

# INDIAN LITERATURE



INDIAN INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDY TRANSACTION SERIES No: 4

# INDIAN LITERATURE

*Proceedings of a Seminar*

*Edited by*

ARABINDA PODDAR

*With a New Introduction by*

SUDHIR CHANDRA



GOLDEN JUBILEE SERIES

Indian Institute of Advanced Study  
Rashtrapati Nivas, Shimla

First published 1972  
Second edition 2015

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ISBN: 978-93-82396-27-7

*Published by*  
The Secretary  
Indian Institute of Advanced Study  
Rashtrapati Nivas, Shimla-171005

Typeset at Sai Graphic Design, New Delhi  
and printed at Pearl Offset Pvt. Ltd., Kirti Nagar, New Delhi

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# Foreword



During the first decade or so following the founding of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study in 1965, several path-breaking seminars were organized around issues that were then of urgent concern to researchers and society alike. Leading academics participated in the deliberations and the interesting volumes that emerged were published by the Institute as the 'Transaction Series'. Each of these publications represented an important benchmark in the subject they sought to explore. However, questions of fundamental importance are not only complex: they are also perennial in nature. Even the most outstanding contributions can perhaps provide only partial answers. In their relative incompleteness, nevertheless, are contained possibilities of future trajectories for exploration. Half answers, therefore, often become the basis of a renewed and revitalized effort and thereby of a better understanding.

Given the significant nature of these seminars and the continuing relevance of their themes, my predecessor, Professor Peter Ronald deSouza, was justifiably of the view that their proceedings needed to be republished with a new introduction written by an eminent scholar in the relevant specialization. His personal initiative has been crucial for the republication of these 'Transaction Series'. The typing of the volumes was a time-consuming task as was the painstaking process of proof-reading. I would like to acknowledge with thanks the support provided by the scholars who undertook the task of

writing the new introductions to these volumes. We are grateful to Professor Binita Desai who helped us with the design not only of these books but also of our other design requirements.

The Golden Jubilee celebrations of 2015 are, indeed, a fit occasion for the Institute to release the Transactions volumes as a new series. These volumes are not simply markers of the lasting impact of the research carried out at the Institute. They are points of both reference and departure even today for those who seek meaningful answers to questions that have for long drawn the attention of thinkers.

CHETAN SINGH  
*Director*

## Preface



The Indian Institute of Advanced Study, a centre of higher learning and research, is dedicated to the exploration of ideas and the pursuit of knowledge. Its principal aim is to provide atmosphere and essential infrastructure, conducive to quiet contemplation and serious study, to a community of scholars engaged in individual or group research.

From time to time the Institute holds seminars, conferences and workshops focussed on specific themes, to which leaders of thought and action are invited. Each such get-together is carefully planned—as a meeting of minds and an adventure of ideas—to generate insights and perspectives on issues of conceptual or contemporary significance. Their proceedings are published in the Transactions of the Institute. Twelve volumes, including this one, have so far been published in this series, more are in press or in active preparation.

The reader will find in this book a panoramic view of India's literary landscape. On a limited scale, the contributions and summary of discussions brought together in this volume also illuminate the unity and diversity in the literature of different Indian languages.

Dr. Arabinda Poddar was entrusted with the responsibility of editing and introducing this volume. He has carried out this task with imagination and competence. The Institute is grateful to him.

Simla  
March 15, 1972

S.C. DUBE  
*Director*



## New Introduction



*Indian literature* over the centuries in all its aspects was the ambitious theme that the then infant Indian Institute of Advanced Study chose for a fortnight-long seminar way back in May 1970. In just under two years, the proceedings of the seminar, including a summary of the discussions during those two weeks, were published by the Institute. The volume brought out forty years ago has been out of print for some time. It is being reissued now.

*Now* is a very different time. Much has changed in the intervening four decades. We have even lived through the opening decade of a new century. The subject chosen for the seminar – Indian literature – has since grown enormously, and also changed dramatically. Ways of defining and understanding the subject, too, have changed significantly. So has, often unrecognizably, the larger world within which literature is produced. And, not just calendrically but in terms of the quality of human life, the new century is proving to be very different.

This is reason enough to reissue the volume. This gives us a chance to look back and compare the developments and changes in between. We can see how our immediate predecessors saw Indian literature and *literature*; also what those of us who have lived on thought in our youth. We can feel how they, and the then we, felt Indian literature and literature. We may, in the process, compare

with that our present modes of apprehending the subject. And wonder how much, or in what respects, the intervening decades have enriched or impoverished us. Our individual answers may not produce a consensus. But our perspective will, more likely than not, have gained in depth.

Let me begin with an example that highlights the enormous growth and change Indian literature has undergone since 1970. Modern Indian literature was described by a participant at the seminar as the product of ‘an infinitesimal section of the middle class elite’ (95). Literature in no Indian language today will match that description. Even within the middle class – and that class itself has burgeoned rapidly – much more than an infinitesimal section of it has taken to creative writing. Then there has been a powerful torrent of women’s writing both from within and without the middle class. Some of the finest and most varied voices, displaying new and often startling ways of seeing and recording things, have been voices of two already established generations of women writers, and their third generation is beginning to make its presence felt. There has also emerged in the meantime a powerful body of feminist criticism.

Add to that the tidal wave of Dalit literature that has moved swiftly from Maharashtra to sweep through the entire country. Possessed with the power of the raw and the unadorned, Dalit poetry and Dalit fiction even more have transformed the act of writing and the experience of reading. Dissolving effectively such conventional distinctions as the literal and the figural, the austere and the abundant, the real and the fictive – viz., the indistinguishability in some cases of autobiography and novel – they have provided a very different kind of literature and also, consequently, forced a reexamination of conventional aesthetics.

The Adivasis, too, have not lagged behind. And, in the process, serious issues of orality and writing, indeed literacy and literature, have come to the fore.

The democratization of Indian literature in the wake of Bhakti pales into insignificance in comparison to the literary upsurge during the *preceding forty years*.

Forty years I stress on purpose, to point towards the very remarkable timing of the seminar. The description of modern Indian literature as the product of ‘an infinitesimal section of the middle class elite’ was not demurred to at the seminar. Many will even today accept it as a faithful description of the state of Indian literature then. Equally faithful, however, seems the statement

about the unprecedented democratization of Indian literature in the intervening years. If this, indeed, is what happened, then the 1970 seminar would, in hindsight, appear to have been located in a truly catalytic moment in our literary history. This was the liberatory moment in which Indian literature broke out of its elitist confines to be embraced by those who, variously denied and hounded, had for long been kept outside the pale. Within two years of the seminar occurred the iconic event – the formation of the Dalit Panthers under Namdev Dhasal's leadership – that would make it difficult to not take cognizance of Dalit literature.

This chronology may seem fairly clear and unproblematic. Yet, the description that went unchallenged at the seminar about Indian literature being the product of an infinitesimal minority of the middle class, may appear objectionable from a different existential and ideological position. Viewed from that position, the description may reflect the characteristic upper-caste bias that – masquerading as conventional Dalit aesthetics – would not acknowledge Dalit literature to be literature. It may be argued, citing examples like Narayan Surave's *Majhe Vidyapeeth* (1966), that Dalit literature had made itself felt already in the 1960s. It will help to remember that perceptual conflicts, such as this, rest on impressions. The problematique of perception defies resolution precisely when mutually acceptable comprehension of the relevant facts is unavailable.

The seminar, obviously, was oblivious of the epochal quality of its timing. Yet, Indian literature was important enough for the likes of Niharranjan Ray and R.K. Dasgupta to plan a fortnight-long seminar on the subject; for Suniti Kumar Chatterjee, unrivalled in his understanding of the Indian linguistic and literary universe, to defy old age – he was eighty then – to be part of the deliberations throughout; and for some of our finest minds to stay on for two weeks.

There was, though, an awareness of the significance of the moment. It was, indeed, seen as a critical moment. But that sense of crisis was not directly in relation to Indian literature. It related, rather, to the Indian nation, and it was hoped that the role of Indian literature could prove decisive in that moment.

The nation, then barely into the third decade of its independence, had come up against the threat of what then was described as regionalism, including a serious secessionist challenge to its unity. At the political level, it had sought to counter the challenge, among

other measures, with a constitutional amendment. But the challenge also included a serious cultural-ideological questioning of the idea of the basic unity of Indian culture and nation. That aspect of the challenge could, effectively and meaningfully, be tackled only by refurbishing and propagating the idea of Indian unity. This was a task that the government alone could not have performed. There were scholars, some of them in positions of influence and power, who believed themselves to be part of the grand project of designing a desirable new India. Having lived through, in some cases even participated in, the struggle for independence and the no less exhilarating Nehruvian project, they felt a kind of vested interest in the country's integrity and prosperity. In fact, just two years after the 'Indian Literature' seminar, the Institute organized a seminar on 'A Cultural Policy for India', which was even more directly concerned with national integration. That world was far removed from globalization and liberalization, the governing shibboleths of today.

It was such scholars, with their sense of responsibility in what they saw as a critical moment in their fledgling nation's life, who conceived of a seminar on Indian literature. They were too serious, and intelligent, to not know that an academic exercise organized merely, or expressly, for an extraneous purpose could only be counter-productive. But they did hope to serve that purpose as well. Indeed, their very conviction in the underlying unity of Indian literature, irrespective of the variety of languages it was produced in, furnished them reason for looking upon it – Indian literature – as a powerful psychological-cultural cementing force. The important thing was to broadcast that unity and propose possible institutional arrangements for promoting it.

The seminar, it is noticeable, had two avowed purposes. One was to gain 'a panoramic view of India's literary landscape'; the other, closely related, was to examine 'the contention that Indian Literature is one despite being written in different languages.' The inaugural session was dominated by the idea of unity. The 'Inaugural Address' by V.K.R.V. Rao, the Union Minister for Education and Youth Services who was an eminent scholar and also Chairman of the Institute's Governing Body, even pronounced the promotion of the unity of all Indian literatures to be 'the object behind the holding of this seminar.' He was followed by Krishna Kripalani, Secretary of the Sahitya Akademy, who wound up the session by emphasizing the inward and conceptual – as opposed to outward and mechanical – unity of Indian literature.



The question of unity once again figured prominently when, at its concluding session, the seminar discussed and made certain recommendations. Its last, by no means the least, recommendation read:

Finally, the Seminar recommends to the University Grants Commission and the Union Ministry of Education and Youth Services that a National Survey of the teaching of Indian languages and literatures in our universities be made so that appropriate steps could be taken soon not only to inaugurate a new era in the teaching of the Indian literatures but also to promote unobtrusively yet effectively the cause of national integration. (p. 527)

The same concern inspired the seminar to propose ‘a large scale programme of reliable and readable translations of selected works of literature from each of the Indian languages into the others, and also into English.’ And to this was added the suggestion to institute ‘a background course in Indian Literature as ancillary to the study of the various individual literatures.’ All this reflects how strong and natural was the tendency to see all regional literatures and cultures as integral to a larger pan-Indian unity. To cite a rather striking example, even in the discussion on the Sangham literature, which is pivotal to Dravidian identity, the claim of Tamil classicism was questioned. Besides others, Suniti Kumar Chatterjee insisted that ‘the Sanskrit infusion’ was integral to the evolution of Tamil literary and cultural traditions. (p. 466)

But the seminar was not a command performance. Its real purpose is reflected in Niharranjan Ray’s ‘Welcome Address’. In fact, his address anticipates, uncannily, the tenor and temper of the following fortnight’s deliberations. He was the first speaker, and the first note he struck was one of scepticism. This, moreover, was a scepticism that persisted even after it had practically been resolved in the course of the address. ‘Let me start,’ Ray said, ‘by doubting the contention that Indian literature is one though written in different Indian languages and by stating that the contention cannot be sustained in its fullest sense.’ Arguing that literature ‘is absolutely language-based’, he inferred that ‘what we have in India is as many Indian literatures as there are languages, and not one literature, just as there are as many European literatures as there are languages in Europe and not one European literature.’ He did discern, though, an underlying ‘Indianness’ in ‘the peculiar nature and character of our perception, sensitivity and sensibility’. That ‘Indianness’, he further argued, lay in a certain ‘passage to the reality of things’, which was

‘not so much through ratiocination as through sense, perception and through intuitive insight, which is another name for perception at a higher and deeper level.’ So long as ‘this emphasis on emotional and perceptual experience’ persisted – and things were changing – literatures written in our different languages would be ‘Indian without the slightest doubt.’ (pp. 6-10)

This is no sophistry. It reflects, rather, Ray’s suspicion of ready answers. He must see the problem in its complexity. The wide spread of a nebulous feeling, that something like an Indian literature exists, is in itself insufficient for him. It cannot counter the inescapable logic of logocentricity, by virtue of which literatures written in different languages must necessarily be different. He can recognize the *Indianness* of Indian music and dance; and, ‘until very recent times’, of ‘the mainstream of our plastic arts like sculpture and painting’. But, then, unlike literature, those art forms are not – or not in the same substantive way – dependent on words. The fact of their existence alone cannot warrant the existence of a common Indian literature. At the same time, whatever the law of logocentricity, the sense of commonness produced – deep down – by literatures in different Indian languages cannot be denied either. Where, then, does that commonness come from?

The way Ray rounds off his argument to resolve the doubt with which he had begun may not convince everyone. I myself have difficulty accepting it. One can, justifiably, propose that a question, like whether or not there is an Indian literature, must hinge on what Indians feel, not on external theoretical-analytic criteria. Unanimity is improbable in a matter involving the subjectivity of a whole people. Nonetheless, the existence of a widely shared feeling that literatures in different Indian languages constituted Indian literature – which was admitted in 1970 – should have been proof of its own truth. One may also argue that if an Indian mode of apprehending the reality of things is shown to exist, then that mode must in some measure neutralize the logocentric specificities of the various languages, and invest them with a modicum of commonness. Why, then, should Ray have introduced those extra steps to resolve the doubt?

Possible differences over Ray’s argumentation apart, the important thing is his call to conceptualize an ontological basis for Indian literature. Even after the *felt* reality of Indian literature is recognised, it is imperative to identify the elements and the dynamics of that feeling. Ray answers his own call, and offers a possible blueprint. He locates the spring of Indian literature in what

he calls ‘the myth of India’ – ‘using the term myth in its sociological and socio-anthropological connotation’ – and ‘the set of values and attitudes it generated and sustained.’ However, as he sees it, the myth is organically related to a ‘traditional’ India, which is in the throes of change. He must, consequently, ask: ‘... would there be then any Indian literature *in the sense we are speaking of* when the so-called process of modernization had run its full circle?’ (pp. 8-9) [Italics added.]

That was forty years ago. The waning of the traditional Indian society has in the meanwhile followed its inexorable course. But evidently *Indian* literature has not wilted with that waning. It has, on the contrary, acquired a global presence that was inconceivable in 1970.

## II

But is this literature Indian *in the sense* Ray and the others were speaking of Indian literature? If it is not, is it proper to still call it Indian? If yes, what are the grounds for justifying that appellation? Also, does this compulsion to conceptualize Indian literature anew mean that the exercise will need periodic renewal, or can a less provisional and long lasting ontological base be imagined for Indian literature? And if it necessarily has to be a periodic exercise, is that the case with all literatures, or is it unique to Indian literature, perhaps in common with literatures from all not-yet-fully-modernized societies?

Modernization is not something I am suddenly smuggling into the discussion. Whatever the discussants’ orientation to the phenomenon, modernization has been critical to virtually every discussion about the fate of societies – including the fate of literature – in modern times (here using the term ‘modern’ simply chronologically). Keeping in mind the historical background to the emergence of what is described as modern literature – viz., modern Bengali literature, modern Marathi literature, modern Malayalam literature, and so forth – I wish to recall a certain common pattern in the Indian reception to modernization.

Going back to how it began, and how perceptive contemporaries saw it happen, I should like to mention Mahadev Govind Ranade’s (1842-1901) evaluation of the growth of Marathi literature from the 1860s to the 1890s. He wrote:

... a very sensible contribution to the stock of our best works has been made, and the fact that Spencer, Max Muller, Sir Walter Scott, Lord Bacon, Sir Bulwer Lytton, Buckle, Defoe, Swift, Bunyan, Smiles, and Lubbock have furnished

the models for these additions, justifies the hope that the national mind is showing signs of awakening.

The nascent modern Marathi literature, Ranade further noted, was also freely drawing upon Sanskrit literary texts and treatises. Enthused by the catholicity of this borrowing, he wrote:

As none of these additions have been school-books, the industry and enterprise represented by these publications have had to depend for their reward solely upon the unaided patronage of the reading public. With proper guidance and encouragement by such a body as the University, the circle of this reading public will be enlarged, and we may soon expect to have all the departments of prose literature properly represented in their due proportions, and the work of development, now indifferently attempted by stray authors, will be pushed and completed in a systematic manner...

This, Ranade hoped, would ‘enable the national mind to digest the best thoughts of Western Europe with the same intimate appreciation that it has shown in the assimilation of the old Sanskrit learning.’ (*The Miscellaneous Writings of the Late Hon’ble Mr. Justice M.G. Ranade*, Bombay, 1915, pp. 31-2.)

Around the same time, G.M. Tripathi (1856-1907), a *litterateur*-intellectual restless about reawakening his fallen people, was lecturing them on what it meant to be an educated Indian. A model educated Indian, in his view, was one who could ‘enjoy Shakespeare and Kalidasa’ equally. (G.M. Tripathi, *The Classical Poets of Gujarat and Their Influence on Society and Morals*, Bombay, 1894, reprint 1958, p. 32.)

Accepting Ranade and Tripathi as representative voices, it is remarkable that a subject people were ready for such non-partisan assimilation. They were, vis-à-vis tradition, unmarred by overweening pride or shame. Vis-a-vis the rulers’ culture, they were unmarred by blind rejection or slavish emulation. Their heads were free.

In those free heads, however, an invisible epistemic corrosion had set in. This is poignantly illustrated in the privacy of Tripathi’s diaries. Anxious to familiarize himself with the best in his tradition, he had embarked upon a systematic study of various branches of Sanskrit learning. Naturally he felt drawn to the Upanishads. While studying the Upanishads, he told himself: ‘I think there is some meaning in all this, which must be *translated into the language of modern ideas before I could accept or reject it.*’ [Italics added.]

Tripathi is recording here a historic moment, the kind of which is but rarely recorded with such unself-conscious candour. He has

the capacity to think that there is some meaning in traditional wisdom as recorded in the Upanishads. But he cannot accept what he thinks has meaning. He will accept or reject it, depending upon what happens after he has translated it into *the language of modern ideas*. A sample of what that translation would mean is provided in the same entry in Tripathi's diary, which says: 'Nirgun and Nishkarma would not mean more than what Mill would have called "Not manifested through visible sensations".' (Kantilal C. Pandya, ed., *Govardhanram Madhavram Tripathi's Scrap Book, 1904-06*, Bombay, 1958, vol. I, p.99.)

This was a moment of loss: loss of faith in the epistemology one had been born into. It came in stealthily, this tectonic moment, unbeknown to those whom it had seized. Let alone its irony, Tripathi did not even notice the irreconcilability of faith in the language of modern ideas as the sole locus of validation and the ideal of equal familiarity with Shakespeare and Kalidasa. Like the Upanishads and everything indigenous, Kalidasa, even when read in the original Sanskrit, would require to be translated. Translation may not always be outright cannibalism, but it always violates the original.

India, to be meaningful to itself, would now be constantly translated into a language not its own. In fact, even one so intrepid as Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay (1838-94), who could chide the Europeans that no knowledge to them was true knowledge unless it had 'passed through the sieve of European criticism', needed to make sense of ancient philosophy and aesthetics in western terms. (Sisir Kumar Das, *The Artist in Chains: The Life of Bankimchandra Chatterji*, New Delhi, 1984, pp. 158-61; and Jogeshchandra Bagal, ed., *Bankim Rachanabali*, Kolkata, 1390 Bangabda, vol. ii, pp. 186-88.)

The moment of loss was also, however, a moment of gain. This was the gain of the language of modern ideas. What was initially alien tended to become Indians' own language. In proportion as it became their own, the need to translate decreased. For, no matter what language they spoke in – Telugu, Panjabi, Gujarati, or English – they now spoke, increasingly, the language of modern ideas. Unlike Tripathi, Ranade and their contemporaries, subsequent generations began to lose 'the language of tradition', and become cognitively monolingual.

Following that monolingualism, half of the hope expressed by Ranade was realised in a way that rendered the other half unrealizable. The national mind began familiarizing itself with 'the best thoughts of Western Europe', which was but a reification of the 'language of modern ideas'. In the process, to reiterate, the national mind got

so constituted as to be cognitively distanced from tradition and its stock of learning.

Cognitive distancing did not mean estrangement. Much bad was seen in tradition. But tradition also brought myriad psychological-cultural sustenance in the thick of subjection. A similar ambivalence marked the relationship with the 'modern' as well. That dual ambivalence continues. As it must, given the duality of the post-colonial condition in our post-modern world. It is a condition that, in the midst of liberation, keeps alive subjection. It celebrates plurality and valorises the local in a fast globalizing world. But it offers no escape from the prison of the language of modern ideas. The latest, perhaps most pitiable, manifestation of post-colonial subjection appears in the succession of alternative 'modernities' being discovered in one post-colonial society after another. As an example of this from India and literature, I may mention Purushottam Agarwal's recent study in which, focusing on Kabir, a scholarly case is built for an Indian modernity that goes back to the 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> Centuries

These are claims of alternative non-western indigenous modernities, not of alternatives to modernity. Contemporary imagination continues to be enchanted with the 'modern'. The ultimate aspiration, apparently, now can only be to be able to say: we had been modern in our own right.

It is this ambivalence with regard to 'tradition' and 'modern' – operating necessarily within the language of modern ideas – that lies at the heart of our understanding of Indian literature. It permeates Niharranjan Ray's formulation, too, about the defining link between the myth of India and Indian literature. There is in the formulation a romance of traditional India, and a wistfulness that it should be dying. At the same time, that which is replacing traditional India is being welcomed. Ray says: 'But today this traditional India is in the throes of vast changes, that are intended to carry the Indian people from the shores of the medieval to those of the modern world. In the process much of what I have called the Indian myth is slowly and steadily withering away, and much of its grip on the mind and imagination of the people in general and socially conscious and articulate individuals in particular is definitely lost.'

A certain residue of the myth, Ray continues, might still remain. But the real remedy, to retain a common denominator of Indianness, would be to reinterpret the old myth and build up the new ones. (pp. 8-9) Is Ray's prescience coming true in the 'recovery'



of alternative modernities? Whatever the worth of the question, it is difficult to overlook a similarity between the two positions. The one rejecting tradition and the other recovering it, both are lured by the old. The 'translation' that began as a natural response to the colonial encounter has rendered itself redundant. The discovery of indigenous modernity has shown that the two 'languages' are, in fact, similar, if not the same. Intimations of this similarity can, in hindsight, be noticed during the early phase of the translation. To cite but one example, in a brilliant lecture on 'The Classical Poets of Gujarat and Their Influence on Society and Morals' (1891) Tripathi had shown how modern had been the Bhakta poets of Gujarat.

Continuing with the metaphor of language, it is important to note that this entire translation has been in the language of modern ideas, not the other way round. Consequently, the indigenous modernities that are brought to light mirror western modernity. Let alone alternatives to western modernity, even an alternative understanding or definition of modernity is not sought. The old language, it would seem, has been lost. Only fragments of it, and pockets of nostalgia for it, remain.

Ambivalence vis-à-vis both tradition and modern, we have seen, has shaped the social consciousness that began to emerge since the colonial mediation and has continued to date. It was within this consciousness that modern literature in different Indian languages was born. And within that consciousness it has developed. That is what has given, for all their multiple variations, literatures in the country's different languages their Indian character. Clearly, then, the defining feature of modern Indian literature cannot belong to a dying myth that is tied solely to the old. It is, rather, this ambivalence that defines, and in its varied manifestations is reflected in, modern Indian literature.

As for the myth, it has in its colonial and post-colonial incarnation(s) actually subsumed both 'tradition' and 'modern'. And to the extent it relates to traditional India, the actual demise of that India need not – it may – damage the myth of traditional India. However, independent of what the future has in store for the myth of India, it is a common social consciousness that gives literatures in different Indian languages their Indian character.

It may be objected that there is nothing uniquely Indian about ambivalence. Ambivalence is universal, and the Indian kind of collective ambivalence can be seen as the defining characteristic of many, if not all, erstwhile colonised societies. The answer to that,

in brief, is that ambivalence points to a ceaseless interplay of what analytically appear to be opposite tendencies. Given its inherent dynamism, ambivalence must be seen specifically in terms of the varying ensembles the operation of those opposite tendencies keeps producing at different spatial and temporal points. At the same time, the prior presence of 'tradition' – in which respect India was adequately endowed when the colonial encounter commenced – gives the ensuing ambivalence a frame and a direction, not permitting it to randomly fly off.

### III

Looking back, one is struck by a persistent anxiety to believe in the reality of Indian literature. This, we have noticed, was related to a sense of fragility about the Indian nation. Think of a discussion on Indian literature today. No one will feel overly anxious about dismissing, if she or he so believes, the idea of one Indian literature. Even those who subscribe to that idea will not now hesitate to recall the often fraught relationship between the regional identity that almost every Indian language literature nursed and a pan-Indian identity. In fact, these regional identities were conceived of as so many 'nationalisms' – Utkal nationalism, Ahom nationalism, *Gujaratni rashtriya asmita* – as distinguished from Indian nationalism. Very often, representative literary institutions – e.g., Bangla Sahitya Parishad, Tamil Literary Academy, Utkal Sahitya Samaj, Gujarati Sahitya Parishad – were formed, and they promoted respective 'regional nationalisms'.

