-law's house. But little did I know when I got married the very source of my laughter would dry up." And a sad smile played across her face.

Shanker could not help looking at her face. Bhabi steadily looked back at him.

She had no interest in Bhai Saheb's activities. His altruism and profound study of philosophy left her cold. She complained that in his eagerness to help others he often got himself involved in difficulties. For instance, when he had been the headmaster of a National School at Hoshiarpur, and the Secretary of the local Congress Committee, he gave asylum to a girl who lived in the neighbourhood. Her mother was dead and her brothers lazy louts. Taking advantage of her helplessness her maternal uncle wanted to sell her off. Bhai Saheb had her educated so that she could stand on her own legs. Soon tongues began to wag and people insinuated that there was more between Bhai Saheb and the girl than met the eye. "They suspected his character!" Bhabi had put on a wry smile, "After Munni's birth he started regarding me as his sister. What spell could that poor girl cast on him?"

Munni was their daughter, eight years old.

Shanker looked quickly at Bhabi. She was stitching a button on his shirt. There was a hint of dejection on her beautiful face. Her eyes had a tired look and her lips were dry like leaves wilting in the summer heat.

Shanker's heart welled with pity and it began to beat faster.

Bhai Saheb taught him next day that for the fullest consummation of soul it was imperative to renounce all desire for woman. For a householder who wanted to free his soul from the shackles of desire, it was necessary that he should regard his wife as a sister after the birth of her second child. He should pray to God that He may give the couple the strength of mind to lead a life of the spirit.

Shanker looked at Bhai Saheb questioningly.

"Of course, it's difficult to put such a resolve into practice,

Bhai Saheb said trying to still Shanker's doubts. "But here I am, a living example of what I preach. Not that I've attained complete mastery over my desires. But I do my best to practise what I profess."

And even now Bhai Saheb regularly retired into solitude for a day or two. It was exactly in these days that Bhabi complained of one ailment or the other: either her heart started sinking or she developed a severe headache. Once her condition became so bad that Shanker had to press her head and massage her temples with oil. As he was massaging her temples his hand slipped down to her cheek; he felt the warmth of her soft flesh. He immediately left the room, determined not to minister to her headaches in future. But Bhabi again got a fit a few days later. Bhai Saheb, as usual, had gone to a quiet spot to meditate.

Bhabi used to get fits before also—when she talked about her mother's sorrows and her uncle's cruel behaviour, or when she remembered Manohar, her husband's cousin, who died at a very young age. His jokes, his clever talk, his eagerness to run errands for her—the thought of these moved her to tears and she would swoon.

Bhai Saheb never allowed her condition to interfere with his routine. He took it in his stride, without losing his equanimity of mind. When she got a fit in his presence he remained composed as if this was also a part of his Yogic discipline. On such occasions the only deviation that he made in his fixed routine was to stop the morning ritual of the spinning wheel, or forego his nightly study, which time he utilized in sitting by Bhabi's bedside. Whether this cold ministration did Bhabi any good is difficult to say. But Bhabi soon left the bed and Bhai Saheb was saved the drudgery of cooking the meal.

One day Bhabi had such a terrible fit that Shanker was frightened out of his wits. It was evening and Bhai Saheb was not at home. Shanker had gone in to get some matches when he heard someone sobbing.

The room was plunged in darkness and he was groping for the match box when he heard some sobs coming from the direction of the bed.

"Bhabi."

The sobs became louder.

"Bhabi, Bhabi."

"Oh, God, something has happened to my heart." She started groaning.

"Bhabi." He went close to the bed.

"My heart . . . my heart is sinking," she started writhing on the bed.

Shanker was in a terrible predicament. He tried to light the lamp, fumbled with the matches and could only succeed in lighting the lamp at the third attempt. He came near Bhabi's bed. Her hand was on her heart; she was groaning and tossing her head.

Shanker had never seen Bhabi in such state. Once when she got a fit Bhai Saheb had given her a doze of spirit of ammonia. He quickly fetched a phial of spirit of ammonia and measured out a spoonful.