The nation, in certain respects, is less anxious now. Contrast this readiness to face the warts with the generally serene, harmonic picture that emerges from the papers and discussions on regional language literatures – Tamil, Bengali, Malayalam, Gujarati, Oriya, Urdu, Assamese, and Maithili – at the 1970 seminar. Little is reflected of the lively, often bitter, inter-language antagonisms, or of the no less rancorous intra-language controversies that have been an integral part of the literary history of modern India. There is, for example, a paper on 'An Outline of the Three Major Eastern NIA Versifications', which begins with the maxim: 'Know thy neighbor to know thyself better.' Dealing with what it describes as 'our three major Eastern sisterly vernaculars, viz, Bengali, Oriya and Assamese', the paper simply states that the three languages had separated themselves from their common stock, which is known as Eastern Apabhramsa, before the thirteenth century. Its merits from a purely technical linguistic point of view apart, the statement elides the



sustained struggle that Oriya and Assamese had to wage against Bengali to assert their identities as separate languages and literatures in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. From polemical tracts, such as *Udiya Swatantra Bhasha Noy* [Oriya is Not an Independent Language] to the best of *bhadralok* opinion, there was agreement that Oriya and Assamese were mere dialects of Bengali. Lakshminath Bezbaruwa (1868-1938), an eminent Assamese writer who had married into the famed Tagore family, records in his autobiography, *Mor Jivan Sowaran*, that ‘Robi Kaka’ – Rabindranath Tagore – would advise him to write in Bengali, the language, and not in its dialect, Assamese.

In an interesting reflection of this growing confidence, it is now possible to propose a ‘fiction’ of Indian literature with a view to making it real. The strategy proposed for the purpose is as follows:

... if Indian universities start teaching a fictitious discipline designated ‘Indian Literature’, and stop teaching regional literatures separately, perhaps new theorizing will arise, for, in that case, a commonly shared dominant discourse of criticism will become necessary. (G.N. Devy, *After Amnesia: Tradition and Change in Indian Literary Criticism*, Sangam Books, London, 1992, p. 128.)

One may not accept the appellation of fiction for Indian literature. Nor may one believe that through the creation of an academic discipline can be produced a critical discourse capable of making the fictive real. But it is, indeed, a far cry from the 1970 tendency to hold back possible reservations, maintain faith in the reality of Indian literature, and propose the creation of an academic discipline so as to foster and theorize that reality.

Alongside of this growing self-assurance has emerged a paradoxical and divisive phenomenon. It involves, on the one hand, something resembling overweening confidence and, on the other hand, an opposite feeling that is even more difficult to name. This relates to the unprecedented global presence Indian literature has acquired since – using the event emblematically – the appearance of Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* (1981). Of this presence the participants at the 1970 seminar could not have had even the faint intimations that, with greater sensitivity and alertness, they could perhaps have had of Dalit and women’s writings.

What, as *Indian literature*, now compels global attention is not the literature that was discussed at the seminar and forms the subject of this volume. It is the literature that, at the time of the 1970 seminar, was with a hint of derogation called Indo-Anglian literature. And it was written off by the editor of this volume as the work of an ‘insular

group of writers ... who dwell in metropolitan centres and possess neither identity nor relation'. (p. xv) Shedding off the derogatory appellation to be successively, and increasingly respectably, addressed as Indo-English and Indian English literature, that literature now claims, and in many quarters is accepted, to represent the acme of contemporary Indian literature in what is currently the most influential literary genre, fiction.

Sense of superiority vis-à-vis contemporary literature in other Indian languages, began to be voiced by the Indian writers in English within a decade of the 1970 seminar. Anita Desai, speaking at a seminar in London in 1982, announced to the wide world: '... there is very little fiction written by women in India. The few novels that have been written are for the most part in English.' ('Indian Women Writers', in Maggie Butcher, ed., *The Eye of the Beholder: Indian Writing in English*, Commonwealth Institute, London, 1983, p. 54.) Meenakshi Mukherjee, who since her *The Twice Born Fiction: Themes and Techniques of the Indian Novel in English* (1971) had made it her passion to follow the Indian novel in different major languages, was present at the seminar. She would write sixteen years later: 'To this day I remember Anita Desai's astounding statement.' (*The Perishable Empire: Essays on Indian Writing in English*, OUP, New Delhi, 2000, p. 119.)

This fast-deepening sentiment of superior self-worth, however, needed another decade and a half to be definitively articulated. The job, as everyone remembers, was performed by Salman Rushdie in 1997. What everyone does not remember – but must – is that Rushdie's statement began as a clarion call on behalf of Indian literature, declaring: 'On the map of world literature, India has been undersized for too long; that age of obscurity is coming to an end.' This was a deceptive opening for a statement that announced the arrival of Indian English fiction in a way that left little doubt about the relative unworth of what was being written in the other languages:

... the prose writing – both fiction and non-fiction – created in this period [1947-1997] by Indian writers working in English is proving to be a stronger and more important body of work than most of what has been produced in the 16 'official languages' of India, the so-called 'vernacular languages', during the same time; and, indeed, this new and still burgeoning, 'Indo-Anglian' literature represents perhaps the most valuable contribution India has *yet* made to the world of books. (Emphasis added.)

What is being believed and asserted here is not only a valorisation of writings in English in comparison to the combined production of

all the ‘vernacular’ languages during the post-Independence years. In fact, what Indians writing in English have in these fifty years given to the world of books is being believed and asserted to have surpassed the entire literary contribution India has *yet* made.

Leaving polemics alone, we may try and understand how, let alone gifted minds like Salman Rushdie and Anita Desai, how anyone can believe and say such a thing. The thing has been said, and it is being widely believed. The evidence is there. It goes way beyond the Rushdies and the Desais and the few anthologies of *Indian* literature that contain exclusively or predominantly Indian English writings. The evidence appears at all international, and now even Indian book fairs, literary festivals, seminars and similar other gatherings. International book trade apart, the most palpable everyday evidence comes from the coverage of literature and literary events in the country’s so-called national newspapers, magazines in English, and the electronic media, which demonstrate the enormous and growing disproportion between Indian English and ‘vernacular’ literatures.

This represents – this phenomenon of the wide sharing of the sentiments expressed in the statement – the perfect fruition of the epistemic necessity of translation in the language of modern ideas. It is uncanny that ‘translation’ should loom large in Rushdie’s statement. That is translation into English. And English has meanwhile emerged as literally the language of modern ideas. The entire comparison that is made between Indian English literature and the rest of Indian literature is made on the basis of translations into English. The normal tendency following a comparison of original with translated texts would be to hazard no more than a hesitant speculation. Here something very much larger is being done, and done very naturally.

That naturalness is what must be understood. Translation, by nature, is for the others. Colonial mediation naturalized Indians – the English educated ones certainly – into translating themselves for themselves into a language that was not their own, and which, as aspiring moderns, they had resolved to internalize. English being the language *par excellence* of modern ideas, thinking and writing in that language by itself ensures modernity. The others must keep staking their claims, and be constantly scrutinized. The Rushdie claim and its acceptance indicate the extent to which a presumed language of modernity has triumphed. Besides, the rejection of the claim does not mean rejection of the epistemic dominance of the modern, of

which the claim is but an extreme manifestation. The rejection is more on account of such reasons as the exaggerated nature of the claim, the ignorant arrogance which is seen behind it, and hurt pride.

I have, as indicated above, little faith in the efficacy of facts to settle sensitive matters of perception and identity. However, even the intransigently partisan do not usually believe themselves to be unshakably predisposed one way or the other. And there are, of course, the others as well. Maybe, therefore, a few explanatory remarks concerning the matter will help put things in perspective.

The axiomatic association of English with the modern and, in contrast, of the vernacular mind with an as yet unrealized aspiration to be modern pre-decides the fate of the comparison. Parochialism, as if in obedience to the association, appears as ‘perhaps the main vice of the vernacular literatures’; and those writing in English, for the same reason, appear to be ‘too good to fall into the trap of writing *nationalistically*.’ (Salman Rushdie’s Introduction to *The Vintage of Indian Writing: 1947-1997*, edited by Salman Rushdie and Elizabeth West, Vintage, London, 1997.) Things seem, in reality, to have transpired differently.

The rise of modern Indian literature, including fiction, was coeval with national awakening. It would in a subject society have been unnatural for its writers not to be concerned with questions like justice and freedom. That is, if they had *not* felt nationalistically. But not one writer of note – not just a solitary Tagore – wrote of nationalism and of the freedom struggle uncritically. Even Premchand (1880-1936), often remembered as the great chronicler of the freedom struggle, was unsparing in his expose of the sordidness of nationalism.

When freedom came, disenchantment took over before euphoria could set in. If writers had been good enough to handle their patriotic instincts during the struggle for freedom, they were unlikely to falter after freedom was won. They did not. Even the Nehruvian consensus could not conceal from them the bleak, dark, cruel reality of their society. There is no point in illustrating the obvious. What, actually, would require illustration is that this was not so. Yet, it may help to mention but one short story in this context.

This is ‘Ek Bin Likhi Razmiya’ – translated from Urdu into English as ‘An Unwritten Epic’ – by Intizar Husain. It was written around 1950. Convinced that the creation of Pakistan was a great moment of *hijrat*, the kind that comes but once in many generations, young Intizar Husain had been among the earliest *muhajirs*. He

would passionately argue that Pakistan needed to be celebrated, not seen as a tragedy. 'Ek Bin Likhi Razmiya' was written by this youthful Pakistan enthusiast. What came out is a perfect parable for our sad times. Transcending the locale and the time within which it is framed, and violating the author's conscious ideological commitment, this masterpiece is a tragic meditation on the ineffectuality of human nobility in the modern world.

I have not mentioned Intizar Husain only because, besides this great short story, he has created some of the most poignant and complex fiction about Freedom and Partition. The purpose is also to problematize the idea of 'Indian' in the context of literature. Salman Rushdie is seen, quite unself-consciously, by most Indians as an Indian. That does not happen when an Intizar Husain, or a Faiz, is mentioned. Rushdie himself understands the nature of his acceptance as an Indian by Indians. That acceptance, he knows, has not raised or settled any definitional difficulties. But when, in his 'Introduction', he mentions Bapsi Sidhwa, a Pakistani writer, he has to stress that mere nationality is not an issue in literary identity. He is right. However, to propose that Bapsi Sidhwa and Intizar Husain belong to Indian literature would – must – imply that there is something in their sensibility and writing that calls for this inclusion *in spite* of their nationality.

To return to the question of parochiality and nationalistic writing, Intizar Husain does not figure in Rushdie's ostensibly comprehensive account. Nor do the other post-1947 'vernacular' writers whose fiction belies the description of being parochial and nationalistic. Is Rushdie aware of this large and impressive body of work, or does he think it is not worth mentioning? Whatever the truth, his detection of a common vice running through all 'vernacular' literatures must rest on something. What is that?

Besides being fashionable and politically correct, today it makes perfect sense to say that a writer is 'too good to fall into the trap of writing *nationalistically*.' But to forget that times were once different, and that nationalism, for all its sordidness, was then an emancipatory force, is to betray a self-congratulatory cosmopolitanism. It reveals an incapacity to appreciate a simple difference. Today's global citizens, which is what for better or for worse we are becoming, can avoid the trap because they are dismissive of nationalism. The trap is nearly non-existent for them. The real creative test was faced by those who, justifiably, were ardent nationalists and had to avoid the trap of writing *nationalistically*. Not one of them, it bears reiteration,

failed the test. The inability to see this difference is parochialism. This constricted vision, this smug self-celebration, this uninformed depreciation of difference, that is parochialism.

‘The difficulty in philosophy’, Wittgenstein observed, ‘is to say *no more* than we know.’ (Emphasis added.) The difficulty, sadly, is not unique to philosophy.

Indian English fiction may not be what it is increasingly being believed to be. Nevertheless, the contribution of Indians writing in English, in different genres, is formidable, and must be acclaimed. Instead, more often than not, that contribution has been judged, and belittled, on extraneous grounds. Rushdie is justified when he complains – without realizing that he has done precisely that to the ‘vernacular’ literature – that much of the criticism of Indian English fiction has been non-literary; it has been ‘about class, power and belief.’ (Introduction to *The Verso Book of Indian Writing*.) It has dilated primarily on considerations like the supposed or real deracination of Indians writing in English and their connection with the West. Since the onset of the dual ambivalence that I have outlined above, attempts by some to call some others ‘deracinated’, ‘westernized’ ‘alienated’, and the like, can only be arbitrary exercises in this-far-no-further. Actually, Indians writing in English are not the sole targets of such criticisms. These are, when convenient, directed also against writers writing in other Indian languages.

A more serious and self-reflective culture of criticism, surely, will do us no harm.

Finally, welcome as the reissue of the proceedings of the 1970 seminar is, even more welcome will be a similar seminar on Indian literature today. But today is a different time. Is a similar seminar likely today? The 1970 seminar was spread over two weeks. Counting out the inaugural and the concluding sessions, forty-two papers were presented over thirteen days. That meant one entire day for three to four papers. Besides, the participants stayed together the whole fortnight within the precincts of the Rashtrapati Nivas. Even after the day’s proceedings were done, many participants would form small groups and carry on animated discussions over meals, walks or drinks.

I write this with some nostalgia. Exactly two years after the literature seminar, I joined the Institute as a young Visiting Scholar and was there for two and a half years. Arabind Poddar, the editor of this volume, and A.N. Kaul, whose paper on R.K. Narayan appears here, were still there. Seminars at the Institute had by then become

one-week affairs, but the old format still continued. Four papers were presented in a day; the participants stayed together for the entire duration of seminar; and clusters of lively informal discussion continued.

That relaxed rhythm is gone. We, not just the stars among us, no longer have the leisure to deliberate with fellow-scholars for a week even subjects of importance. The pace around us – so also the pace within – has accelerated so, and we do not seem to feel impaired.

But, whatever the nostalgic misgivings, the case for a follow-up seminar remains.

2015

SUDHIR CHANDRA





# Introduction



The essays included in this volume were presented at a seminar on Indian Literature organized by the Indian Institute of Advanced Study in May 1970. The seminar was planned with a view to, first, gaining a panoramic view of India's literary landscape, and, secondly, examining the contention that Indian Literature is one despite its being written in different languages. The seminar, however, was not language-oriented, and, as such, all the major languages were not represented. This, contrary to the declared aim, prevented the seminar from seeing Indian Literature in its totality. The essays, therefore, are to be read within the context of this limitation.

The inaugural essays contributed by three distinguished intellectuals who are also perceptive critics—Dr Niharranjan Ray, Dr V. K. R. V. Rao and Sri Krishna Kripalani—recognize the diverse phenomena of India's literary life as also the multi-facedness of her culture. But, nonetheless, they also stress the essential unity which lends to the multiplicity itself its unique charm. This unity is more conceptual and inward than mechanical and outward, following as it does from the characteristic nature of our perception, sensibility and sensitivity. Furthermore, it is sustained by common cultural inheritance and made meaningful by common aspirations.

Section A presents ten essays on the heritage and background of Indian literature. These seek to illustrate how much it owes to

classical Indian as well as to modern European influences, Dr M. Varadarajan supplies a wealth of information on classical Tamil Literature and dwells, incidentally, on features that made the Sangham Poetry aesthetically so rich in both formal beauty and content. Dr K. K. Raja, after a brief survey of the Dravidian Literatures, concludes that in the South alone the classical Sanskrit traditions have been preserved in their pristine purity. Dr K. M. George, while maintaining the view that the modernity of Indian Literature is bound up largely with Westernism, makes a scrutiny of the phonological and morphological structures of several languages in order to locate the Western influence in the structural development of Indian languages. The other essays review the situation in respect of a few regional literatures.

The Section on Folk Literature contains only four essays which do-not aim at giving either a comprehensive or an analytical treatment of the topic. Yet Dr A. K. Ramanujan's search of the myths and folklore for the Indian Oedipus offers genuinely absorbing stuff, more so because such explorations are rare to come by. Mere drawing of parallels is not his purpose; he has taken care to show that, in different sociocultural contexts, the same basic patterns may change direction and appear quite in the reverse, as is perhaps the case with Indian Oedipus themes. Sri Kshitish Roy has briefly but successfully argued in favour of Folk Literature as the highest common denominator of Indian Literature, which deserves encouragement, study and promotion.

In Section C devoted to an examination of literary genres, Dr (Mrs.) Kaul re-evaluates Tulsidas's *Ramcharitmanas*. Her application of Western criteria in assessing the merits of an Eastern masterpiece is not only apt but pays adequate dividends, inasmuch as the analysis reveals the historical urges silently determining the direction of Tulsidas's narrative and its too obvious drawbacks as even a Secondary Epic. The shift in the historical motive and scale of social values perhaps also explains his deviation from Valmiki and occasional lapses in taste.

The Section on Literature and Ideas contains eight essays covering, relatively, a large area of contemporary interests. Sri A. S. Ayyub, no doubt, treads controversial ground when he seeks to re-establish the almost broken tie of religion (although deinstitutionalized) with literature, but yet pleads very cogently for a personal religion in conformity with one's experience of the world and acquired

through emotional maturity gained from combats with life. He, *inter alia*, makes commendable journeys into Richards' and Maritain's philosophy of poetry and examines Eliot's insistence on the production of a sort of sacred literature as against secular and on the necessity of belief in the supernatural order, and finds Eliot's position quite vulnerable on a good number of points. Poetry becomes great when it draws sustenance from the personal religion or spiritual *Weltanschauung* of the poet, and for proper enjoyment of it no complete identification is demanded of the reader but only well-grounded esteem, he concludes. Dr A. N. Kaul gives a critical penetrating and perceptive analysis of the development of R. K. Narayan as a novelist, unveiling in the process the multiplicity of inspiration as well as of motive that went into the growth of the Malgudi novels. The cardinal thematic point that has been emphasized is that there is no irreconcilable conflict in his works, and, therefore, no tragedy of the Western type. The point to remember, however, is that Narayan should not be taken as belonging to that insular group of writers called Indo-Anglians who dwell in metropolitan centres and possess neither identity nor relation, and that Western canons of tragedy or of comedy are hardly applicable in an assessment of Narayan's works which smell so strongly of the soil. Dr (Mrs.) Margaret Chatterjee's essay on social and political ideas in modern Bengali literature; although not all-inclusive, is yet refreshing; while Dr H. Gohain's survey of contemporary literature shows that it is little helpful in removing ideological obstacles and emotional resistances to secularism. He thus brings home an important point.

In the tools of criticism section, several specialists have analyzed the metrical structures of major Indian languages. Dr O. M. Anujan writes about the south Indian languages, Dr N. Sen on three eastern Indo-Aryan versifications, Dr N. G. Joshi about Marathi prosody, and Dr M. H. Khan on Urdu poetic forms. Dr S.K. Ghose starts with Sanskrit poetics but dwells mainly and with authority on Sri Aurobindo's aesthetics. Dr V. I. Subramoniam's erudite article on 'Linguistics and Poetry' seeks to take away the irrelevant and the redundant from prevalent modes of literary appreciation and provide a framework for the analysis of communication. But readers, allergic to linguistic dissection, may still remain sceptical and ask : How far can linguistic analysis be an aid to the understanding of the creative process or its

enjoyment ? The same perhaps holds good in relation to Dr S. K. Das presentation of a relatively young 'discipline' Stylistics, in his essay 'Towards a Unified Theory of Style'. Dr Subramoniam offers us one variety of dissection, Dr Das another essay, where various categories of time, place, participants, form, content, purpose, choice, etc. combine to identify the style of a text and also determine in a way, its artistic quality. The intellectual effort demanded in such analysis is undoubtedly enormous, but, at the end of the journey one arrives only at a level of description and not of evaluation. The question, therefore, recurs: should one remain content by merely stating 'A rose is a rose is a rose', or tear every petal to a hundred pieces vainly to see wherein lie its sweetness and beauty ? Dr A. R. Das Gupta in his 'East-West Colloquy' discusses how the 'translation curtain' could be removed to enable people of one tongue to appreciate the literature of another and also on the difficulties associated with the problem. Dr R. K. Dasgupta provides a scholarly discourse on the problems of methodology that confront literary historiography.

In the last section, constructive suggestions have been put forward on the feasibility of introducing Indian Literature as an academic discipline with a view to the cultivation of a sense of awareness of the background of India's literatures and culture on the one hand and fostering national integration on the other. While the ideological framework is provided by Dr K. R. Srinivasa Iyenger, an examination in detail of the diverse aspects of such a course incorporating therein the phased programme of instruction to be imparted has been done by Professor. V. K. Gokak. Dr R. K. Dasgupta, again, elaborates a concrete frame of research in modern Indian languages that any university having departments of modern Indian languages could undertake. These suggestions offered by persons long associated with university teaching and research should draw the attention of people in charge of the nation's education.

The above paragraphs give an outline of the areas covered by the essays included in the present volume. No one is conceited enough to claim that the last word on the subject has been uttered, simply because there exists no finite number in the sphere of knowledge. But, on the whole, it is hoped that these essays will stimulate further inquiry, besides satisfying current curiosity.

The Editor of the volume wishes to offer his apologies to those with whose articles he was directed to take considerable liberties, and also to the readers of this volume for possible errors, printing or other; that have crept in due to inadvertence.

ARABINDA PODDAR



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PART ONE

INAUGURATION

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NIHARRANJAN RAY

## Welcome Address



I

MAY I on behalf of the Governing Body and as the Director of this Institute, welcome each one of you individually and all of you collectively, to this inaugural function of our fortnight-long seminar on Indian Literature? This I do in all humility of spirit but most warmly and sincerely since you have responded most readily to our invitation. It has been our singular good fortune that scholars and intellectuals of India have always extended their help and cooperation and, shall I say, also their love and affection, to this young Centre of Advanced Study and Research, which affords us a sense of satisfaction and fulfilment.

I am particularly grateful to those who have come to participate in the deliberations of the seminar in response to our invitation. Not a few of our esteemed participants have come from distant corners of our land, and one of them at least, our esteemed friend Professor A. K. Ramanujan, has come from still more distant Chicago, specifically for the purpose of this seminar. Equally grateful do we feel to our venerable National Professor of Humanities, Acharya Suniti Kumar Chatterjee, who has taken that trouble of journeying from Calcutta to preside over this function and to participate in the day-to-day proceedings of the seminar, to our esteemed Chairman, Professor V. K. R. V. Rao who has so graciously taken the trouble of

finding time in the midst of his very exacting duties as the Union Minister for Education and Youth Services, to come to deliver the Inaugural Address, to Sri Krishna R. Kripalani who, as the Secretary of the Sahitya Akademi, has been, more than anyone else, holding aloft the banner of Indian literature as one literature despite its being written in different languages, for having agreed to deliver the Keynote Address, and to Professor R. K. Dasgupta for having urged me on and helped me in preparing the plan of this seminar and then come to take an active part in it.

I feel very happy that here in this hall we have in our midst some of our most eminent front-rank university teachers of all the major literatures of India, including English. For the next two weeks they will discuss the state of affairs that have been in operation in their field of study, research and teaching with a view to better understanding and appreciation of the problems involved in their day-to-day work, and to give to their academic and intellectual pursuits a greater depth, a wider dimension, and, if possible and necessary, even a new direction.

## II

Holding of seminars, conferences and workshops on themes and subjects of academic significance and intellectual interest and, at the same time of social relevance, is one of the main planks of our activities at this Institute. In course of the last four years and well-nigh eight months of its academic life we have been able to hold as many as fifteen such academic and intellectual meets and publish as many as nine volumes of *Transactions* containing the papers and proceedings of these deliberations, six others being either in the press or in the process of being made ready for the press. For me, personally speaking, it is a matter of deep regret that the seminar that is going to be inaugurated this afternoon would be the last of the long series that I had the pleasure of planning and organizing since in another three weeks' time I would cease to be the steward of this Institute. What other higher purpose or purposes these seminars, workshops and conferences have been able to serve it is not for me to say; but one thing may safely be stated, and it is this: these seminars, workshops and conferences have enabled this young Institute to overcome its physical limitations and spread itself out all over the land and beyond by drawing within its fold no less than five hundred leading scholars and intellectuals over the last four years and eight months and gathering them round a table to exercise

their minds on a number of themes and subjects of great intellectual significance, academic importance, and social relevance. This one item, more than anything else, has enabled this Institute to broaden its base, I believe, to inculcate into the minds of a large number of scholars and intellectuals of the land the ideas, aims and objectives that this Institute stands for and made them conscious of other concepts and methods, and other horizons and dimensions than to what they had been exposed hitherto. I hope I would not be making a very tall claim if I say that these and other exercises at this Institute are well on their way to make an impact on our national life.

An analysis of the themes and topics of our collective exercises in our seminars, etc., shows that we have so far held three exercises in the field of Comparative Religion, three in the field of Social and Economic History and Historiography, four in that of Sociology, Social Anthropology and Languages, one in that of Political Science and three in that of Art, Aesthetics, and Literature. Since our basic approach is multi-disciplinary and attitude one of social relevance, any intellectual exercise naturally embraces and cuts across the concepts and methods of other disciplines and goes beyond what is exclusively its own. I have no doubt that the present one, too, will be no exception.

### III

The seminar that is before us has been given to Indian Literature. Since I have been responsible for selecting its theme and for its planning and organization, I think I owe to you an explanation as to the rationale that was at the back of my mind at the time of planning.

It has been said that though written in different languages Indian literature is one, that is, in whatever is written in India and even outside by Indian authors there is something which is specifically Indian, the analogy perhaps being that even in a very cosmopolitan crowd consisting of men and women from all nationalities and large ethnic groups, one--having the minimum knowledge and experience of ethnic and behavioural characteristics of Indians--can easily find out who the Indians in the crowd are. Similarly, it has been contended that in any library of creative, imaginative, and even analytical writings a knowledgeable person can, without any reference to the names and backgrounds of the respective authors, find out which of the authors are Indians and which are not. The first and the most important aim is, therefore, to analyze and examine this contention of Indian literature being one despite

its being written in fifteen or seventeen languages is recognized, respectively, by the Constitution of India and the Sahitya Akademi. As a corollary the seminar should also try to find out, if possible, the common denominator that characterizes the various regional literatures of the land and its peoples, and together make them “what one calls Indian Literature, and, *inter alia*, to examine what is Indian as distinguished from regional, in Indian literature. It is not proposed to represent each and every language in each session since the seminar is not language-oriented. Our aim is to see Indian literature Since I have been responsible for selecting its theme and for its planning and organization I think I owe to you an explanation as to the rationale that was at the back of my mind at the time of planning.

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Secondly, we have tried to plan this seminar in such a way as to bring to the fore and discuss a few of such vital issues as Heritage and Background of Indian literature and its more modern tendencies, Folk literature and its relation to more refined and sophisticated

literature, the various literary genres of the past and the present, the diverse tools and techniques of criticism and appreciation Literary Historiography and Ideas, Society and Literature and their inter-relations, all in the context of Indian literature but from a comparative point of view.

Thirdly and finally, since in all our universities regional languages and literatures form an important field of academic study and research upto the highest level, and since such study and research are not always made as they should be to make them acceptable and intellectually effective, a subsidiary but no less important aim of the seminar should be to consider the matter of Indian literature as an academic and intellectual discipline and find out the ways and means by which we can remodel our relevant curricula of studies in this field. Since by far the large majority of the participants at this seminar are drawn from the ranks of teachers of literature at high levels, it should not be difficult for them to do so.

#### IV

It is customary with us that the Director of the Institute gives a full-length address at the inaugural function, by way of introducing the theme of the seminar. On the present occasion I shall not do so, as my esteemed friend Sri Krishna R. Kripalani has very kindly agreed to deliver the Key-note Address, for which I feel very grateful.

But I cannot help touching as briefly as I can, on the main theme of the seminar, and refer to one or two points that may escape notice because of their being somewhat intangible in character. Let me start by doubting the contention that Indian literature is one though written in different Indian languages and by stating that the contention cannot be sustained in its fullest sense. Literature is absolutely language-based, and language being a cultural phenomenon it is all but wholly conditioned by its locale and the socio-historical forces that are in operation through the ages in the particular locale. If that be so, one may reasonably argue that the literature of a given language will have its own specific character of form and style, images and symbols, nuances and associations, etc. Even themes and contents are more likely than not to have their specific nature and character. This is how and why French literature is distinguishable from English literature, or from German and Russian literatures, or Bengali literature from Marathi or Tamil or Hindi literature. They are not different just because the languages are different. This is best proved by translations where a piece of

writing in translation into another language still retains its original aroma and atmosphere and character if, of course, the translator does not take too much liberty with the latter.

Considered from this point of view, what we have in India is as many Indian literatures as there are languages, and not one Indian literature, just as there are as many European literatures as there are languages in Europe and not one European literature. That this is so is recognized even by the Sahitya Akademi that has to judge and select books language-wise and not as one Indian literature. Indeed, in any consideration of literature it is difficult, if not impossible altogether, to get away from the ties that bind a literature to its natal language.

As regards Indian music and dance, however, which are in their essence much more abstract than literary creations, one can without reservation speak of *Indian* music and dance, irrespective of the style in which it is rendered, since in each case there is a common denominator or denominators that characterize each one of them. In the case of music, it is melody and mood which are the very basis of Indian music irrespective of the region it comes from, and which distinguish it from the music of the rest of the world ; in that of dance it is the nature and character of the time-beat or *tala* and of the *bhargas*, *bhangis* and *mudras*, that is, bends, attitudes and hand-gestures, etc. Their recognition as Indian is almost direct and immediate.

Until very recent times, this was perhaps equally true of the mainstream of our plastic arts like sculpture and painting. In both these arts there was a characteristic Indianness in the perceptive quality of the modelled line and generalized plasticity of the volume, in the sensuousness of features and in the naturalistic vision that shaped and formed them, apart from certain common denominators of images and symbols, of themes and contents. But this is no longer true of a great deal of what is being done in these fields in contemporary India; it is difficult to say that they are Indian in any other sense than that they are being worked out in India by artists who happen to be nationals of India. It is not difficult to know and understand the reasons of this phenomenon, but that the phenomenon is there cannot be denied. As pieces of art some of them are certainly very good examples, but there is nothing specifically 'Indian' in them.

But words which are the very life blood of literature, are instruments of direct social communication; they are not like

melodies and moods, lines and volumes, which are also means of communication but communication at levels other than directly social. This being so and words being properties of a given language, the question that one cannot just pass by is : Is it possible to achieve in literature the kind of 'Indianness' that one finds in Indian music or dance or even in the mainstream of traditional Indian painting or sculpture? To my mind, the obvious answer should be in the negative.

Having said that I would ask myself a counter-question: Is there no common denominator or denominators in the different regional literatures of India, apart from the fact of the commonness of their historical origins, that would enable one to recognize them as authentically Indian, a recognition which would be valid as much for Indians as for non- Indians? Here my answer would be in the affirmative. Indeed, I do think there are more than one common denominators that would justify our regional literatures being called significantly Indian in a socio-cultural sense.

Until very recently, Indian society was a traditional one, admitting social changes nevertheless but absorbing all changes in terms of the flowing tradition. The main ideological and cultural prop of this tradition was the vast storehouse that accumulated through the centuries, a huge mass of myths and legends that, through various communication media, became the common property of all the peoples of the land. These myths and legends which were the sources of the equally vast storehouse of images and symbols, ideas and concepts, shaped and formed the mind and imagination of our peoples all over the land, by and large, at any rate of the more conscious and articulate ones. Regional variations there certainly were of the myths and legends, etc., and of individual and group variations of consciousness and articulation ; but despite all variations, their commonness was always and invariably more than evident and all our early and medieval regional literatures could not but register their strong imprint. And since these myths and symbols, etc., also shaped and formed the peoples' behaviour pattern, and their general attitudes and approaches to life, the imprint of these items of life on all our regional literatures were also equally unmistakable. Until our own times, therefore, there was an easily recognizable 'Indianness' in all our literatures, and this characteristic Indianness is, in the ultimate analysis, traceable to the totality of what one may call the myth of India, using the term myth in its sociological and socio-anthropological connotation.



But today this traditional India is in the throes of vast changes that are intended to carry the Indian people from the shores of the medieval to those of the modern world. In the process much of what I have called the Indian myth is slowly and steadily withering away, and much of its grip on the mind and imagination of the people in general and socially conscious and articulate individuals in particular is definitely lost. To a very large extent this is but inevitable, and yet the fact remains that what gave to our literatures their Indian character was the Indian myth and the set of values and attitudes it generated and sustained.

The question that inevitably arises is : would there be then any Indian literature in the sense we are speaking of when the so-called process of modernization had run its full circle?

A certain residue of the myth will perhaps remain, not so much in its elements of value and faith, as sources of images and symbols bereft of much of their meaning and significance, and hence their sustaining quality. To what extent this will help our literatures to retain their common denominator of 'Indianness' is a question which is not very easy to answer.

The remedy, therefore, lies, to my mind, in seeking to re-interpret the old myth in terms of the new and changing situation in India, and in trying to build up new myths that would outstrip and override the boundaries of the regional, social and linguistic situation and draw in the totality that is India. The task is not an easy one, but if we are to have an Indian literature genuinely called thus, we must then have an Indian myth that can inform and sustain that literature. Let us not forget that even the form and style of a given piece of writing is ultimately traceable to the myth and the set and structure of values embodied in it.

There is, however, another feature of our creative expression in art and literature as known through the ages, that has a characteristic 'Indianness' about it, and which is a common feature in all our regional articulations in art and literature: it is the peculiar nature and character of our perception, sensitivity and sensibility, which may have been due as much to the ethnic character of our people and geographical features; of the land as to the historical and cultural conditioning undergone through centuries. But be that as it may, the fact remains that our reactions and responses to facts and situations of human life and the life of nature are characteristically different from those of many other peoples of the world, even from those of the Chinese, of Japanese, the Afghans, Iranians and the Arabs. This



is nowhere so clear and evident as in our music and dance, painting and sculpture and in our literatures.

Briefly and summarily, our passage to the reality of things is not so much through ratiocination as through sense, perception and through intuitive insight which is only another name for perception at a higher and deeper level. True it is that a good deal of intellectual activity and experience goes into any significant creative articulation, but take any such example of plastic art or a piece of music or of writing and you will at once realize that the thematic content, form and style are all directed towards communicating a felt experience, a state of being and becoming, and through this towards achieving a certain emotional mood or moods ; in other words, that is, in the words of our classical *alamkarikas*, towards achieving *bhava* and *rasa* which are both perceptual qualities. This is true not merely of our early and medieval literatures but of our modern literatures as well, and this feature is common throughout India. Pick up any modern piece of creative writing in translation in any non-Indian language and without knowing the name of the writer or/and his background, and irrespective of the thematic content, you will be able to say that here is an Indian piece of writing.

I do not know how long in the fast changing situation this direction towards and emphasis on emotional and perceptual experience will persist, but that it does today can never be denied. And to the extent it does are our literatures Indian without the slightest doubt.

V.K.R.V. RAO

## Inaugural Address



I AM very happy to see so many literary luminaries, critics and scholars, academicians and others, gathered here. You will all discuss in depth the problem of unity-in-diversity in Indian literatures in various regional languages. I shall only attempt to pose a few problems from the viewpoint of a writer and as a representative of the common reader.

In the *Prithvī-Sūkta* in *Rg Veda* there is a passage :

*Janam Bibhratī Bahudhā Vivāchasam  
Nānā Dharmānam Prithivī Yathaukasam*

‘Many people speak many languages and have many religions’. Even in those days, thousands of years ago, our ancestors were aware of the multi-religious and multi-linguistic nature of our culture. In ancient literature, in Sanskrit and Pali, in Tamil and Ardhamagadhi, poets describe not only their own people and landscape but show wide interest in the natural surroundings and peoples of various other lands. Thus, in the *Ramayana* there is the description of the hill-people and the forest-dwellers, in the *Mahabharata*, of fisherwomen and huntsmen, of polyandrous societies and of several principalities. In medieval literature saint-poets travelled far and wide : Namdev was born in Maharashtra but his songs are found in the Guru Granth Sahib in Punjabi; Swati Tirunal of Kerala wrote plays and

songs in Hindi and Raja Sarfoji composed operas in Tamil called Kuravanji Mirabai was the bridge between Rajasthani and Gujarati ; Vidyapati between Bihari and Bengali. Many Muslim poets like Rahim and Raskhan wrote in excellent Brajabhasha; Father Stephans composed his *Khrista-purana* in Marathi. Even in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries this tradition of writing for an all-India audience continued: Maharshi Dayanand was from Gujarat but his works are in Hindi; Deuskar was a Maharashtrian revolutionary who wrote in Bengali; Kaka Kalelkar and D. R. Bendre write in Gujarati and Kannada. Subramanya Bharati in his famous national song saw the vision of this one-ness. Even today there are many bilingual poets and authors in all states.

In the ten or more centuries of the development of regional literatures there were at least three upsurges where thematically and even in formal innovations the unity of Indian literatures was very apparent. In the Bhakti movement all over India we find the Shaiva and Vaishnava, the Rama-worshipping and Krishna-worshipping composers fired with the same enthusiasm and fervour. Shankardeva in Assam or Chandidasa in Bengal; Surdasa or Tulsidasa in North India or a Purandaradasa in Karnataka; a Kamban in Tamil Nadu or Cherushsheri in Kerala; a Tyagaraja in Andhra or a Tukaram in Maharashtra ; a Narasi Mehta in Gujarat or a Balramdasa in Orissa sang of their deities with the same mystic rapture and spiritual sublimity. Not all the poets were idol-worshippers. There were poets who were highly critical of caste-inequities and who advocated 'Man as the highest Truth': Kabir or Dadu, Basaveshwara or Vamana, Akho or Bhim Bhoi, and host of others who came from all walks of life: gardeners, cobblers, tailors, scavengers and even dancing girls. Saint-poetesses were not far behind : Kanhopatra, Mirabai, Andal, Akka Mahadevi, Awiyar, Lalla Dyed, Muktabai and Taj.

The second wave was of the heroic ballad-singers, who were united in resisting the foreign and alien invaders; and appealed to the people at all levels to be one. The composers of *Rāso* or *Ālhā*, *Powādās* or *Thullal*, *Chandī dī Vār* or Mymensingh ballads were all inspired by the same nationalist fervour which is seen later in the lyrics and long poems written about the martyrs and freedom-fighters during the nationalist upsurge. Nabin Chandra Sen's *Battle of Plassey* in Bengali (translated by Maithilisharan Gupta in Hindi), Kazi Nazrul Islam's *Agni-bina*, Bharati and Vallathol's invocation songs, Savarkar and Iqbal's poems with patriotic passion, Chakbast in Urdu and Narmad in Gujarati, Puttappa in Kannada and Ambikagiri Raichoudhury in

Assamese are reminders of the fact that our poets did not live in their famed ivory-towers but were committed to the cause of national liberation.

The third common point in Indian prose literature of the twentieth century is the study of the peasant-landlord relationship, the sympathy extended by the novelists to the exploited and underprivileged, the description of the backward rural masses steeped in superstition and victims of privation and penury. I would cite a few examples, the titles of these novels are themselves quite eloquent :

- (Bengali) *Palli Samaj* (Village Folk) by Saratchandra Chatterjee  
 (Assamese) *Sabuj Patar Kabini* (Story of Green leaves—a novel on tea-plantations) by B. K. Barua  
 (Oriya) *Chha Man Atha Guntka* (Six acres of land) by Fakirmohan Senapati  
 (Telugu) *Malpalli* by Unnava Lakshminarayan  
 (Tamil) *Agal Vilakku* (The Earthen lamp) by Akhilan  
 (Kannada) *Marali Mallige* (Towards the Soil) by Sivaram Karanth  
 (Malayalam) *Rantitangali* (Two Measures of Rice) by T. S. Pillai  
 (Urdu) *Ik Chadar Maili si* by Rajendra Singh Bedi  
 (Hindi) *Godan* by Premchand, *Maila Anchal* by 'Renu'  
 (Marathi) *Banagarwadi* (The Village had no walls) by V. Madgulkar  
 (Gujarati) *Malela Jiva* (United Souls) by Pannalal Patel  
 (Panjabi) *Surajamukhi* by Jaswant Singh 'Kanwal'

Indian English has its own Malgudi novels and the novels in which Mulk Raj Anand wrote about the untouchables and coolies. Thus, we find that the democratic dawn of secularism and socialism was ushered by our writers.

Our poets reacted to the seasons in the same manner—may it be Kalidasa's *Ritusamhara*, or Guru Nanak's *Tukhari Ragini*, or a Rajasthani or Awadhi *Barahmasa*. The writer's reaction to Nature, to his environs, to God and death is remarkably the same, whether he belongs to Kerala or Kashmir, Kamrup or Kaccha. The basic attitudes to the three main Rasas, *Shringara* (the Erotic), *Vira* (the Heroic), *Karuna* (the Tragic), are all over India the same. We do not extol or celebrate excessive sex or violence or necrophily; which is a common factor in 'modernist' Western literature, particularly after the last great war.

Indian literature is one in its philosophical detachment. 'While

the one bird eats, the other watches' said the Upanishads. We believe in a fullness of life and a ripeness of experience, and so our literature did not discard any aspect of our social life. The *Mahabharata* contains the loftiest heights of human liberalism (There is no religion higher than Man) and also describes the vilest passion in its lower depths. This non-attachment gives a peculiar complexity to the character of our literature, Westerners find it hard to reconcile our contradictions. Erik Erikson in his 'Gandhi's Truth' stumbles at many such irrevocable and dichotomous -situations.

I am aware that there are also points of dissimilarity between different languages and literatures. It is but natural that this should be so. The wonder, however, is the extent to which similarity and oneness exists in them all despite the diversity of the languages in which they are written. Literature is the lone voice which transcends all contending camps, all barbed wires and concentration camps, all artificial geographical barriers and boundaries. Rabindra-Sangit had to be re-broadcast from East Pakistan and Urdu poets from India are read with equal love and admiration in West Pakistan. People may fight for North and South, Hindi or Dravidian languages, but Subbulakshmi sings the songs of Mirabai with the same depth of feeling as a Jain scholar from North India studies the Jain texts in Kannada. Bankimchandra, Tagore and Saratchandra were voluntarily translated in all Indian languages long before Sahitya Akademi or National Book Trust launched their large-scale programmes of massive translation. Even now a Mahashveta Bhattacharya writes a novel on Rani of Jhansi in Bengali and an Amritlal Nagar in Lucknow writes a novel on the famous: Kannagi story in Tamil Nadu. 'Nirala' wrote a novel on Shivaji and Tagore wrote poems on Guru Gobind Singh. Subramanya Bharati wrote a poem on Tilak and Shantiranjan Mukherji translates Ghalib into Bengali. There were and are stray individual attempts at this kind of vague but steadily increasing search for a common national image. But to augment it the Government of India has announced its big projects of *Adan-Pradan*, translation of ten best works from one language into the rest of the fourteen ones; the plans for the development of languages through core books and common vocabularies; the propagation of a common script; the *Nehru Bal Pustkalaya* and so on.

It will be seen from the account given above that the literatures in our different languages have an unambiguous and easily discernible element of identity. Basically, of course, this identity springs from the common cultural heritage of India embodied in

its philosophy and mythology and the other art forms in which also it got expression. But, in addition—and this is of great significance from the point of view of modern thinking—the literature dwelt on such modern themes as human dignity, the essential identity of man despite differences in caste, creed and status, the exploitation of man by man in the economic, social and cultural spheres resulting from feudal or religious or educational or economic concentrations of power in small groups or selected individuals, and finally the basic unity underlying different faiths springing from common ethical values, common mystical experience and common allegiance to God. It is also a matter of significance that all these literatures dealt with love of the land and a passionate patriotism that swept across regional frontiers and embraced the entire country because of the national unity in terms of geography that included in a grand mythological and cultural sweep the seven holy rivers, the seven holy centres of pilgrimage and the many holy mountains from the Himalayas in the north to the Vindhya in the south all of which together constituted the whole that we now call India. Though Indian literature meant literature in many Indian languages, there was communication and cross fertilization among them because of Sanskrit, Persian, and now English; and as we have seen, the themes covered not only regional myths, regional heroes, regional problems and regional urges but also national myths, national heroes, national problems, and national urges. More significant still, many a regional work covered themes relating to regions other than its own; and the lack of a common people's language did not prevent inter-communication between the different languages and the criss-crossing of ideas, motifs, experiences and themes across the multi-lingual frontiers that ran across the length and breadth of the country. Thus, there is such a thing as Indian literature, though this literature is composed of works in many Indian languages; and it is this Indian literature that gives historic foundations to our current gospel of secularism, humanism, social justice, and national integration. It would be exceedingly foolish on our part if we do not take advantage of this glorious inheritance and make it available to the millions of our Indian people, both students and others, who now seem divided on account of their many languages, faiths and regions. Our socialism too can derive infinite strength from the links it has with our literature of humanism, social justice, and exposure of and fight against exploitation. Truly then, we must strive for giving form, shape, identity, and content to the Indian literature that is the

essence of our many Indian literatures, and that is the object behind the holding of this seminar.

Concretely, I would make the following specific suggestions for your consideration and comments :

(1) Readings in Indian Literature should be introduced as compulsory reading in our entire educational system, from the primary to the collegiate. The readings of course will vary with the stages in education and the levels of knowledge and attainment appropriate to each. They should not only introduce great authors in different Indian languages but also pinpoint the commonness of theme and approach, whether in the field of mythology or philosophy or humanism or exploitation or social justice or secularism.

(2) Every language course, whether Pass or Honours or Post-graduate, should include the study of one other Indian language, besides a paper on Indian literature in general and a sourcebook for the literature in all the Indian languages.

(3) A movement should be started for giving all Indian languages an additional common script, preferably the Nagari script, and getting important works in all Indian languages transliterated in this additional common script. This would facilitate inter-communication between our different Indian languages and open the gates for movement between the literatures of these languages.

(4) Simultaneously, facilities should be made available for scientific and time-saving methods of teaching and learning the different Indian languages. Basic vocabularies, bilingual and multilingual dictionaries, encyclopaedias of literature in the different Indian languages, simplifications and possible standardization of grammar in the different languages, research on common origins of words, imageries and idioms in the different languages—all these and other relevant work should be undertaken with the basic objective of promoting a multilingual movement in the country and thereby enabling our people to recognize and enjoy the Indian literature that is composed in their many languages.

(5) A well-planned and coordinated project should be launched for compiling the folk songs, folk tales, and other folk-literatures in all our Indian languages, including the many languages and dialects that do not have a script of their own but have shown their vitality by their long and continued survival among the people.

(6) Then there should be a well-planned scheme of translation in all Indian languages of the best writings in each Indian language. Along with this, original writings should be promoted by modern



authors that can be made available by translation to all their Indian brethren. This should be both for children as well as adults.

(7) Finally, our universities and colleges should arrange for lectures and symposia by authors in other than their own regional languages; and extension lectures for the general public should also be provided in all parts of the country on Indian literature, as distinguished from the regional literature of their respective areas.

The seven suggestions I have made I would like to call the Charter of Indian Literature. On some of these, my Ministry has already initiated action. On the others, action has to be taken by our universities, our state governments, and our creative writers in different Indian languages. In the implementation of this Charter, I look forward to the cooperation of the many distinguished authors and critics who are attending this seminar. I also look forward to hearing from them their comments on my ideas and their suggestions for omissions, additions, and alterations in the same.

I have great pleasure in inaugurating this seminar on Indian Literature.



KRISHNA KRIPALANI

## Concept of Indian Literature as One Literature



I AM honoured by the Director's invitation to give this opening talk. I take it that such a talk is expected to raise some basic doubts and queries which might be discussed, clarified and answered in the discussions at the seminar to follow. My task is thus to investigate and to instigate rather than to elaborate.

Before we can say anything on the concept of Indian literature as one literature, it is desirable to be clear in our mind what we understand by Indian literature, or rather, what I understand by it, for, no doubt, the perspective will differ from person to person. I would class as Indian literature any memorable utterance in any language used as a vehicle of speech, communication or literary expression in India.! The definition may seem trite and obvious; all the same, it is worth examining.

It is necessary to stress the phrase 'memorable utterance', for literature has not always been, and need not be, written. Some of the greatest literatures of mankind were written down centuries after they were uttered. But to be cherished, century after century, without the aid of an inscribed text, the utterance has to be sufficiently memorable for the people to hand it down from generation to generation.

It is equally desirable to note that this utterance may be in any language or speech of India and need not be confined to the so-called major languages listed in the Indian Constitution. The songs, poems and tales cherished in the daily life, ritual and festivity of the santhals, Gonds, Mundas and other tribes are as rightfully Indian literature as the Vedic hymns or the great Sanskrit epics. With the adivasis and other lowly and forgotten folks coming into their own, it will be increasingly evident that their seemingly isolated patches of cultural heritage are a significantly indigenous and authentic base of our civilization.

We may also recall that what were once honoured as vehicles of great literature came in course of time to be relegated to an inferior status as sub-languages or dialects. Maithili and Rajasthani are obvious examples, among others. Who can say that these languages will not again rise to their earlier heights? In any case, literary merit as such is irrespective of the status of its medium in the linguistic hierarchy, which, like any other social or man-made hierarchy, is a matter largely of historical circumstances and subject always to shifts.

One might go a little further and say that the speech used need not be native in the orthodox sense of the term, for its utterance to be classed as Indian literature. How can we say that what Amir Khusru, Ghalib or Iqbal wrote in Persian, or for that matter what Raja Rammohan Roy wrote in that language, is not part of Indian literature?

In the same way, and even more pertinently for us today, can we exclude from our literary storehouse what has been and is being written by Indians in English, provided it is memorable enough to be classed as literature? It would be both arbitrary and unseemly to say that the Bengali *Gitanjali* is Indian literature and the English *Gitanjali* is not. It may be that British literary historians will not recognize or give due place to the latter as English literature, but that is their privilege and their loss, and need not be ours.

A more difficult problem is posed by the nationality of the author. Since Partition, Bengali, Punjabi, Sindhi and Urdu are languages we share with Pakistan. While Ghalib, Iqbal, Tagore and Nazrul Islam could be claimed by both India and Pakistan as their poets, could the same be said of the post-partition authors? What is being written in these languages today, whether in India or Pakistan, is no doubt part of Bengali, Punjabi, Sindhi and Urdu literatures, but would that necessarily make it part of Indian literature as well?

The same might be said of Tamil literature written in Ceylon by Tamil writers who are not nationals of India.

Many Europeans, in particular Christian missionaries, have written in our languages and have thereby contributed to the development of prose in them. Their contribution would surely be deemed part of Indian literature. But what is one to say of some English works by British -authors, written in India and not merely inspired by Indian themes but permeated with a feeling for India which we cannot but admire—works like Tod's *Tales of Rajasthan* or Edwin Arnold's *The Light of Asia* or Sister Nivedita's *The Web of Indian Life*, and similar works?

However that be, such queries merely remind us that while it is easy to talk glibly of Indian literature, it is not so easy to define its limits, and much less easy to pick one's way through the tangle of its by-paths.

And so we come back to our basic thesis that what constitutes Indian literature is a vast panorama of endless variety, with its many landscapes, many altitudes, and many climates. This composite and haphazard unfoldment reflects many levels of intellectual and cultural development, and has drawn its inspiration and sustenance from widely divergent sources, some indigenous and some imported. The myths which feed the imagination, the canon and criteria which guide the creative expression, have also varied.

If we disabuse our minds of the artificially generated notion that there is a mystic virtue in homogeneity, we need not shy from admitting that Indian literature is, in fact, less homogenous than even the literature of Europe as a whole. Its constituents in Bengali, Hindi, Tamil and other languages may more appropriately be classed with such specific foreign and homogenous literatures as English, French, Japanese, Hungarian, etc.

How far this heterogeneous complex of creative expression we call Indian literature is one depends not so much on any inhering unity in its body as on the spirit with which we can make it truly our own. In other words, this unity is more conceptual and inward than mechanical and outward. Its quality may be likened to what the Vedic sage had in mind when he said that truth is one though men call it variously, or which his modern descendants like Rammohan Roy, Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Tagore and Gandhi meant when they said that all religions lead to the same goal by diverse paths.

One might ask: What is Indian in this Indian literature? I wish I knew. I could not honestly point my finger and say, this is Indian

and that is not. How often it has happened in our history that what was once alien became in course of time our own, and what was our very own came to be much less ours than of others! How else explain that we have today many more Christians and Muslims than Buddhists in India!