"I detest this medicine," Bhabi cried and clenched her teeth. The medicine ran down her neck.

"How will you get well if you don't take the medicine?" He filled another spoon. Bhabi pushed away his hand and the medicine spilled on the floor. She kept writhing on the bed.

Shanker drew the quilt upto her neck. Climbing on the bed, he caught hold of her hands and pinned them against her chest with his knees. Opening her mouth he forced a spoonful of medicine down her throat, and then quietly climbed down the bed. Sweat broke out on his brow and his heart went pounding.

Bhabi pushed away the quilt. The medicine had left a bitter taste in her mouth, making her cough. Pressing her heart she again started groaning.

"You'll be all right in a minute," Shanker said, "just give the medicine a chance." His breath came thick and fast.

"Please, please press my heart," Bhabi wailed. "I feel it sinking."

Covering her with the quilt, Shanker again pressed her bosom.

"Harder, press it harder." Bhabi was feeling relieved.

Shanker got down on his knees by her bedside and placed his hands on her heart. While pressing her heart he found himself leaning over her body and his chest brushed against her breasts. He could hear her heart-beats.

Bhabi stopped crying. Her groans had changed into a low moan. Just then Bhai Saheb came in.

Shanker got up in confusion. Unperturbed, Bhai Saheb quickly took Shanker's place. Perhaps the medicine was doing its work, or perhaps it was the magic of Bhai Saheb's presence that Bhabi suddenly calmed down.

Shanker spent a sleepless night. His mind was in turmoil. Bhai Saheb's image danced before his eyes again and again. Here was a man who had renounced the greatest pleasure of the world to attain spiritual height. And look at himself; he had shamelessly fallen for the smallest picking. But the demands of the flesh. . . .

The next day he mentioned his predicament to Bhai Saheb. He wanted to know if one could indulge one's animal desires and yet attain spiritual fulfilment.

Bhai Saheb smiled. "Sex is also a hunger, like all other hungers," he said. "The way we subdue other desires through rigid training and self-discipline, we can quell our hunger for sex. It lies within us to give it free rein or curb it completely. Wading through a sea of desires an individual can still steer his way to spiritual salvation through devotion and penance. In fact, one should become a rock which can withstand the rigours of cold and heat with the same casual indifference."

Yes, he would become a rock, firm and unchanging. He would rise above his passions, soar skywards, and attain the highest state of the spirit. The word "rock" kept revolving in his mind.

But he had reckoned without Bhabi—Bhabi, who was like the spark of an unquenched fire.

One day Bhai Saheb was out on a visit to a patient. Shanker, his back set against the wall, was busy reading under the hurricane lantern which hung on a peg. Bhabi came and sat by his side. Shanker kept reading, Bhabi yawned and lay down on the mat.

Shanker looked at her from the corner of his eyes. The end of the sari had slipped from her head, the button of her blouse had come open, exposing the curve of her breast. Shanker averted his gaze. He tried to read. The letters became blurred, and were reduced to a long black line. The page swam before his eyes, and then the book was gone. The only thing he was

aware of was the dim outline of her breasts—the cleft between her bosom, dark and deep, which in the dim light of the lamp got lost somewhere.

The book fell away from his hand, his gaze travelled to her firm round shoulders, to her slim waist, and skimming over the divide between her breasts, it came to rest on her face. She was lying inert, like a lifeless log. Her lips were dry and parched and lined. His gaze remained fixed on these lines on her lips, and he felt tempted to kiss them. He bent over her. . . .

Bhabi slowly opened her eyes—hungry, sad, heavy with desire. He looked into those eyes and bent lower.

He stopped. Those lines had become hard as nails, drenched in blood. They were trying to pierce through the rock.

He got up bewildered. Jumping over her body, he flung open the door and rushed out of the room. He walked swiftly and then broke into a run, as if he was being chased by a ferocious beast—bareheaded, barefoot, breaking the stillness of the night, piercing the dim moonlight.