Even as physically the people of our land are of varied colour, size-and features, so are the patterns of religious and cultural consciousness and their expression of many kinds. Those of us who saw Rabindranath Tagore talk to a Santhal, could we have said that one was Indian, the other was not, or even that one was more Indian than the other? If so, which?

The only thing we may confidently call Indian is the many-sidedness, the myriad-facedness, of our multifold, multiform and multifid civilization, with its many virtues and many vices, its many splendours and its many horrors. We may please ourselves by proclaiming that the peacock is our national bird and the lion our national animal, but can we overlook that we have in fact many more common crows than peacocks, and many more asses than lions ?

One often sees in the papers these days a controversy on the need to Indianize some of our people. It is claimed by some that they are more Indian than others. It is not easy to understand what exactly is meant by this claim, unless they mean that to be unlike them is to be less than Indian, if not un-Indian. Some years ago many Americans of liberal sympathies or radical leanings were accused of being un-American. If this game of giving the dog a bad name so as to hang it with a good conscience had started a century earlier, it is not unlikely that Thoreau, Emerson and Walt Whitman would have been hanged as bad dogs.

It is the same bias, disguised as literary patriotism, which makes some writers expel from their writing words of non-Sanskrit origin to make their language seem more Indian. Ironically, the Tamil patriots do just the opposite and avoid words of Sanskrit lineage, though they do not claim that thereby they are making their language more Indian. They claim to purify their language and make it more Tamil. One wonders what would become of the English language if its writers felt patriotic in the same fashion and tried to restore the pristine purity of Old English.

Who is a better lover—one who tries to mould the other in his or her image or one who loves the other for what he or she actually is? If to love is to understand, we must recognize that whatever is of this land and whatever subsists on it is Indian, and that he is truly

Indian who can make all this his own. In other words, the only way to Indianize ourselves or others is to humanize ourselves.

Recently I read a fine English rendering by Professor Khawaja Ahmad Faruqi of the Diary which the poet Ghalib had kept during the stormy days of the uprising of 1857. Talking of the chaos and suffering which he had to witness when the city of Delhi was overrun by soldiers and freebooters, Ghalib wrote that if Rustam had heard this story he would have been overcome by despair. It is possible that some very "Indian" Indians would think that since Ghalib wrote his Diary in Persian and thought of Rustam as the symbol of courage and valour, and not of Bhima or Arjuna or Karna, he was not sufficiently Indian and needed to be Indianized.

When Ghalib wrote, Persian was still cultivated and understood by the educated over large parts of India, and it was no more perverse of him to write in Persian than it was for Gandhi to edit *Young India* in English, some decades later. Moreover, since Ghalib came of Turko-Persian ancestry, it was natural for him to take a special pride in its virile tradition and legends. Unlike his equally eminent contemporaries in Bengal, Michael Madhusudan Dutta and Bankim Chandra Chatterji, Ghalib did not cultivate the English tongue and so escaped the impact of modern Western thought. Was he, therefore, less Indian than his Bengali compeers ?

Few poets would seem more different in their background, aspiration and mode of expression than Ghalib and Madhusudan Dutta and no one need pretend that he can appreciate both with equal understanding and feeling. But he would be wrong who denied the claim of either as a great landmark of Indian literature. Indeed, one might say that it is only to the extent that we are able to appreciate the essential Indianness of such and even more, diverse phenomena in the literary landscape of our country through the ages that we shall understand how Indian literature is one, though written in many languages.



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PART TWO

PAPERS

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*Section A: Heritage and Background  
of Indian Literature*

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M. VARADARAJAN

## Sangham Literature



THERE were in ancient Tamilnad three great dynasties called the Pāṇḍiya, the Cola and the Cera as well as the minor rulers of small territories who patronized and encouraged the development of arts and helped poets, musicians, dancers and other artists with their bountiful gifts. Literature developed in different parts of the country and its growth was believed to have been fostered by academies called Sanghams and so it was called Sangham literature. Traditions were established by this indigenous growth of literature, and literary conventions were codified by grammarians (500 B.C. to 200 A.D.). One such grammatical work called Tolkappiyam is still extant and contains many references to some earlier grammatical works which prove the antiquity of the literary conventions codified in it.<sup>1</sup> There were thousands of such poems in different parts of the country. Only some of them were collected and made available to us by the valuable efforts of certain anthologists of the third or fourth century A.D. The anthologies, nine in number, known as Sangham literature, evince the genius of a cultured nation with noble ideals and unique traditions. Some of the verses in these anthologies belong to the pre-Christian era and some to the first or second century A.D. There were, perhaps, many more verses available here and there during the days of the anthologists<sup>2</sup> but they were left to be lost through the

ravages of time. Only these nine anthologies have survived the ages and are now regarded as the precious heritage of the Tamils.

There were hundreds of poets throughout Tamilnad composing those lyrics and dramatic monologues. There were mostly on the generosity and glories of the rulers and chieftains and the themes of ideal love. Many of their compositions were lost. Two thousand three hundred and eighty one poems are now extant in the nine anthologies and they vary from small lyrics of three lines to idylls of many hundred lines. Four hundred and seventy three poets have contributed poems. Most of them are known by their names and places. The names of some of the poets are pseudonyms or nicknames and some names are based on the striking phrases or expressions in the poems. There are about a hundred poems whose authors are not known. Thirty of them were women poets. The poets were capable of the loveliest and most dignified utterances even when the theme was erotic. Purity of diction, unity of thought, directness of expression and intensity of emotion characterize these early Tamil works.

The poets belonged to different parts of Tamilnad and to different professions. Some of them were very popular like Kabilar, Nakkīrar and Avvaiyār and some others are rarely remembered by their names. Yet a general harmony prevails throughout these nine anthologies. The tone and temper of the age is reflected in all their poems with a singular likeness. They were moulded according to the common literary conventions or traditions that prevailed in those days. Yet they reveal the individual genius of the poets who sang them.

Those poets wrote with their minds and eyes on the panorama of life and were concerned generally with various aspects of things and man's emotional response to them. There are numerous details of the land and the people in their songs. Though these are very ancient pieces of writing, we do not find the crudeness of the primitive in them. They are gems highly polished and the light that breaks from them is clear and bright.<sup>3</sup> The poets successfully caught the flashes of poetic moments and enshrined them in their poems with all vividness and force. The shorter their verses the greater was their concentration of emotional experience.

The earlier poetry which preceded the era of scholarly writings was oral bardic poetry generally recited or sung to the accompaniment of musical instruments. The professional practitioners of this earlier oral poetry were called Pāṇars and Viṛaliyars. The dramatic forms

of such oral compositions were used by professional actors called Kūttars and Porunars. The rulers and the patrons rewarded them for their skill and inspiration. The bards organized themselves into troupes and travelled from place to place and entertained the patrons and the people wherever they went. Their themes were interesting, as they drew upon the local history or the popular folklore, incidents of war and fancies of love. There is a species of ancient Tamil literature called Aṟṟuppaḍai or Guide song in which a bard who had his rewards from a ruler or patron took sympathy on a group of bards whom he met on his way and guided them to the same ruler or patron to get themselves rid of their poverty.<sup>4</sup> In the anthology called Pattuppāṭṭu or Ten Idylls, there are four long poems on this theme.<sup>5</sup> The authors of these idylls depicted in their compositions the life of these bards as well as the valour and generosity of the rulers and patrons. In the other anthologies, Puṟanānūṟu and Paṭiṟruppattu, also, we have a number of short poems on this theme.<sup>6</sup> In all these, the learned poets assumed the panegyric role of those bards, i.e., imagined themselves to be the bards in their poems. The learned poets drew a great deal of material from the then existing oral songs of the bards, not only their forms but also their themes. In their poems, the poets do not address the patrons, but only the bards are imagined to sing in praise of them, i.e. the poets imagined themselves to be the bards and composed scholarly works. They were realistic in their descriptions of the land and the contemporary rulers and patrons, but were dependent on their imagination when they depicted the bardic troupes and their poverty-stricken life. Thus we see the elements of bardic poetry in the stylized and conventionalized compositions of the learned poets, viz., Sangham literature.

Of the eight anthologies called Eṭṭuttogai five are on Agam, two on Puṟam, and one on both. Six of them are in 'agaval' metre which is a kind of blank verse, interspersed with alliterations and rhymes. The poems on Agam as well as Puṟam theme are written in this metre and its regulated and subtle music adds to the poetic beauty. This metre is a simple but wonderful instrument which causes no impediment to the freedom of expression of the poet. It has been found to be an appropriate and natural medium for the expression of the valuable experience of the poets.

The two anthologies that are not written in 'agaval' metre are Kalittogai and Paripāḍal. The poems of Kalittogai are in Kali metre which is wellknown for its dramatic and lyrical qualities and which,

according to *Tolkāppiyānār*, is well suited to express the emotions of the lovers. There is repetition of certain lines and phrases and this, added to the haunting music of the metre, is very appealing.

*Paripāḍal* is a metre full of rhythm and music and the anthology known by this name consists of songs composed in this metre. There are religious poems as well as those on love-themes. The love-theme is worked against the background of bathing festivities. These songs were sung in different tunes as is evident from the notes on the music at the end of these. The names of the musicians who set tunes to these songs are also mentioned therein.

The prosody of Tamil is indigenous and all the ancient metres were derived from the metres of folk songs that were prevalent in Tamilnad in ancient times. After the evolution of scholarly literature, folksongs too continued to be popular along with the works of the learned poets. *Tolkāppiyānār*, the author of the earliest extant Tamil grammatical treatise, recognized the influence of folk songs and in his chapter on prosody he has referred to those as *vāymoli* or the oral works are distinguished from the written literature.<sup>7</sup> The poets of the Sangham Literature confined themselves to the scholarly compositions.

Of the nine anthologies of Sangham literature, *Aganānūru*, *Naṟṟiṇai* and *Kuṟuntogai* consist of 400 stanzas each; the stanzas are of a certain maximum and minimum number of lines in each anthology. They are of 13 to 31 lines, 9 to 12 lines and 6 to 8 lines, respectively in *Aganānūru*, *Naṟṟiṇai* and *Kuṟuntogai*. *Aiṅkurunuru* is a collection of 510 stanzas of 3 to 5 lines each. *Kalittogai* consists of 150 poems of the melodious metre called *Kali*. All these five anthologies are on the theme of idealized love in the form of dramatic monologues. *Paripāḍal* is an anthology of 70 long poems (now many are lost); *Padiṟṟuppattu* is of 100 stanzas divided in tens, each ten eulogizing a *Cēra* prince. *Puṟanānūru* contains 400 stanzas of historical as well as literary importance. Most of them are on the patrons and rulers of those days. The anthology called *Pattuppāṭtu* consists of ten long idylls as its name signifies. Five of them are guide songs of bards of those days. One is an idyll of 782 lines on the city of *Madurai* and eulogizes a *Pāṇḍiya* king and concludes with an advice to him. Four other idylls are on the theme of idealized love.

The first part of *Tolkāppiyam* consists of nine chapters dealing with phonetics and phonology, the second part, also of nine chapters, deals with morphology and syntax and the third part of nine chapters with literary conventions, prosody and poetics. It is evident that this

work was preceded by centuries of literary development, as the great author Tolkāppīyanār lays down rules for different kinds of literary compositions and the literary traditions prevalent in his times. He also refers to other authors who have dealt with the subject. It is very striking to find that the authors treatment of phonetics and morphology are on sound principles appreciated by scholars of modern linguistics. The third part is really a mine of information regarding the literary conventions of those days.

The most important of these conventions is the classification of poetry into Agam and Puṟam. Agam is that which deals with the idealized love and Puṟam is on war, administration, etc. Puṟam is mostly lyric poetry and refers to particular kings and patrons. In Agam poetry the hero, the heroine, her confidante and others are imaginary personages and they are never identified with historical persons. The hero is simply mentioned as the lord of the hill, or the chieftain of the forest, or the leader of the peasants or as the head of the fishermen. The heroine is likewise referred to as the lady of the mountain, etc. Even the mention of the particular royal flag or flower, if it identifies the hero with a certain dynasty or family, is considered to disqualify the poem to be classified as Agam.<sup>8</sup> Then it is treated as Puṟam poetry. So rigid was this convention.

Another important convention is the treatment of the land in five regions, viz., mountains, forests, fields, sea-coasts and arid tracts and the classification of aspects of love and war in accordance with these regions. Each aspect of love has its own environs of the particular region allotted to it.<sup>9</sup>

In the poems on Agam, the different aspects of love of a hero and a heroine are depicted. The story of love is never conceived as a continuous whole. A particular moment of love is captured and described in each poem through the speech of the hero or of the heroine or the lady-companion or somebody else. There are one thousand eight hundred and fifty poems of this type in five anthologies, viz., Aganānūṟu, Naṟṟiṇai, Kuṟuntogai, Aiṅkuṟunūṟu and Kalittogai. One may expect a sort of monotonous repetition in so vast a number of poems on more or less the same aspects of ideal love. This is what one finds in all the Indian arts, sculpture or iconography or music. But when looked at carefully, the individual genius of the poet is revealed through his contribution. He gives something which is already familiar to the readers, something which assures them of a continuity of the past art, but he gives it with his fine colourings distinguished by his own rich experience and

imagination. And thus instead of monotony we feel a surprise that so many variations of the same theme should be possible. The first attempt to arrange all the contexts of such love poetry into a series of continuous succession of speeches giving as it were the story of two lovers is found several centuries later in the 'kōvai' species.<sup>10</sup>

Love was dealt with in five 'tīṇais', each pertaining to a particular region with its own suitable season and appropriate hour of the day and its flora and fauna and characteristic environment. The aspect of love is called the *uripporuḷ* or the subject matter of the tīnai, the region, the season and the hour are called the *mudal poruḷ* or the basic material; the objects of the environment are denoted as *karupporuḷ*. Kuriñcittīnai or the union of the lovers is characteristic of the mountainous region; mullaittīnai or the life at home spent in expectation of the return of the hero is set in the background of the forest region; marudattīnai or the sulky life has the agricultural tract as its background; neytal tīnai or the life of despair is characteristic of the sea coast; pālaittīnai or the life of desolation in separation is depicted against the arid tract. Literary tradition in Tamil has inextricably associated the sloping hills and the winding streams with the adventures of the lover coming to his sweetheart at midnight, the early winter and the mullai blossoms of the forests with the patient waiting of the wife for her husband's return from the battlefield, the fertile paddy fields and the roaming buffaloes with the careless life of the hero in the company of a harlot, the backwaters and the seashore with the heart rending despair of the heroine and finally the waterless arid tract of the withered trees and emaciated beasts and birds with the separation of the hero from the heroine in pursuit of wealth in a far off country.

Tolkāppiyānār clarifies the relative importance of these three components of tīnai.<sup>11</sup> According to him, karupporuḷ is more important than the other two. In other words, the aspect of love is the most important part, the objects of environment come next and the region, the season and the hour are the least important. There are a few poems in the anthologies which have no mudalporuḷ but only the other two; a few poems have neither karupporuḷ nor mudalporuḷ but only uripporuḷ or the aspect of love.

The poems on the theme of love are all in the form of dramatic monologues. The hero, the heroine or the lady-companion seem to appear on the stage and express his or her feelings and thoughts. Appropriate natural scenery forms the background. The poet has no place on this poetic stage. He cannot express his own ideas or feelings



unless through the actors, the hero, the heroine and the others in the drama of love. What have been expressed, has to be taken as the feelings and thoughts of the characters imagined and created by him. The poet merges himself in the characters he creates and does not, as in subjective poetry or in ordinary narrative, describe or relate in his own person and from the outside. The dramatic element commonly appears more or less prominently in the shape of a dialogue. There might have been some autobiographical material incorporated by the poet in such poems, but it is not always easy to distinguish those elements. These are dramatic lyrics, and in spirit and method subjective poems; but the subjective element pertains, not to the poet himself, but to some imagined characters into whose moods and experiences the poet enters and to whose feelings and thoughts he gives vicarious expression.

But there is this great difference between the early eight anthologies and the later works as regards the men and women dealt with in them. In the medieval epics and other literary works, the common man and woman never attained the status of the hero and the heroine, whereas in those early poems on love the ordinary man and woman either in the mountainous or in other regions are depicted as the hero and the heroine.

Tolkāppiyānār has explained these literary conventions and stated that he had based his observations on the usages honoured by the practice of the great poets (Pāḍuluṭ-payinṟavai nāḍuṅkālai)<sup>12</sup>. He has clearly noted that in the poems on Agam, the name of the hero or the heroine, should never be mentioned.<sup>13</sup> In the poems on love found in Eṭṭuttogai, there is not a single stanza wherein the hero or the heroine is mentioned by name. The poets never wanted the readers to identify the hero and the heroine with historical persons. As Professor T. P. Meenakshisundaram puts it, Agam poetry 'expresses not something to be dated with reference to any particular person',<sup>14</sup> and the aspect of love depicted in it is intended to be universal and common to all times. 'The majority of the world's great lyrics', says Hudson,<sup>15</sup> 'owe their place in literature very largely to the fact that they embody what is typically human rather than what is merely individual and particular'. Every reader finds in the love-lyrics of the early Tamil anthologies the expression of such experiences and feelings in which he himself is fully able to share. Thus, by prohibiting the mention of the names of the hero and the heroine in these lyrics, the literary tradition in Tamil has preserved Agam poetry in its essential purity and enabled it to give outward

form to the inner feelings not of the individual but of the ideal man and woman.

Here is the translation (by P. N. Appuswami) of a stanza in the Kuṟuntogai. It is the expression of the feelings of separation of the heroine :

Pitch dark  
 Is this midnight hour;  
 All speech is hushed,  
 And mankind is lapped in slumber sweet,  
 Anger and hate are laid aside;  
 and the whole wide world  
 Sleeps—now;  
 But, alas! I am sleepless,  
 I'm sure, I alone.

The following is the translation of a stanza in Naṟṟiṇai, describing the disturbed and agitated mind of a lover who has left his home for foreign lands in search of wealth.

Lonely lives my lady,  
 Dark shines her back  
 With long and lovely lock;  
 Her cooling gaze did bind  
 My heart with her heart;  
 Back sends my heart  
 To cheer the pining soul;  
 So I turn to home  
 Wishing wings to fly  
 "Haste Not" cries the head  
 "To take a task and leave unfulfilled is base,  
 Foolish and unwise"  
 What about my body  
 In this mighty flight?  
 Is it to decay  
 Like an old old rope  
 The strands of which are worn out,  
 Held in tug by elephants  
 Of bright and mighty tusks,  
 Standing front to front.

The evolution of these poems started before the Tamils had come into close contact with other people and so they were mainly their response to the influence of physical surroundings. Nature and life lived in natural environment inspired the poets to sing. They painted pictures of the hills, the forests, the fields and the sea-coasts and dealt

with the feelings of the innocent folk who lived therein, but they never personified Nature as modern poets do. Their apt descriptions of Nature are based on close observation and are so accurate that a botanist might acquire a correct knowledge of the vegetation of the country. Their love of Nature was so intense that it permeated the theme of love as well as of war in their poems. Their blending of the feelings of men and women with the beauties of Nature had been recognized and maintained as essential in the later literary works, and conventions had been codified in the grammatical treatises.<sup>17</sup>

Nature is used to enrich the suggestive nature of poetry and this kind of suggestion communicated through some description of Nature is called *iraicci*.<sup>18</sup> When the hero has been meeting his sweetheart at night during his premarital relationship, the lady-companion desires to impress on him the necessity of hastening the marriage and asks him to come and meet her during daytime. She specifies a place for the meeting of the lovers during daytime and describes it as the place where the honeycombs hang, the trees are full of ripe fruits and the creepers have blossoms in abundance. She expects the hero to understand from this description that a number of people will frequent the spot attracted by the honey, the ripe fruits and the fragrant flowers and thus indirectly forbids him from coming at daytime as well as at night and urges him to marry and avoid such clandestine meetings.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, when he frequently comes at daytime, she requests him to come during nights and describes the front-yard of the house as adorned by the punnai trees with fragrant blossoms and the palmyra trees with the nests of *anril* birds. The suggestion herein is that at night the *anril* birds are so close to the house that they keep the heroine awake throughout the night by their heart-rending cries<sup>20</sup>; here is also the indirect urge on him to marry early and settle himself in an inseparable life.

In some kinds of descriptions especially in love songs of *marudat tiṇai*, Nature is used in allegories called ‘*uḷḷurai uvamam*’ or ‘the implied simile’.<sup>21</sup> All the objects of Nature and their activities stand for the hero, the heroine and the others and their activities in the drama of love. The latter are not at all mentioned but only suggested through the former. It is simile incognito which leaves it to the reader to discover it. The commentator *Pērācīriyar* explains it as a type resorted to in order to make the literary expressions more beautiful and apt.<sup>22</sup>

An otter enters a lotus tank, scatters the *vallai* creepers, seizes the *valai* fish amidst them, feeds upon it and returns in the early

morning to its rattan bush. The heroine describes this in order to blame her husband on his return from a harlot's house. She suggests to him that she is aware of his infidelity, of his loose morals, of his pleasing the harlot's parents and relatives, and of his returning home at dawn for a formal stay. Here the otter stands for the hero, the vālai fish for the harlot, the vaḷlai creepers for her parents and the rattan bush for his own house.<sup>23</sup>

In such descriptions, the speaker hesitates to express certain things openly but desires to dwell on minutely in a wordy caricature of a familiar incident in Nature, and through it more effectively conveys to the listener all the feelings and thoughts:

The anthologies abound in apostrophes. The hero or the heroine addresses the sea, the moon, the wind, the crow, the crab, a tree or a creeper and expresses the grief of his or her heart or requests one of them to sympathize with him or her.

The heroine addresses the sea and enquires of it as to why it cries aloud even at midnights and who has caused such sufferings.<sup>24</sup> She also asks it whether it cries aloud in sympathy with the misery of those pining in separation just like herself or whether it has been forsaken by anybody as in her own case.<sup>25</sup> She blames the northwind as merciless and unsympathetic.<sup>26</sup> 'Oh, chill north wind; we never meant any harm to you. Please do not cause further suffering to this forsaken and miserable soul of mine'.<sup>27</sup> She remarks that it mercilessly blows at midnight to afflict her in her loneliness without any pity for her utter despair and bids it blow through the country where the hero is so as to remind him of her and make him return.<sup>28</sup> The hero in the distant country feels the effects of the north wind but only thinks of his sweetheart suffering lonely in the distant village and requests it not to blow through her village and cause her more distress.<sup>29</sup>

The sun, the moon, the trees, the birds, the beasts and other objects of nature have been artistically described in the poems of these anthologies. But they have never been loved and described for their own sake, as in modern poetry. They have been described only to portray some aspects of human life. Nature serves only as background for or setting to the human emotions that are depicted in Agam or Puṇam poetry. They serve as frames for pictures of love or war, munificence, etc. Though Nature is thus made subservient to the human theme, yet there is no dearth of independent descriptions of nature. Nature has a prominent, though not a primary, place in these anthologies. These poems treat all outward things as

subordinate to the inner forces and problems upon which the interest is concentrated.<sup>30</sup> They essentially depict mental states and are predominantly psychological, meditative and argumentative.

The poets believed in the unique effects of a few deft touches of description, not in the elaborate and full descriptions of all the parts of a beautiful object or scene. In the later days, the poets indulged in the descriptions of persons from head to foot or from foot to head. According to Winchester,<sup>31</sup> the difference between unimaginative treatment of Nature and imaginative treatment is the difference between trying to describe all one sees and rendering in a few epithets or images what one feels. The pictures of the Sangham poets consist of only a few vivid features enough to interpret and communicate their emotional experiences. They drop out of their pictures all irrelevant and unpleasant details, so that the reader's attention is concentrated upon the few features that give him a powerful and characteristic impression. Through single lines, or sometimes single epithets, the poets flash upon the readers' imagination the whole pictures. The picture of a hare by the poet *Tamiḷk-kūttanār* of Madurai may be cited as an example.<sup>32</sup> In one single line of four simple qualifiers and four small nouns—*tūmayirk kuṟuntāl neḍuñcevik kuṟumuyal* (the small hare with pure fur, short legs and long ears)—the complete picture of the animal is impressively drawn. Such simple and direct words have a suggestive magical power. There is no room for exaggeration in such artistic descriptions which are rather interpretations of the poets' experience. They have such an intensity of feeling and imagination that their descriptions do not deteriorate into exaggeration.

A Japanese painter once confessed that he had to concentrate on the bamboo for many years and still a certain technique for the rendering of the tips of the bamboo leaves eluded him.<sup>33</sup> Word-painting is no less difficult. Many of the ancient Tamil poets had mastered this word-painting. They frequently used simple adjectives that convey with force their deep thought and experience regarding the pictures they depicted.

In descriptions of the beauty of the heroine, we find only one or two aspects of beauty artistically touched, e.g.,

the lady abounding in beauty and with bamboo-like shoulders<sup>34</sup>

the lady of pleasant red lips resembling the petals of kaviṟ and of sweet words, wearing fine jewels.<sup>85</sup>

Even in the descriptions which extend to more than six lines and

which form part of the monologues of the hero, we find that the poet restricts himself to two or three aspects of the physical beauty of his sweetheart and never transcends the limits of decency. As such, this vast corpus of poems dealing with love is happily devoid of obscenity. Even the songs on the harlots and the hero's association with them are free from gross bawdiness. Sexual passions have been purged of their obscenity through dignified poetic touches.