The cold had increased and the wind moaned as it rustled through the pines.

At dawn Shanker found himself sitting on a rock. His legs were caked with mud upto the knees. His soles were blistered and a toe-nail had pared off. Exhausted, he had sat down on the rock. Perhaps he had also dozed.

He opened his eyes. Far away at the farthest point of vision, he could see the undulating hills, gently merging into the plains, where the river Suvan glistened, carrying the sand from the hills as a votive offering to the distant oceans. Beyond the river, he could discern the town of Hoshiarpur, its roofs dimly rising out of the haze. He ran his hand through his tangled hair and stretched out his legs. His knee had started aching and his toe throbbed with pain. He looked around at the hills, thick with pines—there was a strange newness about them, as if he was seeing them for the first time.

He stretched out his arms in a yawn and his hand brushed against something soft. A tender sapling had narrowly escaped being crushed under his hand.

Shanker saw that some earth had fallen from above into the fold of the rugged rock and a seed carried by the wind had got

embedded in the earth and sprouted into a tiny sapling. But a rock was a rock, harsh, cruel and inhospitable. It was not prepared to give an inch of space to the sapling to enable it to burst into green glory. The young sapling was on the point of withering and its tender leaves had turned yellow.

Shanker got up and cast a surprised look at the rock and then at the sapling. And then he saw the silhouette of another rock rising in hazy outlines over that rock and in place of that sapling, another sapling, also withered and yellowing, suddenly swam before his eyes.

The Devil*

by S. J. JOSHI

“IT has been an unhappy day at the office,” I said to my wife while taking off my coat.

“Why? What happened?” She appeared concerned.

“It’s about Ram. Poor chap! He has lost his job; got a month’s notice today,” I replied moodily.

“Notice? Good heavens! What’s to happen now?”

I had no answer to that. I felt beaten. In the kitchen the tea-kettle steamed on the stove, the steel blue flames trying vainly to devour the burner.

“It is bad, very bad indeed!” I exclaimed. “But it could have been worse. . . .”

“I don’t see how—?”

“For the last two or three months there has been a rumour that the firm was wanting to retrench. One of us had to quit. It’s Ram’s bad luck that he was chosen to take the rap. I think I am safe. I need not worry any more now. . . .”

“How can you? I am really surprised you can be so narrow-minded. . . .”

“I know; it’s a selfish thought. But . . . but it is a fact and the same . . . ; it’s true. I shudder to imagine myself in Ram’s plight.”

The next hour or two ticked away listlessly. My wife busied herself in cooking and I took my favourite place on my cot in

Translated from the Marathi by Mangesh Padki.

the living room. I could see the chawl opposite. I liked to watch the families caged in dingy, crowded, two-room tenements, the men and women striving to squeeze bits of rest, bits of pleasure out of life. I sat watching aimlessly.

Dinner was early. My wife appeared to be in an unusual hurry. She asked the neighbours to baby-sit for us and began to dress.

"Get up! Let's pay a visit to Ram."

"Don't you know it's past nine now?" I asked. "It's rather late. We better not!"

"It's all right. I feel we ought to visit him. He must be feeling miserable."

"Well. . . I don't see how it's going to help him," I muttered vaguely. "Let us go."

We climbed down the creaking stairs of our chawl and moved along. I had nothing to say. My wife was silent. My heart was heavy and I could sense that she was depressed too.

"Really, it must be very trying," she said after a while.

I was silent. People react differently to painful situations. Some speak out while some have nothing to say. Behind the apparent calm, the latter experience a deep agony.

My wife, however, continued to talk. "What will Ram do now?" she asked.

"Look out for a fresh job, I think!"

"And if none comes along . . .?"

"He will have to keep trying."

"Do you think it is that easy?"

"What is so difficult about it?"

"Please! How can you? One has to live, isn't it? You know he has a wife and a child. Something has to be done for them. There are family expenses, groceries, milk! These things cannot wait till he gets a job, can they?"