The early poets did not like to introduce foreign or borrowed images in their poetry. They always copied direct from life and nature. Even when they had to describe the scenes of a distant country which they had not seen, as for example those of the Ganges in floods,<sup>36</sup> or of the Yak at the foot of the Himalayas,<sup>37</sup> they did not describe them in detail but restricted themselves to the facts they knew from others and avoided the odd mixture of any incongruous details in them. Even while describing the scenes of their own country they did not extend their descriptions beyond their own direct observation and experience. For example, Kabilar, a great poet of the age, who had left us the maximum number of songs, had not depicted the agricultural region; he was content to deal with the mountains and their surroundings. The poet Perunkadunko of the Cera family, celebrated for his descriptions of the arid mountains and forests, was silent about the beauties of the coastal region. Ammuvanar and other poets who had written so much on the coastal region were silent about the Trills and forests. They wrote according to the fundamental principle stressed by Hudson, the principle that, whether his range of experience and personal power be great or small, a man should write of that which lies at his own doors, should make it his chief business to report faithfully of what he has lived, seen, thought, felt, known for himself.<sup>38</sup> This sincerity of fidelity is characteristic of the poems in these early anthologies.

'Purānānūṟu' (the four hundred of Purāma theme) is the most popular and historically most valuable of the anthologies. One hundred and fifty-seven poets have composed the verses in this collection and all of them were unflinching advisers and faithful friends of the rulers; they even averted war by intervening between the agitated rulers and advising them suitably. All these find place in the poems of this collection. Some of the kings were themselves scholars and their poetic contributions are also included in this. Some stanzas contain many truths expounded by philosopher-poets in their own significant manner. There are many lyrics of a high order. Two of them are given below.<sup>39</sup>

*About the sages*

To us all towns are one, all men are kin,  
 Life's good comes not from others' gift, nor ill,  
 Man's pains and pains' relief are from within,  
 Death's no new thing; nor do our bosoms thrill  
 When joyous life seems like a luscious draught,  
 When grieved, we patient suffer; for, we deem  
 This much-praised life of ours a fragile raft  
 Borne down the waters of some mountain stream  
 That o'er huge boulders roaring seeks the plain,  
 Tho' storms with lightnings' flash from darken'd skies  
 Descend, the raft goes on as fates ordain.  
 Thus have we seen in visions of the wise;—  
 We marvel not at greatness of the great;  
 Still less despise we men of low estate.

*Let all share:*

All those who loved thee,—all whom thou dost love,  
 Thy kindred all, with seemly virtues crowned,  
 All who in times gone by, thy wants relieved,  
 Call them together now; bid all the world;  
 Nor counsel nor direction ask of me;  
 Thus will we live, ponder no more,  
 Give thou to all, my housewife dear;  
 The Lord of Muthirai's fruitful hill,  
 Kumanan, Lord of mighty spear,  
 Hath given this wealth which all shall share.

From the verses in *Puṛaṇānūṟu* and *Paṭiṟṟuppattu*, it is evident that the ancient Tamil kings and chieftains patronized the poets and treated them with great regard and respect, and through them rendered unique service for the advancement of literature and culture. They rewarded the poets with liberal presents in the shape of gold flowers, gold coins, lands, elephants and chariots with horses. In these poems we do not find the idle accumulation of hyperbolic conceits which abound in later works. These are fine gems of poetic art in the most finished classical style.

There are a few elegies in *Puṛaṇānūṟu*. These elegies are frankly personal and are high tributes to the dead patrons and friends. A few of them appear to be poems of some philosophical significance. They are the outpourings of the emotions of the poets who were very attached to the patrons. In these elegies we don't find such similitude of a shepherd mourning for a companion as we have in



the pastoral elegies in Western literature.<sup>40</sup> These elegies in Tamil are genuine and spontaneous. There is no artificiality in them. They express intimate and personal grief. They cannot be charged of artificiality as in Milton's *Lycidas*. Like Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, the ancient Tamil elegy speaks in its own character and calls things by real, instead of allegorical, names. We need not penetrate a disguise to feel the poet's personal grief. The ancient Tamil elegies are entirely free from any conventional bucolic machinery.

There is one peculiarity to be noted in these anthologies. Whenever the poets wanted to express their gratitude to their royal patrons, or their admiration of the generosity and valour of some chieftains, they did so through their compositions on 'Puṛam' theme, the theme intended for this purpose. Besides this, they also made use of their poems on Agam to introduce the glory of their patrons by way of comparison or by mentioning their mountains or forests as background for the drama of love depicted in such poems.

The scandal about the association of the hero with a harlot is said to be more widespread than the joyous uproar of the army of the Pāṇḍiya king when it defeated and chased the armies of the two enemy kings in the battle at Kūḍal.<sup>41</sup> In an apostrophe to the north wind, the lady companion says that the wind which now, during the separation of the lover, causes so much distress to the heroine will disappear when the lover returns home. Therein she mentions that the north wind will then run away like the nine chieftains who were defeated in a single day by the great Cōla king Karikālan and who ran away leaving all their nine umbrellas in the battlefield at Vāgai.<sup>42</sup> In another stanza the lady companion consoles the distressed heroine that there is no room for any suffering and assures her that the hero will never desert her to seek wealth even if it amounts to possession of the Elil hills of Koṅkāna Nannan.<sup>43</sup>

Some of these poems have long and elaborate descriptions of the achievements of the patrons and give the impression that though they are on Agam theme, the aim of the poets was only to praise the achievements of their patrons and that the theme of love served as a formula or means to serve this purpose. But it is not always so. As Dr K. K. Pillai observes,<sup>44</sup> it had become almost a convention with the poets of that age to portray the feelings or reactions of lovers by instituting comparisons with prominent political occurrences. The wide popularity which they had attained provided the temptation for the poets to import them into their comparisons so as to make the descriptions impressive and realistic. The commentators of



Tolkāppiyam<sup>45</sup> interpret a ‘nurpa’ in Poruḷatikāram in such a way as to admit and explain such introduction of the glory and attainments of the patrons in poems on the theme of love.

The ancient poets were well-known for their self-respect and dignity and they felt it very delicate to approach a chieftain and directly ask him for a gift. But they found it agreeable to please him by singing the glory of his ancestors or his own achievements or praising the beauty or fertility of his mountains and forests, and thus indirectly indicate to him their request for his gift. They found this a useful device to serve their purpose as direct asking did not suit their sense of honour. This is evident from the poem of Mōcīkīranār in Puṛanānūru, wherein he stated: ‘It is difficult for me to ask you for a gift. But I find it easier to praise the Koṅperuṅkānam hills of yours’.<sup>46</sup> Even Kabilar, who was more a close friend than a court poet of the great patron Pāri, has written more lines in praise of the hills of the patron than on the patron himself.

The Ten Idylls (Pattuppāṭṭu) is an anthology of ten idylls by eight different authors of the Sangham period. These are richly wrought descriptive poems in the most finished classical style and contain charming portraits of Nature in some of her striking moods. A sober-minded and judicious estimate of the values of life rendered pleasant with the beauties of Nature is found in these poems. The shortest of them contains 103 lines and the longest, 782.

Of these ten, Tirumurugatruppadaī is a religious idyll by the celebrated poet Nakkīrar. Aṭṭruppadaī is a general theme in which a minstrel, songster, actor or poet who returns with bounteous presents from a benevolent patron addresses and guides a fellow minstrel, songster, actor or poet who suffers from the pangs of poverty and seeks for a patron to relieve his sufferings. This ‘aṭṭruppadaī’ by Nakkīrar is an exceptional one and is dedicated to God Murugan (Subramanya) and is in the form of a devotee addressing a fellow devotee who is in search of Him. The title means ‘The Guide to God Murugan’. The different manifestations of the god and his different shrines in South India are described.

The second idyll Porunaratruppadaī is a ‘Guide to an actor’ and is sung in praise of the Cōla king Karikāla. The poet Muḍattāmakkaṅṇiyār gives a description of the ancient Cōla kingdom, its fertility due to the unfailing water of the Kāviri river, its agricultural and industrial prosperity and the wisdom and martial glory of the Cōla king. The idyll affords rich material to the student of ancient South Indian history.

The third work *Ćiṛupāṇāṭṛuppaḁai* by the poet *Nattattanār* of *Nallūr* is in the form of an address by a well-rewarded lyrist to a fellow artist. The patron celebrated here is *Nalliyakkōḁan*, a chieftain of *Erumaināḁu*. He is said to have excelled the seven great patrons called 'Seven *Vaḁḁals*' in his rich gifts to the bards. The poem abounds in descriptions of cities and villages and of the different kinds of life led by the people there.

The fourth of this anthology is *Perumpāṇāṭṛuppaḁai* by *Uruttirankaṇṇanār* in praise of the ruler of *Kānchi* (*Conjeevaram*), *Thoṇḁaiman Ilantiraiyan*. It is also a guide to the lyrist and equally valuable for a student of political and social history of ancient South India.

*Mullaippāṭṭu* is the fifth idyll by *Napputtanār*, a gold merchant of *Kāviriḁpūmpaṭṭinam*, the ancient sea-port city of South India. It portrays the feelings of an ideal wife eagerly awaiting her husband's return from a military expedition. The hero on the eve of his victorious return from the battlefield is counting his losses, while the queen in her seven-storied palace in a wintry night is counting days and consulting omens. When the queen had almost lost all her patience and hopes, suddenly her ears caught the sounds of the king's trumpets and conches blown at a distance along with the sounds of his chariot and his horses on his way home. The king's elephants were trained in a northern language, probably *Prakrit*.

*Maduraikkāñci* is the next idyll, the longest of the idylls consisting of 782 lines. Though very rich in descriptions, it is free from fantasies or conceits. The author *Mānguḁi Marudanār* here celebrates the ancient city of *Madurai* and the *Pāṇḁiya* king *Neduñceḁiyan* of *Talaiyāḁaṅkānam* fame. Details of the army, trades, festivals, seaports, customs and manners of the people, and the administrative martial glories of the *Pāṇḁiya* dynasty are all given in this long poem.

*Nedunalvāḁai*, the seventh idyll is also by the famous poet *Nakkīrar*. He here celebrates the *Pāṇḁiya* king *Neduñceḁiyan*. The king is in his winter camp adjoining the battlefield and spends his sleepless nights walking here and there in the drizzle and consoling the wounded warriors, horses, and elephants. The steady chilly north wind is felt in the umbrella under which the king walks and also in the flame of the torch that bends southwards. The queen in the palace is at the same time lying sleepless and careworn. It is a midnight chill with the howling north wind. The monkeys on the trees shiver with cold and contract their limbs; the birds drop down in

their flights; the shivering cows forget even their motherly affections and kick their calves; the shepherds do not indulge in their favourite pastoral amusements, but light up fires and warm their palms at these fires and then apply them to their cheeks; the domesticated pigeons fail to distinguish day from night and simply stay at home altering their posture and exchanging seats with their lovely mates to relieve the monotony of idleness ; the exquisitely wrought fans so much useful in summer now hang in corners covered with cobwebs; only the first-pans are there everywhere in need ; the windows are all closed against the blowing wind. In this manner the chilly north wind's effects are artistically portrayed. The queen in her cot notices the paintings on the curtain which remind her of love and move her to tears. The queen lies there in much distress. The elderly women try their best to console her and pray to the war goddess for the speedy and victorious return of the king from the battlefield. The whole poem is an excellent treatise of rich imagination and the poet allows the words to weave themselves into elegant and descriptive patterns. The title is very apt and highly suggestive, meaning 'the tedious but favourable north wind'.

Kuriñcippāṭṭu, the eighth idyll, is a mountain-song as its name denotes. Its author, Kabilar, has contributed the maximum number of poems to the Sangham literature and is reputed for depicting the mountain scenery and the love-aspect pertaining to it, namely, the furtive love that leads to wedlock. This long poem is said to have been composed by him in order to acquaint the Aryan king Prahatthan with the charms of the Tamil language and literature. This teaches that the qualities of modesty and chastity adorn women.

The next idyll, Paṭṭinappālai is by the same author as that of Perumpāñāṭṭruppaḍai, but the king celebrated here is Karikala Cola. For this work, the author is said to have been rewarded with sixteen hundred thousand gold pieces. There is a very elaborate picture of the great sea port city of ancient days, Kāvrippūmpaṭṭinam in 218 lines. This maritime city was the capital of the Cōla kingdom and the great centre of trade for the countries in the east and in the west. The poet describes its parks, places, alms-houses, religious centres, beach, custom-houses, etc.; the bales of goods in the customs-house are depicted to have the Cōla king's seal of tiger-mark and the goods imported and exported are also described. The Greeks, the Chinese and others had their residential quarters in the city. Honesty was the badge of the traders. The poem, though in the main dealing with

the theme of separation of lovers, yet celebrates the Cola king and concludes with praise of his valour and heroism.

The last idyll, Malaipaḍukadām, is an address of an actor to a fellow actor. Its title is highly figurative, meaning 'Rut of the Mountain'. But here it signifies various sounds echoed in the mountain which is imagined to be made by an elephant. The poet Perunkauciganār vividly describes the Naviram hills of the chieftain Nannan. Details of the musical instruments and the artists' way of life are given as in other 'aṭṭruppaḍais'.

These classics have exercised a great influence on the Saivite and Vaisnavite saints of the seventh, eighth and ninth centuries. The literary conventions of these works have been pressed into service for forging new patterns of mystical experience in their devotional poems. The authors of the immortal epics of the ninth to twelfth century were also greatly influenced by these anthologies. In short, all the later literary achievements have their roots in these classics which are more than eighteen centuries old. They may be said to form a wonderful bouquet of about two thousand and three hundred blossoms of variegated kinds in form and of such fragrance and complexion as age cannot wither nor custom stale.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. There are about two hundred references to preceding works in Tolkāppiyam. The author of this grammatical treatise frequently mentions, 'it is so said', 'ancestors have said', 'the learned have said', 'the predecessors have codified', etc.
2. Some of the anthologists as well as the royal patrons who encouraged these collections are known by their names.
3. A. Srinivasaraghavan, *The Sangham Age*, Bharati Tamil Sangham, Calcutta, 1968, p. vii.
4. Tolkāppiyam, Poruḷ, 36.
5. Porunarāṭṭruppaḍai, Perumpanāṭṭruppaḍai, Ciṟupāṇāṭṭruppaḍai and Malaipaḍukaḍām.
6. Puṟanānūṟu, 48, 49, 64, 70, 103, 105, 133, 138, 141, 155, 180 Paṭiṟruppattu 40, 49, 57, 60, 66, 67, 78, 87.
7. Tolkāppiyam, poruḷ, 384.
8. There is such a controversy regarding the idyll called Nedunalvadai in Pattuppāṭṭu. The hero's spear is said to have been adorned with the neem garland which is the royal garland of the Pāṇḍiya dynasty. This leads the commentator Naccinākkiniyar to identify the hero of the poem as Pāṇḍiya prince and to declare it as not a genuine Agam poem.
9. Tolkāppiyam, Poruḷ, 2-20.
10. Kōvai is one of the ninety six kinds of literary species. It generally consists, of

400 verses in a particular metre, each dealing with an aspect of love, and all knit together in such a manner that the whole appears to be a story of a lover and his sweetheart depicted with continuity.

11. Tolkāppiyam, Poruḷ, 30.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid. 57-8.
14. Meenakshisundaram, T. P., *A History of Tamil Literature*, Annamalai University, Annamalainagar, 1965, p. 26.
15. Hudson, W. H., *An Introduction to the study of Literature*. London, II Ed. 1946, p. 97.
16. Translation taken from *Gems from the Treasure House of Tamil Literature* published by the Tamil Writers' Association.
17. Iṟaiyanār Kaḷaviyal, Nambi Agapporuḷ and Purapporuḷ Veṅbāmālai are some of the important grammatical treatises of the 8th to 11th centuries.
18. Tolkāppiyam, Poruḷ. 225-27.
19. Aganānūṟu, 18.
20. Ibid, 360.
21. Tolkāppiyam, Poruḷ, 50, 51,
22. Ibid, 30.
23. Aganānūṟu,, 6.
24. Kuṟuntogai, 163.
25. Kalittogai, 129.
26. Aganānūṟu, 243.
27. Naṟṟinaḷ, 196.
28. Aganānūṟu, 103.
29. Kuṟuntogai, 235.
30. See the author's *The Treatment of Nature in Sangham Literature*, S.I.S.S.W.P. Society, Madras, 1957, pp. 404, etc.
31. Winchester, C. T., *Some Principles of Literary Criticism*, New York, 1908, p. 132.
32. Puṟanānūṟu, 154.
33. Coomaraswamy Ananda, K., *The Transformation of Nature in Art*, Cambridge, 1935, p. 41.
34. Aganānūṟu, 2
35. Ibid, 3.
36. Puṟanānūṟu, 161.
37. Ibid, 13', Patiṟṟupattu, 1.
38. Hudson, W. H., *An Introduction to the study of Literature*, p. 17.
39. Translations are by Rev. G. U. Pope.
  40. Walter W. Greg, in his *Pastoral Poetry and Pastoral Drama* (p. 134) writes on Milton's *Lycidas* : The poem, in common with the whole class of allegorical pastorals, is undoubtedly open to the charge of artificiality, since, in truth, the pastoral garb can never illustrate, but only distort and obscure subjects drawn from other orders of civilization The dissatisfaction felt by many with *Lycidas* was noticed by Dr Johnson when he wrote: It is not to be considered the effusion of real passion, for passion runs not after remote allusions and obscure opinions. When there is leisure for fiction there is little grief.

41. Aganānūṟu, 116.
42. Ibid, 125.
43. Naṟṟinaṁ, 391.
44. *Journal of the University of Madras—Humanities*, Vol. XXX, No. 2, January, 1959.
45. Tolkāppiyam, Poruḷ, 58.
46. Puṟanānūṟu, 154.

K. KUNJUNNI RAJA

## The Influence of Sanskrit on the Dravidian Literature with Special Reference to Malayalam



THE influence of Sanskrit on the Dravidian literatures has been continuous and comprehensive and has affected not only the language and style, but also the themes and patterns, as well as the conventions and ideals of the literatures; the unity of Indian culture as reflected in these literatures has been mainly due to this benign influence of Sanskrit. Except in the case of Tamil which has an ancient and independent literature little affected by the impact of Sanskrit literature and keeping its individuality even when assimilating some of the influences of Sanskrit, all the other Dravidian literatures are fully saturated with Sanskrit literary traditions and their main works are often free translations and adaptations or feeble imitations of the Sanskrit models.

Among the Dravidian literatures Tamil is the richest and has a continuous history extending to more than two thousand years. It has held its independence and individuality in the face of incessant and strong cultural impacts from Sanskrit literature; even when influenced to some extent, it has held its own feet firmly in its indigenous background and even now it remains less affected than

the other literatures by the impact of Sanskrit or even English. This does not mean that there has not been any influence.

*Tolkāppiyam* is the earliest of the Tamil works now extant ; it deals with Tamil linguistics and grammar, as well as poetics and poetic conventions. This does not represent the beginning of Tamil literature, but presupposes centuries of vigorous literary activity, setting patterns of literary behaviour. From references to Sanskrit language and literature found therein, it is clear that by that time Tamil had already come into intimate cultural contact with Sanskrit. Direct borrowing of Sanskrit words when they fall within the Tamil phonemic system, or accepting them after transforming the words to suit the system if they contain non-Tamil phonemes is allowed. *Eluttu* 102 says that scriptures of the Brahmins describe how the air touches the various places of articulation before they come out of the navel. Among figures of speech the simile is described and the term used is *uvamai*. Dealing with emotions the text enumerates eight, together with 32 minor feelings, corresponding to the *Rasas* and *Sañcaribhāvas*. The stages in the development of love are described in detail. But in all such cases the treatment in the Tamil text is not the same though the parallelism is obvious. The distinction of poems as *Agam* and *Puram*, and as *Kaḷavu* and *Kāṛpu* has no parallel in Sanskrit. The pattern of literature reflected in the *Tolkāppiyam* and actually found in the ancient *Sangham* works is clearly Tamil.

The *Sangham* works show great familiarity with the Vedic culture and Sanskrit literature. References to the four Vedas (nānmaṛai), Vedic sacrifices by the Brahmin's (veḷvi), *Rājasūya* performed by kings (Rājasūyam veṭṭa Perunarkillī); Vedic gods like Indra, Marut and Agni and Purāṇic legends are found in plenty. The story of Indra-Ahalyā legend 'culminating in both the erring lovers being cursed' by Gautama (Paripādal, 19); and that of Guruḍa releasing his mother Vinata from servitude to Kardū, by bringing *nectar* from heaven (*ibid.* 1 verses 3, 9) are mentioned. Incidents connected with the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Bhārata* are also referred to in the *Sangham* works. Ūpodi Pacuṅguḍaiyār says (*Puram* 378) that the rich ornaments received by him from Ilancet Cenni were worn wrongly by the poor women of his family, not knowing where to wear what, just like the monkeys, when they saw the bundle of ornaments thrown down by Sītā while being carried away by Rāvaṇa in the aerial chariot. The poet Kaḍuvan Mallanār (*Agam.* 70) says that the citizens became silent on hearing about the betrothal of the heroine just like the birds on the banyan tree under which Rāma was having a secret conference



became silent at the show of his hand. Later Tonḍaradipodi Ālvar in his Prabandham says that the squirrels helped Rāma in building the dam by dipping their bodies in water and rolling on the sand alternately, while the great monkeys were transporting rocks to build the dam. We may note that these incidents are not found in Vālmiki's *Rāmāyaṇa*. Rāvaṇa's unsuccessful attempt in trying to uproot the Kailāsa mount is also referred to (*Kali*, 38); the story of Paraśurāma's annihilation of the Royal families is also mentioned in *Agam*. 220. The story of Bhārata war is mentioned (*Puram*. 2, *Agam* 233, etc.). There is a story of a Tamil king feeding the armies of both the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas during the Mahābhārata war; he is known as Perumcotruḍiyan.

The golden age of Tamil literature is the Sangham period, when lyrics and idylls dealing with war and love were written dramatically describing situations from the life of the people. Towards the close of this period came epigrams dealing with moral principles and ethics, under the influence of Jains and Buddhists, the most important being the *Kural* by Tiruvaḷḷuvar, divided into three sections *Aram*, *Poruḷ* and *Kāmam* corresponding to the three Purusarthas.

The age of the epics produced the five great epics of which the *Cilappatikāram* by the Kerala prince Ilamkovaṭikal, the *Maṇimekalai* (which quotes the *Kural*) by Cāttanār and the Jīvaka Cintāmaṇi by Tirutakka Tevar are extant. The *Brhatkathā* of Guṇāḍhya whose original in Paisācī Prakrit is lost has been adapted into Tamil in the *Peruṅkatai*.

With the revival of Hinduism and Sanskrit under the Pallava kings from the sixth century Tamil began to feel the Sanskrit influence to a greater extent. The *Tevāram* works of the Śaiva Saints Appar, Sambandhar and, Sundarar and the *Nālāyiraprabandham* by the Vaiṣṇava Ālvars belong to this period. The story of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* were written in Tamil *Veṅpā* metre.

Sanskrit and Prakrit metres later influenced Tamil and the *Viruttam* in lines of 16 or 17 syllables became popular; this is not an imitation of the Sanskrit metre, but an indigenous growth, perhaps under its influence. The *Kambarāmāyaṇa*, the most popular work in Tamil on the Rāmāyaṇa theme is written in this *viruttam*. Kamban follows Vālmiki, but makes many changes and additions from aesthetic and ethical considerations; in his descriptions, portrayal of characters and imagery Kamban is quite original.

In the field of philosophy there have been several original works, besides translations and adaptations from Sanskrit. The

*Raivalyanavanītam* is an excellent and original Tamil work on Advaita. The Sanskrit *Śivabhaktivilāsa* on the 63 Śaiva saints, ascribed to Upamanyu, is based on Tamil sources like the *Periya Purāṇam* of Cekkīlār.

Next to the Tamil literature Kannada literature is the most ancient; the earliest extant Kannada work is the *Kavirājamārga* ascribed to the Rāṣṭrakūṭa king Nṛpatuṅga (A.D. 814-77). This work on poetics presupposes a long tradition of poetical literature in Kannada, and actually refers to several writers and discusses stanzas from others. Kannada literature was exclusively Jaina from the tenth century till the middle of the twelfth century; the *Ādi Purāṇa* and the *Pampa Bhārata* by Pampa, *Śānti Purāṇa* by Ponna and the *Gadāyuddha* and the *Ajītapurāṇa* by Ranna were produced during the tenth century. Pampa *Rāmāyaṇa* appeared in the twelfth century. The Jaina versions of the *Bhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa* stories were thus popularized in Karṇāṭaka, along with stories about Jain Tirthaṅkaras. The next stage of Kannada literature begins with Basava who revived the ancient Viraśaiva or Liṅgāyat religion. There was a great outburst of religious literature—especially the *Vacana* literature, in simple epigrammatic and allusive poetic prose pointing out the vanity of riches and the uselessness of book-learning and advocating Bhakti towards Śiva purity in life and non-attachment towards worldly riches. The changes in language from Old Kannada to modern Kannada took place during this Liṅgāyat period. A revolt against Sanskrit and preference for Dravidian metres and style is seen in this literature. The six-lined *Ṣaṭpadi* and the three lined *Tripadi* and the lyrical *regales* with refrains became popular. The *Basava purāṇa* and the *Padmarāja Purāṇa* were written in this *Ṣaṭpadi* metre.

The Vaiṣṇava revival started in the south by Rāmānuja and Madhva gradually grew in intensity and importance and there was great rivalry between the Liṅgāyats and the Vaiṣṇavas. The Kannada version of the *Mahābhārata* by Kumāra Vyāsa appeared in the fifteenth century; then came the Kannada versions of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Bhāgavata*. Short popular devotional songs by Vaiṣṇava writers like Purandaradāsa (16th century) appeared; Kanakadāsa also wrote Purāṇic stories in *Ṣaṭpadi*, treating also on *nīti*, *bhakti* and *vairagya*.

The seventeenth century produced three important writers, the Jaina Bhaṭṭa Akaṣaṅka, author of the *Karṇāṭaka Sabdānusaśāna* in Sanskrit Sutras and Kannada explanations on Kannada grammar; the Liṅgāyat Ṣaḍakṣaradeva who wrote the *Rājaśekhara* in Campū style and the Vaiṣṇava Lakṣmīśa, the author of the *Jaimini Bhārata*.

Free translations of Sanskrit dramas into Kannada started with the *Nitravindāgovinda* of Siṅgarāya based on Harṣa's *Ratnāvali*.

The modern period came with the impact from the West, when Sanskrit had to give way to English as the dominating influence in Kannada literature.

Telugu Literature is usually classified into four sections: *Āśu* or extempore, *Mathura* or lyrical, *Citra* or ornate and *Vistara* or epics; these existed from the eleventh century onwards, but only the last is recognized as real literature. The indigenous Deśi type of literature existed in songs and sonnets and was fairly independent of Sanskrit; the Mārgi style fashioned after the Sanskrit model in form and content began with Nannaya (A.D. 1020). The translation of the *Mahābhārata* was done by three poets Nanniah, Tikkanna (1220-1300), and Errāpragaḍa (1280-1350). The *Rāmāyaṇa* has been translated into Telugu by Gona Buddha Reddy (A.D. 1230-40). The *Bhāgavata* translated by Potana (1400-75) is much bigger than the original. The style is full of Sanskritisms, though the poet gives local colour now and then.

The period of Prabandha started under the inspiration of Emperor Kṛṣṇadevarāya (1509-30). There were eight famous poets in his court, called the Aṣṭadiggajas, including the popular Tenali Rāma. The themes of the Prabandhas are taken from the Sanskrit Purāṇas, and the style is ornate and artificial. After the disintegration of the Vijayanagaram empire there was a period of stagnation for Telugu literature, when we get only ineffective imitations of the Prabandhas of the earlier writers. The modern period came with the impact of English literature. 'Simplicity of expression and sincerity of emotion and natural figures of speech are again becoming prevalent literary modes, and the literature has emerged from the unnaturalisms and idiosyncrasies of the Prabandha period.'

Malayalam is one of the four main cultivated languages belonging to the Dravidian family, and is spoken by more than fifteen million people on the West Coast of south India now forming the linguistic state of Kerala and also by a large number of Malayalis living in other parts of India. Both modern Malayalam and modern Tamil converge on the ancient Tamil which may be called Old Tamil-Malayalam. The West-Coast dialect had a natural growth and later absorbed and assimilated the rich treasures of the Sanskrit language. It accepted all the non-Dravidian phonemes of the Sanskrit language, and in the literary field there was a successful attempt at mixing Sanskrit

and Malayalam words in what is known as the Maṇipravāla (gem and coral) style.

The independence of Malayalam as a separate language starts from the eighth or ninth century A.D. From the twelfth century onwards there had been a rich and continuous literary output, and at present Malayalam literature is in the forefront among the literatures of India, especially in the fields of poetry and realistic fiction.

Early literature consisted mostly of free translations and adaptations of Sanskrit works like the epics and the Puranas. Two parallel developments are clearly seen in the early period ; one as in the *Rāmacaritam* written on the model of the Tamil works, eschewing even all the non-Dravidian phonemes and the other overloaded with Sanskrit words in the macaronic Maṇipravāla style. Popular folk songs must have existed, but they were not considered as literature. In course of time, the Tamil influence became less and less; scholars began to write in pure Sanskrit, or Maṇipravāla; and the literature was completely influenced by Sanskrit both in form and thought. This state of affairs continued till about the end of the nineteenth century.

The *Rāmacarita* containing 1814 stanzas divided into 164 sections belongs to the type of literature called *Pāṭṭu*, which is in pure Dravidian metres using rhymes, and excludes all non-Dravidian phonemes of the Sanskrit language. To some extent it is as artificial as the Maṇipravāla style of combining Sanskrit and Malayalam; it contains Sanskrit words with Sanskrit suffixes and even Malayalam words with Sanskrit suffixes, though rarely; e.g.,

*Ukkiraya nama, nānmukāya nama* (96.9)

*Camṇuvāya nama tāṇuvāya nama* (96.11)

*Tatsama* and Dravidianized *Tadbhava* words are borrowed from Sanskrit as in Tamil, and greater emphasis is laid on Tamil construction and Tamil words, so that the first impression one gets about the work is that it is semi-Tamil. This led some scholars to believe that the work represented a stage in the development of Malayalam when it had not fully become independent of Tamil. But it is now established that the work is in an artificial Tamilized style. From the literary point of view it is an important work; the descriptions and imagery follow the Sanskrit classical pattern; and *Bhakti* is advocated.

The *Rāmakathappāṭṭu* by Ayyampilla Āsān, recently recovered completely and critically edited by P. K. Narayana Pillai, is another voluminous ancient Malayalam poem on the Rāmāyaṇa theme; the influence of Tamil is seen very much, but there is no attempt at eschewing non-Tamil phonemes as in the *Rāmacaritam*. Next came the works of the poets of Niranam who wrote on Puranic themes in the Dravidian metre in a mixed language borrowing loan words from Sanskrit and Tamil. Rāma Paṇikkar wrote the *Bhāgavata* the *Rāmāyaṇa* etc., Mādhava Paṇikkar wrote the *Bhagavadgīta* and Śaṅkara Paṇikkar wrote the *Bhāratamālā*. Among the early Tamil-influenced works must be included the early campus of which three fragments are available—*Uṇṇiyāṭicaritam* *Uṇṇiyaccicaritam* and *Uṇṇiccirutevicaritam*. The themes are secular and deal with Kerala heroines and their activities and the social customs and manners of Kerala are described; they contain verses in Sanskrit metre and passages in Malayalam metres instead of prose passages. The *Uṇṇinīlisandeśa* and the *Kokasandēśa* written on the model of Kālidāsa's *Meghadūta* and the Sanskrit Sandeśa kāvyas of Kerala, giving much interesting information about the social, religious and geographical conditions of the land in the medieval period may also be considered as belonging to the Tamil school, though they contain Sanskrit words in plenty.

The *Kṛṣṇappāṭṭu* written by Ceruśseri (or Punam ?) under the patronage of Kolattiri king Udayavarman in the fifteenth century shows the transition stage from the Tamil dominated to the pure Malayalam. The imagery and figures of speech are all taken from classical Sanskrit literature ; but the metre is the Dravidian *Mañjarī*. The language is pure Malayalam eschewing hard Sanskrit words completely, but the verbal terminations are adhered to.

The Sanskrit-dominated stream of Malayalam starts from the beginning itself, and owes its origin to the Cākyārs, the professional actors of Sanskrit dramas in Kerala, who used to explain the Sanskrit passages in Malayalam, often introducing humorous parodies in a macaronic mixture of Sanskrit and Malayalam. The Nambutiri Brahmins of Kerala who were great scholars in Sanskrit encouraged and enriched this type of literature. Many stray verses praising local heroines, chiefs and deities are found written in this style. And in the fourteenth century we get a detailed textbook in Sanskrit, called the *Līlātilaka* dealing with linguistics, poetics and conventions of this type of literature called the *Maṇipravāla*, defined as *Bhāṣāsaṃsk*.

*rtayoga*, a harmonious and sweet combination of Malayalam words and Sanskrit words keeping their declensional and conjugational terminations intact. The best example of this type of literature is the *Candrotsava* written in the Kāvya style using figures and imagery as in Sanskrit Kāvya, but dealing with the life of a courtesan girl and the moon-festival celebrated by her in which all the leading poets of the time, the Brahmin Saṅghas and the courtesans participate. From the aesthetic point of view it is one of the best works in Malayalam, though from the moral standpoint its value may be questioned. The later campu kavyas on puranic themes like the *Bhāratacampu* and the *Rāmayanacampu*, Mahisamaṅgalam's *Bhāṣāiṣadhacampu* and Nilakanṭha's *Rājaratnāvalīya* contain more of Sanskrit influence, and the style is a mixture of verses in Sanskrit metres and prose which is almost similar to passages in Dravidian metre; a strong local colour is found in these texts. Though in the *Līlātīlaka* it is specifically stated that the best style is that where there is little of Sanskrit, the tendency was to add more and more of Sanskrit, with the result that long compounds and the Sanskrit structure often stood in the way of this literature reaching the common man who had to be satisfied with folk songs and ballads.

The *Maṇipravāla* style is not unknown in Tamil. Even in the inscriptions of Rajaraja Cola we have *Maṇipravāla* and *Viracoliyam* in the eleventh century speaks about the *Maṇipravāla*. Even grammatical works of this period like *Takka-yaka-pparani* of Oṭṭakūttan show influence of Sanskrit on Tamil poetry of the time. Cekkīḷar's *Periyapurāṇam* reasserted the natural idiom of Tamil and popularized it; and Pavanantire introduced the old theories of Tamil grammar. Still, *Maṇipravāla* style continued in the prose works and the philosophical commentaries, especially of the Jainas and Vaisnavas. *Maṇipravāla* verses like

*arimpu polā tava dantapankṭiḥ*  
*irunpu pola hrdayam kimāsīt.*

were not accepted by the people.

In this connection it may be noted that even in the medieval Kawi literature in Java we find long poems written in the *Maṇipravāla* style, mixing Sanskrit and the local language; e.g. *Sumanu-santaka* of the twelfth century on the story of Aja and Indumati, *Arjunavivāha* and *Smaradabhana*. I attach here one illustration:

*Samar divāratri nekang surālaya*  
*Dening prakāśātmaka sarva bhāsvara*



*Anging sekarning Kumudākaring kulam  
Muang cakravākin papasah lavan priya.*

(Night and day could not be distinguished in the abode of the gods owing to the inherent light of objects and only the Kumudas and Cakravākas, separated from their beloved, proclaimed the night.)

Modern Malayalam literature may be said to have begun with Tuñcat Ezhuttachan, who translated the *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* and wrote the *Bhārata* in Kilippāṭṭu style, using Dravidian metres; his main aim was to inculcate Bhakti among the people and educate them and raise their moral standard. Simple and common Sanskrit words, even those with Sanskrit terminations were sometimes used; but clarity was fully maintained. This set the model for several works on Puranic themes. The name of Puntanam, author of the *Jñānappāna* and the *Santānagopālam*, deserves special mention; his style is even now the standard for perfect and pure Malayalam. The two parallel developments, one leaning towards Tamil and the other leaning on Sanskrit, converge into a single stream with Eluttachan and Pūntānam.

The Kathakali literature started with the *Rāmakatha* of Koṭṭārakkara Rāja in the seventeenth century, and was developed by the Rāja of Koṭṭayam, Prince Aśvati Tirunāl Rāmavarma, Uṇṇāyi Vāriyar Irayimman Tampi and others. The same pattern is followed in all works. The scenes are introduced by Jong Sanskrit verses; the conversation for the characters is through musical *Padas* which is in Malayalam. The language is musical and tries to echo the sentiment. From the literary point of view the best is the *Nalacaritam* by Uṇṇāyi Vāriyar.

The name of Kuñcan Nambiyār who started the literature and the dance-form of Tullal needs special mention here, since it was he who brought Malayalam literature to the ordinary masses by the use of the ordinary language understood by them and spiced his poems fully with an overdose of local colour, humour and satire. The themes of his poems are all taken from Itihasas and Purāṇas; what the Cākyār did inside the temples while explaining Purāṇic stories, he did throughout the country by his Tullal songs.

Impact from the West through English literature brought new life to Malayalam literature and helped in the development of prose and fiction; but it did not oust Sanskrit at all. In fact, there was great enthusiasm for the revival of Sanskrit. Direct and faithful translations of a large number of Sanskrit classical works came in quick succession

; beginning with the translation of *Śākuntala* by Keralavarma ; and of the *Uttararāmacarita* by Cāttu Kuṭṭi Mannāḍiār; many of the classical Sanskrit works have had several translations. The *Mahābhārata* had a literal translation from Kuññikuṭṭan Thampurān completed in three years while Vaḷḷattol Nārāyaṇa Menon translated Vālmiki's *Rāmāyaṇa*, four Purāṇas, many of Bhāsa's dramas, *Śākuntala* and the entire *R̥gveda*. Many of the original short poems of the renaissance period were based on Sanskrit themes; and even now Indian themes taken from Puranas are used as a background or symbol, or reinterpreted in the modern light. Besides the translations there have been annotated editions of these in Malayalam and prose translations by writers like Kuttikrishna Marar. Even now many of the leading poets are Sanskrit scholars and there is no taboo against Sanskrit words or themes.

Though a few decades ago it was demonstrated by Kundur Nārāyaṇa Menon that even long poems could be written in pure Malayalam eschewing all Sanskrit words, it was only a sort of *tour de force* and did not become the fashion. Sanskrit words have become part of the Malayalam language, just as Sanskrit literature and culture has become one of the powerful traditions inspiring Malayalam literature. It is mainly in the field of fiction that Sanskrit influence is not felt appreciably.

Sanskrit language and literature form the common property of the whole of India, and South India's contribution to the literature is immense and vast, both in volume and quality and also in the influence effected. Philosophers like Nāgārjuna, Śāṅkara, Prabhākara, Rāmānuja and Madhva, poets and scholars like Bhāravi, Daṇḍin, Appayya Diksita, Līlāśuka and Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa and a host of others belonged to the South. It was South India that preserved the Sanskrit culture and even Sanskrit manuscripts, as is well known in the case of Bhasa's dramas, the *Arthaśāstra*, etc. The ancient tradition of the staging of original Sanskrit plays has been preserved only in Kerala. Even the ancient traditions of Vedic chantings are best preserved in South India. The Campu form of literature in Sanskrit owes its origin to the Dravidian literature. The Himalayas and the Ganges, Śrī Rāma and Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Kāśī and Rāmeśvara, Kālidāsa and Śāṅkara—all these form the common heritage of Indians; and hence Sanskrit influence on Dravidian literatures does not mean a foreign influence or even North Indian influence.



SHAILAJA KARANDIKAR

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## Classical Influence on Marathi Literature



THE ancient Indian classics are numerous and of different types. They begin with the simple psalms in the Vedas that sing the praise of the different guardian deities in Nature. Then come the Upanishads that constitute the basis of India's philosophical thought in its simplest and the most concrete form. The epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, that sing of the lives and glories of Rama and Krishna, respectively, have universally been lauded as of the highest value. The Puranas, particularly the *Bhagavata Purana* that narrates the life of Krishna in greater detail and also preaches the philosophy of devotion based on the knowledge of the ultimate Reality, constitute the religious classics. Artistic classics like *Raghuvansa*, *Kumarasambhava*, *Sakuntala*, *Uttararamcharita*, *Mricchakatika*, and the three *Satakas* of Bhartrihari as well as the *Bhaminibilasas* have also to be taken into consideration. All these have exercised considerable influence on Marathi writers.

The first available Marathi work dates as far back as 118 A.D. Printing then was yet a remote thing, and hence literature was transmitted to the masses through the oral tradition. The early Marathi writers were philosopher-saints and religious poets gifted with great and singular virtues, and dedicated their lives to the task of spreading religious ideas and philosophical thoughts to the

unlettered masses. They attacked the lethargy and loose living of the priestly class and presented a systematic account of philosophy and religion that they had received. Thus was created a set of traditional values that had tangibly impressed the literature produced by subsequent generations.

The ancient poets belonged to different castes and sects, but all of them preached the philosophy of devotion, the doctrine of Advaita Bhakti. Mukundaraj was the first to preach it in his *Vivekasindhu* (1188 A.D.). It is an independent and original composition; whereas the *Jnanesvari* of the greatest Marathi saintpoet Jnanesvara, written in 1290, is an exhaustive, commentary on the *Bhagavatagita*. The lyrics of Jnanesvara, of his two brothers and also of his sister, echo the same spirit of unswerving devotion to the Almighty. In fact, all the Marathi writers, ancient and modern, were fully aware of the great importance of the *Bhagavatagita*. Apart from numerous word to word translation in the original or in different metres, there are a good number of detailed commentaries, in both prose and verse. Vamana Pandit wrote his *Yatharthadipika* with a view to preaching his own philosophy of devotion to Krishna as the incarnation of God. *Camatkari* of Ramaballabhadasa *Citsadanandalahri* of Ranganatha *Narayanakirti* of Narayanadasa, *Ratnakar* of Ratnakar, *Balabodhini* of Acyutasrama, etc., are a few other works that come immediately to mind.

During the Muslim rule both the tenor and tempo of life changed considerably. But the cult of devotion and the desire for the attainment of salvation remained firmly rooted. Saint Ekanatha, who belonged to this period, turned to the narratives in the authentic epics as well as to the Puranas as a suitable medium for illustrating the same philosophy in actual practice. He represented Rama and Krishna as the best human manifestations of the supreme Reality, and utilized their life-stories as a medium for placing before the public the highest cultural, moral and spiritual values. At that time the Sanskrit Ramayana had not, reached the stage of devotional mythology. Hence, Ekanatha borrowed the theme of his *Bhavartharamayana* from the Ramayana of Valmiki but followed the manner of the *Bhagavata Purana* and *Yogavasistha* as well as of the *Adhyatma-Ramayana* in compiling his own version of the Rama story so as to suit his purpose of preaching devotion.

In fact, the *Ramayana* came to have the largest number of Marathi versions. Besides the encyclopedic work of Ekanatha, there are the *Balaramayana* of Muktesvara, *Ramavijaya* of Sridhara, seven different

versions of Giridhara, one by Madhavasvami, and a hundred and eight by Moropant, and many others. The *Mahabharata* too had many Marathi translators, like Nama Vishnudasa, Muktesvara, Sridhara, Moropant and others. As for *Bhagvata*, Marathi poets seem to have had little interest in the mythological details like creation, deluge, etc., peculiar characteristics of a Purana. Other such works translated widely in Marathi, in whole and also in parts, are *Harivansa* and *Jaimini-Asvamedha*.

Learned poets like Narendra, Nagesa, Vitthala and Moropant were highly impressed by the artistic form of the Panchamahakavyas, like *Raghuvansa* and *Kumarasambhava*. But their aim was not mere entertainment; they too craved for religious devotion. Raghunatha Pandit produced a Marathi version of a part of *Naisadha* of Sriharsa, while Damodara Pandit imitated *Sisupalavadha* of Magha in his work of the same name. Didactic and gnomic passages too were freely translated and imitated. There are quite a few Marathi versions of the three *Satakas* of Bhartrihari, of *Bhaminivilasa* and of *Gangalahari* of Jagannatha Pandit. *Manobodha* of Vamana Pandit, *Manace Sloka* of Ramadasa, and the *Fatakas* (lashes) of Amritaray are a few instances of didactic poetry; the *Karunastakas*, stotras and *aratis* of various poets may be cited as illustrations of Marathi gnomic and psalmic verse.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century there was an outburst of strong patriotic and nationalistic feelings in Marathi literature, which were best expressed through the medium of well-known classical themes. Visnusastri Ciplankar, the father of modern Marathi prose invariably used to begin his articles in *Nibandhamala* with a suitable quotation from one of the epics, or from later classical writers like Bhartrihari, Bhavabhuti, Jagannatha Pandit and others. His followers including Lokamanya Tilak and Professor S. M. Paranjape kept up the practice which lent a unique force and expressiveness to their style. Captions like 'Punascha Hari Om', 'Maranantani Vairani', or 'Mayyapyastha na cette Tvayi mama sutaram Esa Rajan gato asmi' conveyed ideas which could never have been brought home through elaborate discussions. They urged their readers to rise to the occasion in the names of Rama and Krishna and asked in the words of Karma, 'Has the world become void of warriors?' 'Nirviramurvitalam?' The novel form, like the essay, was also imported from the West, but it came to be denoted by the name of the Sanskrit classic, *Kadambari* of Bana. Quite a number of novels preach the time-honoured moral values that are laid down in the

ancient classics. The classical theme too has been made use of by novelists like Sane Guruji, V. S. Khandekar and G. N. Dandekar and others. Theirs is an attempt to present a new interpretation of the classical stories and characters in the light of modern psychology.

Modern Marathi drama has drawn even more freely on classical themes. The lead was given by Vishnudasa Bhave in 1842 with his mythological stage-plays. By the end of the nineteenth century, many dramatists wrote plays based on various episodes of the heroic epics and based on the plays of Kalidasa, to inflame the patriotic feelings of the people. *Kicakavadha* of Khadilkar proved to be very effective in this particular regard for airing the feeling of deep hatred for British rule in India, and was subsequently proscribed by the government. B. V. Varerkar was a staunch advocate of modern social values like equality and freedom. But he, too, sometimes drew upon the epics for suitable plots. There are plays which even suggest a revival of the classical form and spirit in modern drama.

In the field of poetry too the classical theme seems to have come into prominence once again. Madgulkar narrated the classical story of the *Ramayana* through the modern lyrical medium. The success achieved by that work has inspired quite a few poets to present the stories of the *Mahabharata* and the *Bhagavata* too in the same lyrical form. The artistic epic had already inspired a few poets like Sadhudasa whose *Ramayana Mahakavya* adheres strictly to the definition of an artistic epic formulated by Dandin and others.

The *Ramayana* and the *Bhagavata* abound in myths and symbols. Marathi writers like Ekanatha and Krishnadayarnava have incorporated all of these into their voluminous Marathi versions. They have also woven new myths gathered probably from folklore into the lives of their heroes. Through such myths they could glorify certain places and personalities or objects, thus presenting them as worthy of respect and devotion. But while doing this, Marathi saints and poets also carried forward the process of development of the ancient epics by adapting them to the spirit and the circumstances of their own age. This proved to be particularly easy in the case of the Rama story, because of the myth of Valmiki having composed the *Ramayana* in a hundred crore verses before the birth of Rama. Additions and alterations made by Marathi poets are in keeping with the epic tradition of supporting and justifying events that appeared to be abnormal or unnatural. However, the most glaring alteration has been effected in the form of the spirit of devotion that is found to predominate the Marathi versions. In the *Ramayana* of

Valmiki, the philosophy of devotion is almost conspicuous by its absence. But deeply impressed by the spirit of devotion, the Marathi poets transformed each and every character in the Rama story into a devotee. Even Ravana is represented as practising Virodha Bhakti.

Siva worship, or the worship of an idol is but rarely mentioned in the Uttara-Kanda; but Sridhar wrote at a time when Siva worship was very common. So he described Rama as erecting Siva temples, wherever he went. Thus the Marathi poets were influenced not only by the matter, but also by the manner of the classical poets. Particularly the Rama stories bear a distinct stamp of the manner of the *Bhagavata Purana*.

Exaggeration in numbers, e.g., in those of arrows discharged or soldiers killed or minutes passed, etc., gives an indication of their treatment of time and space. Limits of space and time are utterly disregarded, so that time comes almost to a standstill and space seems to know no bounds.

The above survey should suffice to indicate the extent to which the classical literature of the past has influenced our literature in both its theme and the manner of developing the theme. Last but not the least, come the classical diction and style which have raised them to the distinct position of being of the highest order. Here too the Marathi men of letters are considerably indebted to the classics. Homely similes and profuse illustrations form a distinct feature of the classics. They were particularly useful in the elucidation of the abstract philosophy of the Advaita Vedanta. Marathi philosopher saints made free use of appropriate similes and illustrations from the *Bhagavadgita* and the *Bhagavata*. The Ghatakasa and the Mathakasa, for instance, could easily be understood by even the common man and could convey much more than the mere words.

Long-drawn similes and metaphors based on the ultimate unity of the individual soul with the Eternal are a special feature of our ancient narrative poetry, particularly the *Svayamvaras*. Ekanatha, Venabai and such other poets have described all the details of a marriage ceremony in long-drawn metaphors.

Even the poets of today sometimes fall back upon classical phraseology and imagery in elucidating their modern ideas of socialism, materialism, etc. The last lines of Vedic benediction. '*Saha nau bhunakta saha virayam kara-vavabai*' have been twisted by B. S. Mardhekar as '*Saha anu taraktu, saha viryam daravavabai*'. Similarly, by twisting some lines from the *Bhagavatgita* he has ironically described the fate of modern generation. Such twisting is most effective in

bringing home the disappointment and disillusionment that was experienced after the second world war which shattered all time-honoured traditional values.

Most of the Marathi metres too have developed from Sanskrit metres. The two heroic epics are mostly written in the simple but sweet *anustup* metre. The *Ovi* and *Abhanga* of the saints, though not the same as the Sanskrit *anustup* are but variations of the same. The *Abhanga* and *Ovi* as well as the formal *anustup* are widely in use even today. The new poets are inventing and using a wide variety of new metres, including free verse which is gradually gaining ground. Yet the rigid *Ganavrittis* have not fallen entirely into disuse. The metre of the *Gitagovinda* of Jayadeva has also been widely imitated for its sweet music. In short, Marathi literature can boast of having maintained and even carried forward the tradition of Sanskrit classics through all these centuries. It is this tradition that has preserved the innate unity in the spirit of Marathi literature, in spite of the immense diversity that was produced by the overwhelming influence of English literature during the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries.



*King Killi in Combat*

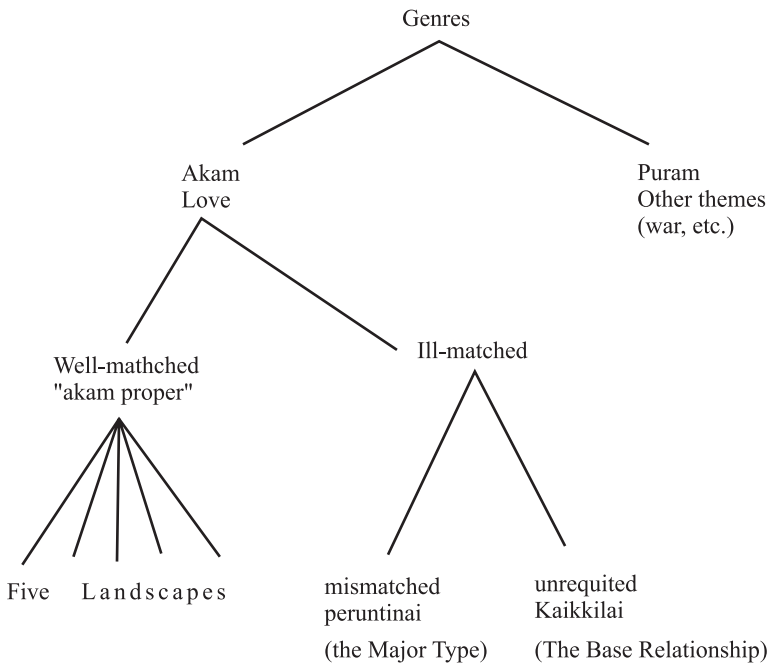
The festival hour close at hand  
 his woman in labour  
 the sun setting behind pouring rains

the needle in the cobbler's hand is in a frenzy of haste  
 stitching thongs  
 for the cot of a king

such was the swiftness  
 of the king's tackles,  
 an *atti* garland round his neck  
 as he wrested with the enemy  
 come all the way  
 to take the land.