"I don't know! I think they will have to pull on somehow."

"How easily said! Life has no patience. It doesn't stop for anybody." She lingered a little abstractedly and then moved on.

"I have a feeling . . ." she hesitated.

"Eh?"

"I think life is like the very devil. . . eternally hungry. . .!"

"Yes!" I felt a little amused in spite of myself. "Yes! It is the devil all right; . . . like the mythical demon who snatched cart-

loads of food from the people of the town, at the cost of their lives."

"Quite so," my wife went on. "You have to keep on feeding it . . . with money. If you can't, it gets you with a will!"

We had reached Ram's chawl now. I paused a little on the stairs and said, "I don't know if Ram should worry. He has been careful . . . might have saved something."

"How much do you think?"

"Around two hundred, I think," I said.

"Two hundred!" She thought aloud. "Why, it's just about a month's ration for the devil! What about the next month?"

We were outside Ram's apartment by now. The door was opened promptly.

In the room, he was perched on his bedstead. His wife Nirmala was standing by gloomily. Scattered around were all those little necessities of life in cupboards, on built-in shelves and in tin boxes. They had acquired everything with infinite labour, bit by bit. They had loved it intensely.

We sat down feeling helpless and incapable of speech. The atmosphere was heavy as lead. When it became unbearable, I spoke. "Well, what are you going to do about it?" I asked in a low voice.

Ram pulled his legs up to his stomach and crouched on his bare feet. "No ideal. The only possible thing is to search for another job, I guess."

"Jobs are pretty scarce now. You will have to wait," I said, looking in the direction of Nirmala. Silence fell again. Ram and his wife exchanged blank looks and I stared at the bright brass tins on the wooden shelves. Their bright gold glitter appeared offensive and incongruent. I knew the passion with which Nirmala had acquired them. I knew her hunger for collecting all those tins and vessels.

"Something will have to be done," I broke the silence again. "If I may make a suggestion. . ."

"Well!" muttered Nirmala with a faint gleam of hope.

"It would be better if you leave this apartment as soon as you can and stay a while at your father's," I told her. "At least, it might cut down expenses for the time being."

"I wonder if it would work," thought Ram. "Her father has

retired from service already. Her brothers aren't well-placed either. I am afraid it would be a drag on them. They may even resent it."

"I know! I know!" I said. "They would feel that way, even if they had good jobs. Every household strikes a delicate balance, with well-defined limits. It is disturbed by the slightest jerk. Even so, I feel it's the only way out. It will help Ram to concentrate on getting a job."

"Really!," my wife burst out enthusiastically. "It's a gem of an idea. Ram can stay with us till he finds a job."

At this Ram's eyes met mine. A deep unease stirred within us. We were quiet for a while. "There need be no worry regarding Ram's lodging," I said. "But you must leave this place as soon as possible. I think we should start packing tomorrow."

I looked around. There were a hundred little things with life throbbing in them unnoticeably. A strange feeling came over me; a feeling that we were trying to shut the devil in tin boxes, to tie him up in rolled mattresses. I wondered if we could send the ever-hungry demon away.

During the next week or two, I waited for Ram. He had taken his wife, his child and all his possessions to his father-in-law.

I found him sitting on the cot in our living room one day. His trunk was pushed under the cot with the rolled-up mattress alongside. During tea, I talked freely in an attempt to clear the mist of gloom that enveloped Ram. I tried telling amusing anecdotes to cheer him. He, however, refused to be drawn out. I knew him to be a man with a fine sense of humour, one who would set the party convulsed with laughter by his jokes and gags. He now seemed to have been drained of all his cheer. It was replaced by a choking reticence and I felt a gradual distance opening between us.

That night he slept on the cot in our living room, at my wife's insistence. He was a guest after all, an invited guest. We slept in the less spacious, crowded kitchen. It was unpleasant, with the smell of the cooking vessels and the sink.