Cāttantaiyār  
 Puṛanaṇuṟu 82  
 Genre vākai

DIAGRAM 1





CHART

Tamil 'Correspondences'

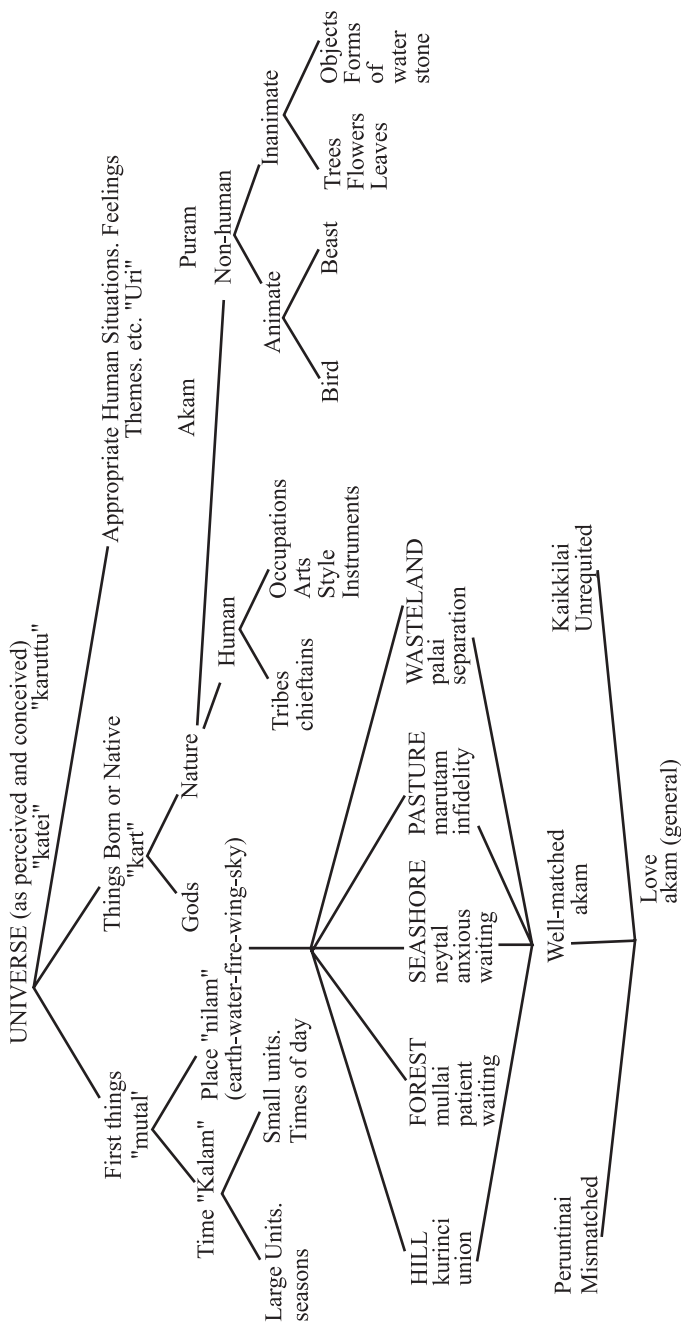


DIAGRAM 2

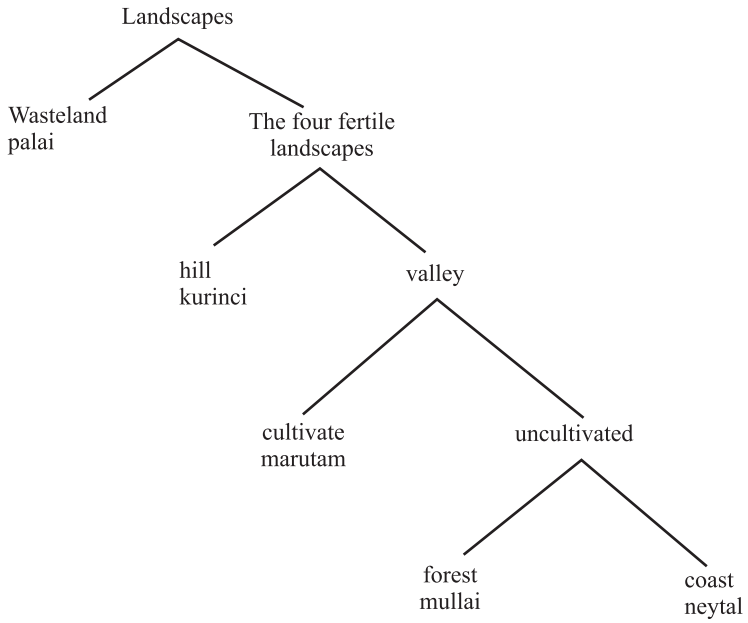
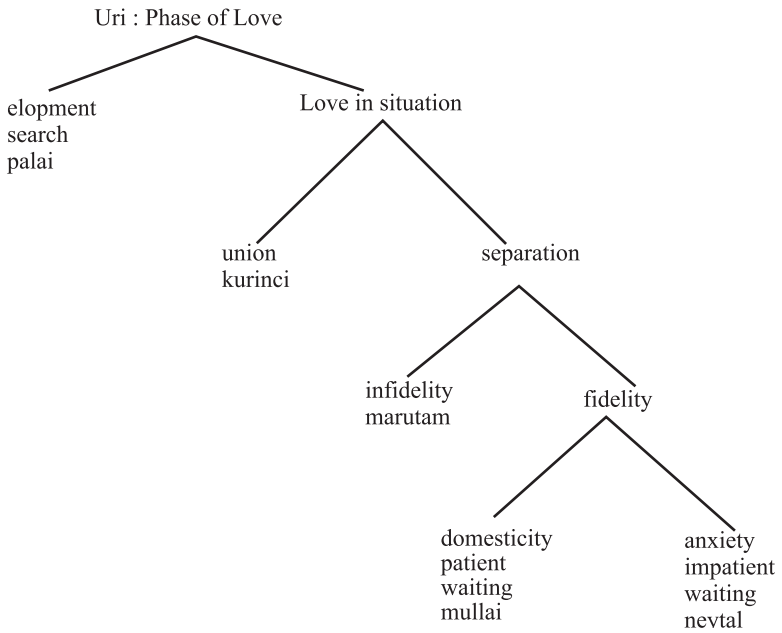


DIAGRAM 3



Tamil Poetics  
Some Features of the Five Landscapes

	Lover's Union	Patient waiting, domesticity	Lover's unfaith- fulness, "sulking scenes"	Anxiety in love, separation	Elopement, Hardship, separation from lover or parents
Characteristic flower (name of region and poetic genre)	kurinci	mullai (jasmine)	marutam	neytal	pālai (an evergreen tree)
Landscape	mountains	forest, pasture	countryside	seashore	wasteland (mountain or forest perched by summer midday)
Time	night	late evening	morning	nightfall	late frost
Season	cold season early frost	rainy season	all seasoned	all seasons	summer
Bird	peacock parrot	sparrow, jungle hen	stork, heron	seagull	dove, eagle
Beast (Including fish, reptile, etc.)	monkey elephant horse bull	deer	buffalo freshwater fish	crocodile shark	fatigued elephant, tiger, or wolf/lizard
Tree or plant	jackfruit bamboo venkai	konrai	mango	autumn punnai	ōmai cactus
Water	waterfall	rivers	pool	wells sea	waterless wells, stagnant water
Occupation and people	hill tribes guarding millet harvest gathering honey	ploughman	pastoral occupations	selling fish and salt fisherfolk	wayfarers pandits

Poem 68

What She said\*

The bare root of the bean is pink  
 like the leg of a jungle hen,  
 and herds of deer attack its overripe pods.  
 For the harshness of this early frost  
 there is no cure  
 but the breast of my man.

Allur Nanmullai

Kuṛ 68

from *The Interior Landscape*, 1967

ulluṛai                  inner substance or ‘implicit metaphor’

Poem 8

*What the Concubine said:*

You know he comes from  
 where the freshwater shark in the pools  
 catch with their mouth  
 the mangoes as they fall, ripe  
 from the trees on the edge of the field.

At our place  
 he talked big.

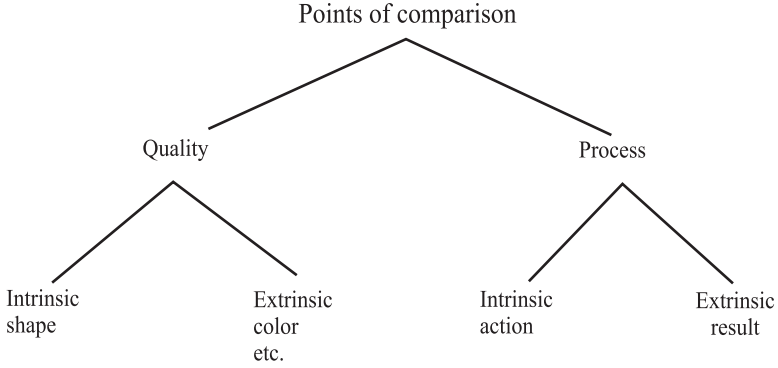
                                Now, back in his own,  
 when others raise their hands  
 and feet,  
 he will raise his too:  
 like a doll  
 in the mirror  
 he will shadow  
 every last wish  
 of his son’s dear mother.

Alankuti Vankanar

Kuṛ 8

from *The Interior Landscape*, 1967

\* The season is early frost (kuṛinci), but the bird mentioned is a jungle hen (mullai), the beast is a deer (mullai). The mixture of kuṛinci (lovers’ union) and mullai (patient waiting) brings out effectively the exact nuance of the girl’s mood, “mixing memory and desire”.



### What He Said

As a little white snake  
 With lovely stripes on its young body  
 troubles the jungle elephant  
     this slip of a girl  
     her teeth like sprouts of new rice  
     her wrists stacked with bangles  
 troubles me.

Catti Nāṭaṇār  
 Kuṟ 119  
 from *The Interior Landscape*, 1967

### *What Her Girl-Friend Said to Him:*

when he wanted to come by night  
 Man-eaters, male crocodiles with crooked legs,  
 cut off the traffic on these waterways.  
     But you,  
 in your love, will come to her swimming  
 through the shoals of fish in the black salt marshes.  
     And she,  
 she will suffer in her simpleness.  
     And I,  
 what can I do but shudder in my heart  
 like a woman watching her poisoned twins ?

Kavaimakaṇ  
 Kuṟ 324  
 from *The Interior Landscape*, 1967

## Puram/Akam correspondences

Puram	Uri	Akam	Uri	Poem features common to both
1 vetci-karantai	cattle-lifting prelude to war	kurinci	first union	night, hillside; clandestine affair
2 vañci	preparation for war	mullai	separation (patience)	forest, rainy season; separation from loved ones
3 uriñai -necci	siege	marutam	infidelity (conflict)	fertile area (city etc.), dawn; refusing entry
4 tumpai	battle	neytal	separation (anxiety)	seashore, open battleground, no season evening; grief
5 vakai	victory, ideals of achievement	palai	elopement, search for wealth, fame, etc.	any landscape, any clan; praise
6 kāñei	struggle for excellence; endurance	peruntinai	mismatched love	no landscape; struggle, defeat
7 *patan	elegy, praise for heroics asking for gifts, invective	kaikilai	unrequited love	no landscape; a one-sided relationship

\* Not the name of a tree or flower

No clear distinction is made in the puram between the last two and the rest as in the akam. Patan also appears to be a mixed class. Later writers separate the 'Ideal Akam Five-fold' from all the rest, count karantai (in 1) and nocci (in 3) as separate classes, add a 'general' class, and make a twelve-fold puram.

*When the neytal flowered*—in praise of King Cēralāṭaṇ

Fish leaping  
in fields of sheep.  
Rash unploughed sowing  
in the haunts of the wild boar.  
Big-eyed buffalo herds  
stopped by lilies in sugarcane beds.

Ancient cows bend  
over water-flowers  
where once busy dancers  
did the Devil's Mask.

The tall coconut, the sounding *marutam*  
now feed  
the mouth of a stream  
and a flowering pool.

Gone are the villages  
sung in song. Faces  
of terror instead of beauty,  
they look like a corpse

killed and stood up  
by Death.

For your rage  
water and village are one;  
waves of sugarcane blossom  
are one stalk of grass,  
the ashen babul of the twisted fruit  
twined with the giant black babul;  
the she-devil with the branching crest  
roams  
astraddle on the donkey;  
and the small persistent thorn  
is spread in the moving dust of battlefields.

The dead hearts of public places are filled  
with dirt and turds and silence,  
and the ruins chill  
all courage and desire.

But here,  
the sages have sought your woods.  
In open spaces the fighters play  
with their bright-jewelled women.  
The traveller is safe on the highway.  
The sellers of grain shelter their dear kin  
and shelter even the distant kin.  
The Silver Star will not go near  
the place of Mars. And it rains  
on the thirsty fields. Hunger has fled  
and taken Disease with her. O Great One,  
in your land it blossoms  
everywhere

Kumaṭṭur Kaṭṭaṇār  
Paṭiṟruppattu (The Ten Tens), Poem 15  
Genre: Pāṭāṇ  
from *The Interior Landscape*, 1967

The dark-clustered *nocci*  
blends with the land  
that knows no dryness;  
the colours on the leaves  
mob the eyes

We have seen that leaf  
on jewelled women  
on their lovely wide-angled mounds  
of venus.

Now the nocci-wreath lies slashed  
on the ground, so changed, so mixed  
with blood the vulture snatches it  
thinking it raw meat

We see this too  
just because a young man  
in love with war  
wore it for glory

Veṟipāṭiya Kāmakkāṇiyār  
Puṟaṇāṇūṟu 271  
Genre: nocci/vetci



*nocci*: the evergreen leaves of the nocci  
 were used as leaf-skirts by women  
 and as laurels by warriors.

O hunchback woman,  
   gentle  
 and crooked as a reflection  
 in the water,  
                                   what great good deeds  
 did you do that I should want you so?

(O mother! she swore to herself) Some  
 auspicious moment made you dwarf,  
 so tiny you're almost invisible,  
 O whelp born to a man-faced bird,  
 how dare you stop us to say  
 you want us? Would such midgits  
 ever get to touch such as us!

O lovely one,  
                                   curvaceous  
   convex

as the blade of a plough, you strike me  
 with a love  
 I cannot bear.

                                  I can live  
 only by your grace.

(Look at the way this creature works!)  
 O dwarf, standing piece of timber, you've yet to learn  
 the right approach  
 to girls. Humans do not copulate  
 at noon: but you come now to hold  
 our hand and ask us to your place.  
 Have you had many women ?

Good woman,  
                                   your waist is higher  
 than your head, your face a skinned heron  
 with a dagger for a beak  
                                   listen to me.

If I take you in the front, your hunch  
juts into my chest, if from the back  
It'll tickle me in odd places.

So, I'll not  
even try it. Yet come close and let's touch  
side to side.

*Chi*, you're wicked, Get lost! You half-man!  
As creepers hang on only to the crook of a tree  
there are men who'd love to hold this hunch  
of a body close, though nothing fits. Yet, you lecher,  
you ask for us sideways. What's so wrong  
with us, you ball, you bush of a man.  
A gentle, hunchback type is better far than a string  
of black beans.

(look at the walk of this creature!) You stand  
like a creepy turtle stood up by somebody,  
hands flailing in your armpits.  
We've told you we're not for you. Yet you hang around,  
(Look, he walks now like the Love-God !)

The root of this love is Kama,  
the love-god with arrows, brother to Shama.  
Look, this is how the love-god walks!

(Look,  
look at this love-god!)

Come, let's find joy,  
you in me, me in you: come, let's ask and tell  
and agree which parts I touch.

I swear  
by the feet of my king, I'll mock you no more.

Right O gentle-breasted one. I too will give up  
mockery.

But I don't want this crowd in the temple  
laughing at us, screaming when we do it,  
'Look, look'. Look at that dwarf and hunchback,  
leaping like demon on demon!

O shape  
of unbeaten gold, let's get away from the temple to the wild  
jasmine bush. Come, let's go.

You're now a gob of wax on a parchment  
made out in a court full of wise men,  
and stamped  
to a seal; you're now flat, incomplete. Come,  
let's touch close and hug hard  
and finish the unfinished.

Let's go.

Marutaṇilanakaṇār  
Kalittokai 94  
Peruntiṇai  
(The major or  
common type of love)

Poem 17

What He Said

When love is ripe beyond bearing  
and goes to seed,  
men will ride even palmyra stems  
like horses, will wear on their heads the reeking cones  
of the *erukkam* bud  
like flowers; will draw to themselves  
the gossip of the streets;  
and will do worse.

Pēreyiṇ Muṟuvalār  
Kuṟ 17  
from *The Interior Landscape*, 1967

C. K. MEHTA

## Modern Gujarati Literature



MODERN Gujarati literature—to be accurate literature written during the last two decades—is an amalgam of traditional and modernist tendencies, although the latter tendency, invariably, is the more dominant of the two.

In poetry, for instance, if we leave aside consideration of those who adhere to prevalent forms and adore traditional values, the predominant note is that of discontent, frustration and dissent. The modernist poets have lost all interest in the outside world and, so, have journeyed within their own selves. The leader of those poets is Rajendra Shah. He and the other poets thus inspired do not search for beauty in the outside world, but they try to find it in the innermost recesses of human mind and heart. Rajendra Shah in the very first poem of his first collection called *Dhwani* says : —

I wander with dust  
ridden attire in the world without any aim.

Another poet Niranjan Bhagat of this school writes

This heart has to endure the pain  
which is unendurable  
I could not relate what I want to relate  
in proper tune.  
ant yet my heart goes on throbbing in rhythms.

In the year 1955, Umashankar Joshi's poem 'Chinna Bhinna Chhun' (I am fragmented) was published. It opened the gates to new feelings and expression for post-independence poets. In this poem a vivid picture of the split personality, and frustration of the modern man is painted. He says

I am fragmented  
 Like a rhythm striving to throb in poem without  
 metre.  
 My wholeness I took for granted  
 I have been crumbling to pieces;  
 Day and night I am torn with pain,  
 Struggling to reach and hold the centre.  
 I am worn out, wasting every breath, fragmented.

This gives a true picture of the frustrated, tired, grief stricken man of this age for whom life has become unbearable. A new wave set in. The second generation of poets, going one step farther, sang the praise of death, because death was the only relief they found from the pain of life. Adil Mansuri of this school says in one of his poems

All these years, I have been looted by life  
 So, when I was caught in the hands of death  
 I experienced a sense of security.

Another poet Mahendra Amin has, in his poem, acclaimed the death of God. He says

Death of God,  
 Removes an age-old misconception.

Jyotish Jain, announced the death of faith. He says

The 'faith' which is lying still in the egg  
 could not be made to live again even if  
 you shout at the top of your voice.

Thus new ideas, feelings and modes of expression of the new poetry have made the old poetic tradition topsy-turvy, and have launched an all-out attack on things held inviolable by the preceding generation. As traditional phraseology, symbols and images fell short of expressing new concepts, these were replaced by new ones. The evening sun, so long looked upon as an artist that beautified the western sky, now becomes a T.B. patient vomiting blood; the moon of the full-moon night is a puss-oozing boil. Harindra Dave in expressing his concept of life finds a new image:

Just as a serpent passes by his own discarded skins,  
 I pass by my hundred thousand corpses,  
 Where do I find even a fraction of a second  
 To mourn over my endless deaths in one birth ?

In the year 1963, yet another school of poets emerged called *Re Math*. They deliberately indulged in gruesome and pornographic descriptions, arrange the sentences and words in geometrical designs, select obscure and abstract subjects and present them in an uncommon way. They believe that poetry need not be communicative. They write for their own pleasure, unmindful of the reader. They are out to uproot all traditions, ethical, social and religious. During the last five years the Japanese poetic form 'Hayaku' has become very popular, and the credit for bringing the form in Gujarati goes to snehrasmi

It is only very recently that the new fiction has emerged in Gujarati. The characteristics of this new movement in fiction-writing may be noted as follows :

(a) Modern novels are mostly psychological; hence, they paint the inner world instead of the outer. Attention is paid more on the workings of the subconscious mind than on those of the conscious. As such, there is little action or movement in the story, which appears to be static. C. K. Baxi's *Roma*, S. K. Joshi's *Abh Ruve eni Navlakh Dhare* (Heaven weeps and weeps), Dhiruben Patel's *Vadvanal* (sea fire), etc., are noteworthy novels in this regard.

(b) Even time and space are not considered as objective but psychological. Time is not determined by the movement of the heavenly bodies but has its location in the mind of man. Digish Mehta's *Apno Ghadik Sangh* (Our momentary comradeship), Harindra Dave's *Palnan Pratibimb* (images of the moment), C. K. Baxi's *Ekal tana Kinara* (The shores of loneliness), etc., are worthy experiments which illustrate the point. These experiments are carried on a stream of consciousness techniques, where flash-backs and autobiographical elements play their usual roles. Judged by old criteria, these will be found to have no cohesion, but perhaps the artistic design cannot be denied.

(c) The new fiction gives an excessive stress on sex and the problems associated with it. What the traditionalists may call immoral or obscene or perverse, is depicted here as natural and normal human behaviour. Novels which have earned both fame and notoreity in this respect are Yashodar Mehta's *Sari Jate Rete* (slippery sands), Mohmad Mankad's *Vanchita*, Abid Surti's *Tutela*

*Farishta*, and C. K. Baxi's above-named novel. All of these tales have as their theme the multiple, unlawful, extramarital sex relations. Even homosexuality has found an entry into Gujarati fiction.

(d) The tone of these novels is mostly that of revolt against the old world. The plots are so arranged as to depict the conflict between the inner and outer worlds, the disruption of married life, break up of the joint family system, the revolt of the young against the father-figure, etc.

Side by side and as parallels to this movement there are regional and historical novels—and a good crop of them—written in the traditional form. Pannalal Patel writes panoramically of north Gujarat, Iswar Pettikar of central Gujarat and Chunilal Madia of Saurashtra. They have incorporated in their works the socio-economic and political changes that have taken place in those regions. As to historical novels, Dhumketu and Gunvantraï Acharya have achieved notable success in writing about almost all the princely dynasties of Gujarat, while Yashodar Mehta has written three novels based on the medieval history of Kashmir.

The new short story emerged in 1955 when Suresh Joshi brought out a collection of his own and wrote in the preface that 'much truth is buried under fantasy and absurdities. He also asserted that incidents were not necessary in a short story, that what was needed is form. The stream of consciousness style asserted itself in this area also. Others who have earned fame in this field include Saroj Pathak, Madhu Roy, Kundanika Kapadia and some of the novelists mentioned above. Their stories tell readers of the split personality of modern man, his loneliness in a world full of people, and of his inner and outer struggles.

Drama is perhaps the weakest branch of Gujarati literature. But well-intentioned experiments have been made by Rashiklal Parikh, Darshak and Shivkumar Joshi. But the modern one-act play has a triumphant record, especially through the contributions of Jayanti Dalai. Absurd drama, too, has made its appearance, and a play by Labhasankar Thakar called *Ek Oonder one Jadunath* was successfully staged recently.

A word about non-fictional prose writings. The branch of literary criticism has been enriched by some of the critics of the preceding era, by their balanced judgements and sympathetic understanding of the modern trends in literature. Umashaker Joshi still remains the foremost critic of this period. The leftist school of criticism came into existence with the publication of *Kshitij*, a monthly started by

Suresh Joshi. He is vastly influenced by western theories of literary creation and by western critics, and has over-zealously decried the writings of the preceding era as lacking in merit. He has also sought, partly successfully, to introduce new norms and new terminologies of criticism. Critics, who write in *Granth*, a monthly journal started in 1963, have been able to maintain a high standard of balanced criticism.

Although biographical literature is being produced in a large bulk, qualitatively, very few works may be said to have high artistic value. The same is true of the essay proper. Kaka Kalelkar, who has been writing since the twenties, is still the dominant figure here.



K.B. DAS

## The Impact of the West on Oriya Literature



SANSKRIT was the source and inspiration of the ancient and medieval Oriya writers. The period of decadence started when they forgot the real object of literature and took credit in exaggeration, puns, verbal tricks and rhetorics. Their writings became more imitative and stereotyped than original, more fanciful rather than real. This literature lacked the deeper spirit of life, its hard struggle and manifold problems and hence it failed to inspire the people educated in the new line. There was no prose of notable quality, no play to satisfy the new urge for entertainment, no criticism to guide the line of thought. Our early literature was more or less confined to the religious minded and that of the medieval period to a few educated in the conventional method, or to some singers and reciters. It developed under the patronage of kings and zamindars, but soon reached its culmination and seemed to be still and static as a pool.

It awaited a storm, a revolution, which would destroy the old and arouse the latent powers for new creations to suit the temperament of the rising generation. The contact with English literature opened up fresh vistas before the writers; it channelized their thought and ideas in an absolutely new direction. It aroused a sense of new values, a zeal for the study of human character; a new taste for love and beauty of nature, a new consciousness towards the history and

geographical configurations, a sense of duty and discipline, an urge for sacrifice for the motherland and a new humanism. A sense of patriotic feeling grew up. Religious and political movements brought about far reaching changes in thought and ways of living. The British administration levelled up barriers through its courts of law and codes of procedure, criminal and civil. Thus the West slowly but steadily dominated our country, both politically and intellectually.

The new prose was born in varied forms like the essay, the novel, the short story, criticism, drama, newspapers and magazines. These are directly or indirectly traceable to English influence. For the consolidation of prose grammars and dictionaries were necessary. According to W. C. Lacy, 'A compiler of dictionaries is a kind of pioneer in literature'.