"Ram doesn't look his usual self," I remarked casually to my wife. "He seems to have changed a lot."

"Naturally! He must be thinking about his wife and child."

"I don't think so. He was with them only the other day."

"Then, may be, he is feeling uncomfortable because he had to force himself on us."

"Why should he? Wasn't he staying with us before?"

"It was different then," my wife said, stifling a yawn. "He is jobless now. It's natural that he feels strange," she said in a sleepy voice.

Ram began his own routine from the next day. He would get up early and finish his morning chores and bath before tea. After a silent cup of tea with us, he would go through the morning papers carefully and walk out. In my absence in the afternoon, he would gulp down his lunch in awkward silence and would go out again. Every evening, he gave a detailed account of his attempts to get a job, after my return from office. He had met somebody; had tried to get a note of acquaintance from some one else; had applied for a typist's job in some firm. I cheered him up usually and painted bright dreams for him.

After a time, a gradual despair set in. With growing hopelessness we realized the impossibility of getting a job. We spoke less frequently. He crouched on his feet on the cot and I engaged myself in the small kitchen with my wife. I would smile vaguely in his direction and would avoid any talk.

He got into the habit of perching on the cot like a vulture and pouring through a stale paper purposelessly. His posture, his inactivity and his utterly hopeless silence strained our nerves. I began to get infuriated without reason and ignored him in his patient position. His spectral presence began to terrorize us.

He continued to sit dumb and broken-hearted on the cot, making it difficult for us to move about in the living room. Once I lowered my voice and inquired of my wife in the kitchen, "I am really surprised to see him not getting even a single job till now!"

"How could he get it? He doesn't stir out of the house at all, nowadays."

"Do you mean to tell me," I asked in a trembling voice, "that he keeps indoors all day?"

"Well, almost! He goes out only in the mornings. But after lunch, he sits there, smoking his time away or just sleeping it off. He squats there on the cot all the time, like the devil," she told me with a shudder.

All of a sudden I felt sorry for him. "Well, what else can he do, poor chap!" My tone became sympathetic. "What is the purpose of going out, if no job turns up? Where is he to go?"

"That doesn't justify his laziness. He sits there like a vulture, at all hours of the day. Is he a human being or . . . what?" She exploded with bitterness.

"He is human all right," I said, trying to smile her irritation off. "Doesn't he eat like me, twice a day?"

"Oh no!" She retorted promptly. "He eats like the devil . . . twice as much as you."

"Please! You should not talk that way about anybody's eating. You know, one feels more hungry when one has nothing to do, when one is confined by forced idleness. By the way, I eat my lunch in the office canteen, don't I?"

She appeared to press the discussion but I felt weary of it. I left her in the kitchen and went into the living room. He was there on the cot. He sat there in that peculiar posture, absorbing an old newspaper. He didn't stir or speak.

I wished to speak to him, to draw him out, but felt differently. The intimacy with which I had invited him to live with us somehow seemed to have wilted like blue smoke. He could not get a job. The likelihood of his getting one seemed remote. He drifted along hopelessly, helplessly. We lived on as usual in the kitchen, wrapped in with our joys and sorrows. We ate, went out for walks, talked in casual tones, while he perched on the inevitable cot all day like a man in a stupor.

He showed signs of life only at tea or meal-times. Sitting awkwardly with us, he gulped enormous quantities hurriedly, without speaking a word. Often, of a sudden, he appeared like a hungry animal, hastily trying to swallow as much as he could. His peculiar mannerisms, the noise he made while eating and the way he licked his hands, sent a chill running through me. I would feel greatly disgusted, almost nauseated. I had never seen these ugly mannerisms before. There was actually no occasion to do so, as his visits usually meant a great deal of fun and laughter.

His presence became a trying experience for my wife in particular. The living room being occupied by him, she had to be in the crowded tiny kitchen all day long. It disturbed her to be

under the continuous pressure of his spectral existence in the house. His mute presence engulfed her and broke her spirit. She talked about him all the time and about nothing else. Unconsciously she watched him during dinner and noted the quantities he ate. She refused to serve him a second cup of tea and would invite him into the kitchen only at my insistence. On such occasions, she would exhibit her disgust by sneering at him behind his back.

It became obvious that the tension was fast tiring us out. We felt moody and uncomfortable in our own house. His ghost seemed to follow us all the time and snatched away every little pleasure from our hands. We felt extremely helpless and did not know how to get rid of him.

On a Sunday, I had a few guests. I had invited them to lunch. They were from my office and knew Ram intimately. They made futile attempts to chat with him during the meal. He appeared strange and distant. Lunch over, he took his place on the cot and we felt relieved and free to chat comfortably in the kitchen. Somebody suggested a short stroll. We dressed quickly. Ram would not have accompanied us anyway. Nor did anybody invite him. As a matter of fact, we wanted to get away from his polluted presence.

Before leaving, I lowered my voice and asked her in the kitchen, "What about some tea?"

"Not in the house. Let's have it outside today."

"But how about him?" I asked, nodding in the direction of the cot in the living room.

"It is all right," she said. She seemed to disapprove of my suggestion. "It is all right if he doesn't have tea some day. We aren't bound to give him tea every day, are we?"

"All right! All right!" said hurriedly, trying to stop her. I went into the living room, putting my coat on.

My wife followed me. She peered into the mirror during her toilet and said in a loud voice, while adjusting a stray curl, "Oh dear! It has been a heavy meal. I don't think I shall eat anything at night. How about you?"

"Oh no! Don't mention it. It's impossible for me," I replied.

"And you?" She asked Ram.

"Me? No, I won't be able to eat either."

"Thanks," she said, smiling at him condescendingly. "It is really a big relief not to have to cook once in a while at least."

We went out and sat on an adjacent playground. We felt relieved and light of heart, and tried to make conversation. Our attempts failed; somehow the life seemed to have vanished from the party. Finally, somebody referred to Ram and his strange attitude. It had disturbed everybody, and having once started, we chewed the subject over. We returned home at a late hour, after well past nine.

The door was bolted from inside. I was tired and tried to shout at Ram. There was no reply. My wife was also quite exhausted having had to carry the child. She also called him in vain, in an enraged voice. She felt disgusted and irritated. "I don't understand what he is doing behind closed doors," she said angrily.

"May be he is asleep," I said with contempt.

"Heaven alone knows how people can sleep so early in the evening. Perhaps it is not so difficult after all. He does that and nothing else."

We heard the tap running and then being closed. After a time the door opened.

"What were you doing?" I shouted at him. I could not hide my anger.

"Nothing," he said weakly, crestfallen.

He resumed his place on the cot. I took off my coat and sat by his side. My wife went into the kitchen.

"Been out?" I asked, making an attempt at conversation.

"No."

I felt violently choked with wrath. I could not sit there, nor look at him. I left him abruptly and went into the kitchen.

My wife was cleaning the stove. There were white milk-stains on it. "What happened? Did the milk boil over?"

Without a word she grasped my arm and guided me towards the sink. There were plenty of tea leaves in it. "Seems he had his tea, all right."

"Obviously!" She said with clenched teeth. She jerked a tin of biscuits open under my nose. "See for yourself!" The tin was half-empty.

"The devil!" I exclaimed, unable to contain my disgust. "He

has finished even baby's biscuits. But why? Why this secrecy? He could have asked for something to eat, couldn't he?"

"You wouldn't know! He had to have his afternoon tea. Well, he had it."

She wanted to warm the milk and was looking around for the box of matches. "Where is the match box? Have you seen it?" she asked.

"Please!" I told her, yawning. "Please find it yourself. Don't bother me."

"Where could it have gone? I always keep it on the spirit bottle," she said. She raised her voice enough to be audible in the living room. "I don't know, but somebody must have taken the box."

"All right! Take out a new one."

"But who took it?" She asked belligerently. She lighted the stove with a new box and said in a loud voice, "What's to be done now? Apparently somebody has started even stealing!"

"All right, all right . . . please quiet down for heaven's sake," I tried to soothe her. I was afraid Ram would hear her words.

I must have dozed off early that night, but my wife kept awake. She woke me up.

"What is it?" I asked sleepily, much distressed. She beckoned me to the narrow slit between the kitchen doors and whispered, "Just look . . . see what he is doing."

Anxiously, I peeped through the door. The light had been switched on and Ram was rummaging through my coat-pockets. We held our breath and watched. He took out my purse, kerchief and clips and stood staring at them, undecided. He returned all the things and took out my cigarette packet. He smelt it fondly and paused a little before opening it. He shelled out a few cigarettes, returned the packet to the coat-pocket and switched the light off. I saw him crouching on the cot in his habitual posture and light the cigarette. The lighted tip glowed off and on in the dark and filled the room with an acrid odour. A terrifying sight, he appeared to be a medieval cyclops, a dangerous, hungry, one-eyed human beast, silently marking its time before pouncing.

"Didn't I tell you?" my wife whispered aloud. "He stole the

match-box. He took your cigarettes. I really don't see how people can behave so shamelessly."

"Take it easy," I said good-humouredly. "May be he isn't getting any sleep. A cigarette helps at such times. You must try to understand."

"I know he can't sleep. He sleeps all day."

"What else is he to do then? Just try to imagine yourself in his position. May be you'll realize it yourself."

Suddenly I started. I felt that the light in the living room was switched on and put out again immediately. I wondered if Ram stood outside the door. I was afraid he would hear us.

"Please! Can't you lower your voice? He may hear you. It may make him feel worse," I urged my wife.

But she would not be soothed. Apparently, she wished that he should hear her. "He feels nothing of the kind," she went on in a clear ringing voice. "It is nice of you to be so good. It's easy. You are out all day and it is I, I who have to suffer him all the time. He weighs on my mind like a ghost sitting there and waiting for its feeding time. I don't think I can tolerate it any more."

"Please, how can you speak like that? Don't you realize that we invited him to live with us, packed his family away to his father-in-law's place?"

"Exactly! We packed his trunks and tied up his luggage. Remember, you thought we were tying up the demon and sending him away. But—then. . ."

"Yes?" I interrupted her.

"But I don't think we tied up that demon at all. Only the luggage left and the demon returned and perched on that cot of ours, out there!"

"Please, please," I pleaded helplessly. "Let him be. I tell you, the demon will turn into a loving human being overnight once he gets a job. He will again be liked by all."

"May be. But I am afraid we'll have to wait for an eternity for that day . . . a lifetime for him to leave that cot . . .," she said in despair. She would have carried on in the same strain, but I finally silenced her.

I kept awake, however. I couldn't sleep at all. I watched Ram through the slit between the doors. He smoked incessantly and

seemed to be in a violent argument with himself. He had left the cot and was pacing the room furiously.

I dozed off eventually without realizing it. I dreamt of a huge demon with a wide open mouth and saw my wife and I feeding him with rolls of bread, rice and tea. He bore a strange resemblance to Ram.

I did not know when or how the dream ended. The day had already begun when I woke up. Suddenly I remembered what had happened at night, the dream and the rest of it. Uneasily, I stepped into the living room.

The room was empty. There was no trace of Ram or his tin box or his rolled-in bed.

I might have understood! I might have even secretly expected it. The fact however left me in infinite sadness. I called my wife, aloud.

"Why? Whatever happened?" she inquired as she came out.

"Nothing exceptional, dear," I said in a sad and distant voice. "The devil has departed . . . to become a human being."

"Really? Well, of all the things . . .," she looked surprised and a little relieved. She would have continued to talk, but I was in the wrong mood. I moved away from her and took Ram's place on the cot and silently watched the chawl opposite. It is my custom, whenever I am depressed, to sit and observe the men and women cooped up in those crowded, two-room tenements.,