Tod's 'Rajasthan' became a source of many patriotic poems, historical novels and plays. Biographies, autobiographies and travelogues were written, Encyclopaedias were compiled. Folk songs, folk tales, proverbs, and riddles were collected.

Many English poems, short stories, novels and essays were translated. The influence of Western literature spread into the villages through these translations. People having no knowledge of English literature could appreciate the beauty of the new literature and tried to imitate it.

Among the Westerners the Portuguese took the lead and established a settlement at Pipli and then another at Balasore. They were followed by the Danish, the Dutch, the French and, lastly, by the English. The Portuguese remained for about 150 years in Orissa. They had no rich culture to influence the local one excepting only a few addition of words to the Oriya vocabulary, words like 'khana', 'kaju' or 'krusa' have now become the property of Oriya language. The Danish, the Dutch, and the French influenced the culture of Orissa to a lesser extent. But the influence of the English and that of European countries through the English were deep and far reaching.

The Oriya people were conservative and hence slow and sluggish to accept the western culture imparted to them through the English medium. But it set a sure footing and touched the life of the Oriyas like a magic wand. The impact of modern consciousness on a society used to old thoughts and ideas and tied to the chains of time-honoured customs, was certainly remarkable.

Orissa came under the British rule in the year 1803. The Britishers afforded scope for higher education after more than sixty years of their occupation. Thus Orissa was far behind Bengal,

Madras and Bombay in respect of educational advancement. The Oriya writers of the first half of the nineteenth century did not have enough education to enable them to follow the new ways introduced into Bengali literature and clung to traditional forms and style. The missionaries were the pioneers of modern Oriya literature in its primary stage. But they did not write for the joy of creation, nor were they patriotically inspired to enrich the Oriya literature. They had the proselytizing purpose behind all their literary efforts. They used the first modern Oriya prose or poetry as a medium of their religious preaching.

Reverend Campbone, the first Christian missionary and an Englishman, landed on the Orissan coast on 12 January, 1822. Reverend. Lacey came two years later. He set up a printing press in 1836 and set the Oriya types. Thus was prepared the field and the seeds planted which awaited a more favourable weather to grow up under the fostering care of talented litterateurs. They were the pioneers in the publication of magazines. *Jnana-runa*, edited by C. Lacey, started publication in 1849. A few days later this was given up as expensive. *Arunodaya*, which came out next, was financed by the Christian Vernacular Society and continued to be published for three years.

The Bible was translated into Oriya for the first time in 1811. John Leyden attempted a grammar in Oriya. Reverend Ames Suttan compiled a dictionary under the name of 'Utakal Bhasarthavidhana' with the help of Bhubanananda Nyayalankara, in 1843. Within decades appeared some literary works which showed the western influences at work. A novel named *Fulmani and Karuna* was translated from Bengali into Oriya by Stabbins. It was an imaginary sketch of two Christian girls for glorification of the Christian faith.

The Calcutta School Book Society published a number of booklets for children. 'Nitikatha' which appeared in 1877 was a compilation of stories like 'A Frog and a Bull', 'A Wolf and a Fox', 'The Lion and the Mouse', 'A Boy Aspiring After Wealth', 'Of Greediness' etc. The 'Nitibodha', a selection from Camber's Moral class Book was translated by W. C. Lacey from the Bengali book of the above title of Rajakrishna Banerjee for use as textbook in Government Schools in Orissa and was published in 1884 by the School Book Society. The missionaries devoted their attention to the writing of textbooks on general sciences and history which were greatly needed in the province till the third quarter of the nineteenth century, when local talents educated in the Ravenshaw College, established in 1868,

appeared on the scene, wrote textbooks or books on literature and took the lead in publication of newspapers or magazines.

John Beames, the Collector at Balasore in 1868, was the pioneer in collection of Oriya folklore. He collected some incantations used for dispelling ghosts, a few songs of the snake charmers which are used to make the cobra dance and play. The work of John Beames was limited to collection of a few beliefs of the rural folk in vogue in the Balasore area. But it deserves mention as it opened a new branch of knowledge, i.e., folklore which was lost sight of and appeared prominently in later ages as a key to knowing the life and society of the people who come under the term folk. Progress of the work in folklore in the West inspired John Beames to start compilation and research in Orissa also. But he did not pursue his collection and research work further.

John Beames was also one of the pioneers in his discourses on grammar and philology. His *A Comparative Grammar of Modern Aryan Languages* was then a guide to the Indian scholars of philology. He was considered as a saviour of the Oriya language and literature, since he gave Oriya a position and also prestige by including it in, the above grammar as one of the seven sister Aryan languages of northern India.

G. A. Grierson's *Linguistic Survey of India* published in 1903 is a work on grammar. Specimens of Oriya collected from different parts of Orissa and its outlying areas and published in the fifth volume of the above work offered a new self-consciousness to the people of Orissa and gave them a clear picture of the districts of the Oriya language.

Literary societies which were the products of European thought contributed a great deal to promote intellectual activities in the province. Magazines and periodicals like *Utkal Dipika*, *Odia O Nabasambada*, *Utkal Prabha*, *Hitaisini* or *Utkal Sahitya*, etc., brought into play the creative activities of the people in novel forms.

Radhanath Ray (1848-1908) was the first and foremost poet of the age, responsible for the introduction of several modern trends in Oriya poetry. He painted nature after the Romantic poets of England like Scott, Shelley, Wordsworth and Keats. He glorified the history of Orissa in the vein of Byron who depicted the Roman history on the broken walls of Rome. He inherited the patriotic spirit of Scott, the pessimism of Shelley and the tragic sense of Shakespeare. He introduced blank verse in his unfinished epic entitled *Mahayatra*, after Milton. But his famous *Chilika* is not a poem like the *Lady of the*

*Lake*. The Lake was lively like a young lady comforting the poet in moments of sorrow. She was the witness to the rise and fall of empires and many momentous historical and social events. Rey borrowed Western models in plot construction and characterization, but his talent turned them as part and parcel of Oriya history. All his poems had a refreshingly original look. The Greek Legend “Daphne and Apollo” was the model of his plot of *Chandrabbhaga* in which the Sun God chased the maiden Chandrabhaga who, out of fright concealed herself in the waves of the ocean.

In construction of the plot of *Parbati* Rey was deeply influenced by *Agamemnon* of Aeschylus and *Hamlet* of Shakespeare. To a sophisticated reader the characters of this play would appear to be exact replicas of the immortal characters of the European masters. Even the device of communicating the news of victory by lighting a fire was adopted by Radhanath.

The plot of *Jajati Keshari* was borrowed from Shakespeare’s *Cymbeline*, of *Usha* from the Greek legend Atlanta’s Race, of *Mandikeshwari* from Byron’s *Siege of Corinth*, of *Kedaragauri* from Chaucer’s *Pyramis and Thisbey*. In spite of these borrowings Radhanath has been hailed as an epoch maker and the father of modern Oriya poetry.

Madhusudan Rao (1853-1912) adopted new literary forms from English Poetry. He was the father of modern Oriya lyrics, odes, sonnets and elegies. He introduced the Spenserian Stanza (nine lined *ababbcbcc*) in his Oriya poem *Bharata Bhabana* and achieved spectacular success.

This teacher-poet introduced juvenile literature in Oriya and his sense of simple beauty and morality made a strong impact on the character of boys and girls. His *Pranayara Adbhuta Parinama* (Love’s strange end) was an adaptation of a Sicilian tale.

Nandakishore Bala (1875-1928) a people’s poet, a prominent lyricist of the age, borrowed ideas and thoughts from English poets and freely admitted it. He wrote ‘Banapriya’ after Shelley’s ‘To A Skylark’, ‘Prabasi’ after Tennyson’s ‘The Princess’, ‘Birahini Lata’ after ‘Maud’ of Tennyson, ‘Taruni Tanu’ after Keats’ ‘Ode on a Grecian Urn’, ‘Smruti’ after Tennyson’s ‘Tears, Idle Tears’, ‘Jananinka Smruti’ after Cowper’s ‘On his Mother’s Portrait’. Goldsmith’s ‘Deserted village’ influenced him most when he depicted the rural scenery in his poems which brought him popularity and great poetic reputation.

Fakir Mohan Senapati (1843-1918), the famous novelist and a

short story writer, the father of modern Oriya prose, received little education in the English line. The influence of the West on him was indirect. But that did not make him a lesser novelist or a short story writer or autobiographer in any way even if he is compared with any great Indian writer of his age.

Gangadhar Meher (1862-1924) and Chintamani Mohanty, who had no English education, built their literature on Indian tradition but Western model so as to make it acceptable to the modern readers.

Orissa had no stage and no play till the third quarter of the nineteenth century. There were only folk plays like *Pala*, *Jatra*, *Daskathia*, *Gotipo*, *Dandanata*, *Patua*, *Chaiti Ghoda Nata*, and *Mughal Tamsa*, which miserably failed to satisfy the educated mind. Playwrights at the early stage followed the Sanskrit model. Nandi, Sutradhara, Nata, Nati and Viskambhaka were later abandoned and plays were written in the English style.

*Babaji* of Jagamohan Lala is accepted as the first Oriya social drama written in 1877, in the English style. Gopinath Parichha's *Gopinath Ballava* (1868) was the first Oriya play written in the Sanskrit style.

A curious amalgam of Eastern traditions and Western tragic ending went on for years and ultimately the Western way predominated. Rama-sanker Ray, Bhikari Charan Pattanaik, Kamapal Mishra, Aswini Kumar Ghosh and Kali Charan Pattanaik and many other progressive playwrights adopted the most advanced technique of the age and the stage development followed accordingly. The number of Acts came down from five to three. Long speeches and songs were mostly avoided. Plays became more social and psychological, less serious and more humorous, and recently a marked decline has been noticed in the Oriya theatre since it has failed to compete with the screen.

The Satyabadi group of writers did not contribute to the theory of art for art's sake. Their creation was purposeful. They wanted to build the nation through literature and created heroes who sacrificed their lives for the nation. Strong national feelings did not permit this group to imitate the West. So its impact on them was indirect.

Nilakantha Das started his literary career with the translation of 'The Princess' (Pranayini) of Tennyson in blank verse. Chastity of women and earnest love of man appealed to him most. He liked to produce works like 'Enoch Arden', in Oriya. But he could not gather enough courage and confidence for the original creation. He



translated it into Oriya and then found himself confident enough to compose his famous *Mayadevi* after the model of Tennyson. He also produced powerful prose in Oriya. If it was due to any influence, it was indirect.

Godabarish Mishra imbibed the spirit of English ballads and wrote his *Alekhika* based on history and tradition. His novel *Ghatantara* is an adaptation of the novel of R. L. Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.

Oriya literature has been deeply enriched with the translations from western literature, both classical and romantic. These books, very large in number, now occupy a lot of place in libraries and directly or indirectly influence the ambitious readers and writers. A few of them like *Shesabandi Bharati* of Ajaya Chandra Das (translation from the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*), 'Paschima Pabana' of Chandrasekher Mishra (translation of 'Ode to the West Wind'), 'Ekakini Krusaka Kamini' and 'Bharatia Pakhi' of Narayan Mohan De (translation from 'Solitary Reaper' and 'To a Skylark'), 'Gramya Smasana' of Jagannath Tripathy (translation of Grey's *Elegy*), 'Bijana Palli' of Chandra Mani Das (translation of Goldsmith's 'Deserted Village') deserve mention.

*Sohrab and Rustam* of Matthew Arnold has been translated by a number of writers like Kuntala Kumari Sabat, Paramananda Acharya and Radhamohan Gadenayak; writings of Maupassant, Gorky, Chekhov, Tolstoy, Hugo, Cervantes, Dickens, Balzac, Rolland, Maeterlinck, Shakespeare, Poe, Carlyle, Goldsmith, Dumas, Eliot, Pearl Buck and many others have also been translated.

The Western novels had a specific influence on the Oriya ones. *Ka* of Kanhu Charan Mohanty, which received the Sahitya Akademi award, was influenced by *Pavillion of Women* of Pearl Buck. The same author, in his *Sasti*, has been influenced by *The Woodlanders* of Thomas Hardy. The impact of Hardy on his brother, the renowned novelist Gopinath Mohanty is considerable. Koraput of Orissa is the Wessex of England. But he did not portray nature with tooth and claw. His nature was a lovable mother who nourished her children—the aborigines most affectionately. The novel touches our social life in more points than any other branch of literature and has a better scope of development under the present circumstances. Novelists are economically better off than poets and the short story writers.

Orissa had a glorious past, full of interesting anecdotes. But historical novel as a class was long neglected. Fakir Mohan's *Lachhama* was rather a stray example. Surendra Mohanty's *Nila Saila*,

which received the Sahitya Akademi award in 1970 deals with the most tragic chapter of Orissan history and throws a flood of light on the political and social conditions of the time. This novel wins for Sri Mohanty a special position in Oriya literature and is responsible for the reader's faith that whatever Sri Mohanty touches changes into gold. Both of these works cannot be said to have received any influence from the West.

Portrayal of social characters with psychological insight has been the new objective of the Oriya novelists. The range of life they portray extend from the aborigines to the so-called sophisticated life of the city. But we have no city worth the name. So most of our notable novels are based on village scenes and characters. No good novel has yet been written on the newly developed town life at Rourkela, Sunabeda or Paradeep. The luxuriant growth of the crop of novels is no doubt hopeful. If, however, judged in the world context, their quality appears to be rather disappointing.

The 'Sabuja' writers or the greens (1921-1935) were the offshoots of the India-wide progressive movement after the first world war. They broke with the past and used their facile pen for emancipation of women from the bondage of centuries and made them stand equal to men. Annada Sankar Ray, Kalindi Charan Panigrahi and Baikunthanath Pattanaik were influenced by Western writers like Roman Rolland, Walt Whitman, Ibsen, and Bernard Shaw. They introduced free verse for the first time in Orissa and some of the 'greens' jointly wrote a novel called *Basant*, an innovation unimitated as yet.

Poets and short story writers after 1930 were influenced by the social and economic theories of Marx and psychoanalysis of Freud. Sachi Routray, the foremost poet of the age was influenced by Pound, Eliot and Mayakovsky. But it was Walt Whitman who influenced him the most. He wrote his first prose poem after 1930 which was certainly an innovation, though not well received by critics. His style was imitated by progressive youngsters. He used his fiery pen against feudalism and capitalism. But psychoanalysis of Freud is still considered a powerful force in the construction of new characters in plays, short stories and novels.

The influence of Marx has almost ceased after the second world war. But psychoanalysis of Freud is still considered a powerful force in the construction of new characters in plays, short stories and novels.

Modern Oriya poetry has been very much sensitive to Western



poetry. The existentialism of Sartre and Camus, symbolism of Yeats, Mallarme and Verlain, imagism of Ezra Pound, agony and despair and idealism of Rimbaud, Baudelaire, T. S. Eliot, Auden, Day Louis and Stephen Spender are the sources of new trends in much recent poetry. Their authors are neither classicists nor romanticists. But a few of them are lyricists, while a few others are whimsical by choice in the use of images and symbols, and are quite unintelligible to the readers.

A modern poet aims at evoking rather than describing. The burden of his poem is impressions, intuitions and emotions. He concentrates more on individual talent than on tradition. He makes it more intellectual than emotional, more philosophical than poetic. A modern poem may put forth problems unsolved or questions unanswered. It may enlighten, but gives little aesthetic pleasure. Modern poetry still appears foreign and has not taken any deep roots in the soil of Orissa. It is still in the experimental stage. On a quantitative measure, the output is remarkable, but there is hardly one poet to be hailed as an epoch-maker.

This is an age of crisis for old values. This, naturally, has its echoes in Oriya literature too. Meritorious critical works have sought to draw the readers' attention to this deepening crisis in literature, thus widening the area of perception and understanding. Earlier critical works were an amalgam of emotional and intellectual elements; but the current ones are more analytical and disciplined, modelled largely on western theories of criticism. An element of indiscrimination may, however, be noticed here; since the source of borrowing varies from George Saintsbury to Cleanth Brooks.

As to the theatre, there are permanent stages where regular performances are also held against enormous odds. But they do not get sufficient patronage from the public who have grown cinema-minded.

The time, one thinks, has now arrived when writers in different branches should, instead of echoing the trends of Western literature, explore the rich cultural heritage of their own country, especially the vast folklore; this would be the surest way of creating a literature for their own people, and of establishing their own identity.

SISIR KUMAR GHOSE

## Bengali Literature Today



THE modern phase is too crowded and too near to permit any safe generalization except perhaps a quick recital of tendencies. The best way to describe what was happening is that it is post if not anti-Tagore, at least non-Tagore. For a while denigrating Tagore (Rabindra-Birodhita), often needlessly and foolishly, became a mark of the modern, a rather negative and self-conscious gesture. But which Tagore, since Tagore is not one but many, was being given the quietus?

The reaction against Tagore—one thinks of the reaction against Tennyson—was bound to come. He was so vast and various that it was impossible for later writers to take him neat. But looking back one might wonder if Tagore's was a unified sensibility, a dark question. He himself had doubts now and then. In any case, his exceptional milieu, was not likely to be matched by the writers that came after. But what a puzzling figure! The patriarchal outsider, nursed on the classic Upanishads, yet instinctively drawn to the *Vratyas* (heretics and outsiders) and the *bauls* of the countryside; an intense patriot, with many a national song to his credit, in his later years he staked almost everything for the sake of a fellowship of cultures and internationalism (a *Visyaprem* for which his provincial compatriots did not fail to berate him); longing, all his life, for rootedness; at seventy he could startle both friends and enemies by taking to prose

poems as well as non-representational, if not primitive doodles and paintings; at seventy-eight, the Grand Old Man of literature, he openly confessed that his poetry did not belong to the people and welcomed the coming poet in whom words and deeds would agree (the poet is yet to come); a charismatic, oecumenical figure, during his last years he came to be haunted by existential agonies and anxieties; and yet held on—as in the eightieth birthday message, “The Crisis of Civilization”—to his undying faith in man. No wonder the harried, younger authors saw in him, a giant before the flood, more an incubus than an inspiration. To them he was no longer a companion but a roadblock. A Tagore reaction was needed—if they were to survive.

The change in style and sensibility, the altered emphasis, is best seen in poetry. Men like Mohitlal Mazumdar and Jatin Sengupta, basically, romantic, felt compelled to don an anti-Tagore stance. But being wholly unprogressive they have now been relegated to the dust heap, somewhat unfairly maybe.

The real break came with the more militant post-First-World-war ‘Kallol’ group of writers. At heart they probably shared the Tagorean overworld of dreams and values, but their social situation would not permit any dalliance with dreams. It was a rougher world they had to deal with. To their sense of frustration and highpitched romantic sensibility was added a morbid note which while it shocked then shocks no more. The three poets of the group, Buddhadeva Basu, Premendra Mitra and Achintya Sengupta, were not cut in the same measure. Buddhadeva was out and out a romantic, a rebel if you like, and the so-called realism of his early verse was only a reverse of the same romanticism. He no doubt scandalized—still does—his audience, somewhat like Swinburne. Premendra Mitra began with sentimental, though sincere, Whitmanesque working-class sympathies. But he has gradually gone back to his lost faith, back almost to the Tagorean world. His recent work *Sagar Theke Fera* (Return from the sea), which won the Akademi award, was also a kind of farewell to poetry. Achintya Sengupta has not cared to compromise. But with little deep feeling he has come to rely more on rhetoric and is no longer looked upon as a poet.

The other important figure, though not to be identified with any group, was Jibanananda Das. Once derided because little understood, the poetry of Jibanananda has caught on in a manner hard to explain. The morbid undertone of his poetry must have

answered to some deep psychic need or wound in the Bengali mind. Death haunted, his awareness of the mystery of existence, of ranges of consciousness was unique and conveyed in a memorable phrasing many of which have passed into common speech.

Samar Sen, a younger poet, surprised us with his sophisticated, truly city-bred cynicism and bitterness with the decline in middle class values. But his creativity was extremely constricted and like the decadence he described, he soon ceased to function as a poet.

The other self-conscious group of poets centred round the cosmopolite quarterly, *Parichaya*, and the salon of its highbrow editor, Sudhin Datta. Datta was a powerful, unhappy poet, for whom the conventional consolations of faith and community had ceased to exist. An intellectual poet, a city poet, he was yet without roots in the life of either the city or the country. Bishnu De would seem to have little roots in Bengali life either. With him the poem turned, in fact, into a soliloquy, and the problem of communication became still more acute. The allusive style plus an overexposed intellectuality made technique almost tendentious. Amiya Chakraborty, the wandering expatriate, has admittedly romantic affiliations. But these were derived from Tagore and his pastoral Santiniketan rather than any real sense of belonging or rootedness. His rural imageries are viewed from a passing car, a jet plane.

The next shift in Bengali poetry was symbolized by the transfer of *Parichaya* to leftist editorship. Politics had never been wholly absent from the sensitive Bengali brain; now it became more pronounced. The works of two younger poets—Subhas Mukhopadhyay and Sukanta Bhattacharya—are more indicative of the political slant that came over the poetry of the period. Sukanta made a successful adjustment of Marxist theory with honest emotion, and, sometimes, memorable phrasing. Subhas's appearance was far more dashing. He had a gift for words, rhythms that easily caught on, and sharp banter that seemed so modish.

So much, more or less, for the period before 1947. Paradoxically, it was in independent India—but a divided, bleeding Bengal—that there arose, for the first time, a truly unsocial poetry. The basis of poetic communication has everywhere tended to be smaller, fragile and fragmented. No one sees steadily or sees it whole. As aids and alternatives some, like Niren Chakraborty, resort to reportage or short incidents as though that was all that the poetic body can bear. The next younger group of poets, born between 1935-47, have

not known that vanished world before Partition or its civilizing and constraining conventions. They have known nothing except decadence in the saddle. Uneasy and angry, whether they look back or around, they do not seem to have received anything and have less to offer, except an uninhibited adolescence, quick to catch the slightest tremor elsewhere, be it in Russia or the United States. On the fringe we have an introvert group; more mature but perhaps more morbid. This group is not quite angry, but it does not accept the age and has, at the time, no desire to escape.

Of all forms of imaginative writing the novel represents perhaps the weakest link in Bengali literature. In fact, critics have suggested that but for exceptions proving the rule no worthwhile fiction has been written date. The one modern writer who had the native equipment of a novelist was Manik Bandyopadhyay. Though his scope was downright limited, dealing with low life' as he did, deliberately, he could infuse a range, depth and intensity and powerful characterization that made his *Padmanadir Majhi* (The Boatman of Padma) a classic. Very different was the genius of Bibhutibhusan Bandyopadhyay, the film version of whose Apu trilogy, especially *Pather Pachali* (Song of the Road) brought him new, posthumous renown. Tarasankar Bandyopadhyay saw the novel as an epic of the collapse of feudalism, of the emergence of a broader consciousness. But one can-not be sure if he has wholly succeeded in the many variations on the theme. There is an inchoate epic quality about his novels, but the structure is not always adequate to the vision.

A neglected novelist, Balaichand Mukhopadhyay (Banaphul) reveals quite other qualities than the three writers mentioned so far. Apart from a large and remarkable portrait gallery, he has been at heart an endless experimentalist, an intellectual in the treatment of theme and character. The others, both contemporaries and those that have come after, provide little more than puffed-up short stories. Even such excellent artists like Premen Mitra and Buddhadeva Basu are really not novelists. The rationalist movement and the natural proliferation of leftist ideas opened up, once again, an epic possibility. It was well reflected in the novels of Narayan Ganguly. But the masterpiece of the movement came much later, in Satinath Bhaduri's moving record *Jagari*. Manoj Basu's works show little more than slick poeticism or popular patriotism, and are never profound. In Subodh Ghose we see a gifted short-story writer

turning into a novelist, almost as a propagandist of the Congress. His novels have a thesis, but their literary value is not high.

Sex was bound to declare itself sooner or later, especially with writers who were not upholders of puritanic morality or of new-fangled political theories. This is where Bimal Kar and his friends came in. Bimal Kar certainly made it live, though now and then the treatment reached a point where art had ceased to exist. A disturbing portrait of an eroded social life and system, is Jyotirindra Nandi's novel *Baro Ghar Ek Uthon* (Twelve Families and one courtyard) and the short story, *Siddheswarer Mrityu* (The death of Siddheswar), both extraordinarily evocative and corpolithic. Samaresh Basu and Dipak Chaudhuri came a little later, but the ground was well prepared. Interestingly, both began as professed Marxists but later turned away, Basu to expose abysses of passion and helplessness, while Chaudhuri continued to chew the cud of disillusionment. Basu's *Ganga*, however, was a remarkable performance. His recent work, *Bibar*, which touched off a controversy, exposed the existential universe which has become so much a part of the Bengali world. It may, however, be mentioned in passing that the Bengali mind and life still remain uncongenial to the growth of the novel. Most of what passes for novels are in reality enlarged short stories, a genre in which the Bengali writer is extremely effective.

Modern Bengali drama turned a new leaf in its career with the emergence in the field of groups of serious-minded amateurs. The most outstanding of these was the 'Bohurupee' (chameleon) group. Sharply slanted towards contemporary problems, the life style and the agony of the age, the group took its stand against what it considered the melodramatics of Sisir Kumar Bhaduri who had set the norm for decades. Excursions into mythology, history or biographical reconstructions of culture-heroes have totally been abandoned, so to speak. For want of suitable plays the group started with old and familiar, in some cases neglected, masterpieces, such as Tagore's *Raktakarabi* (Red Oleanders). And since the group was open, a little too open perhaps, to continental influences, they went in confidently with Sophocles as well as Brecht. Their new, academic but socially sensitive outlook blended with almost expert application of modern dramaturgy and the group succeeded in providing shock and delight. And yet they cannot rest on their oars and are far from having achieved a final articulation.

Other groups, like 'Nandikar', Little Theatre Group, 'Shouvanik', 'Mimesic', etc., are clever as well as serious. And their adaptations of

such plays as 'The Doll's House', 'The Cherry Orchard' look almost like originals. But exactly here one has a feeling that there is too much of adaptation. There has been, understandably, a powerful revival of the jatra too. But expressive of the Zeitgeist instead of sugared pastorals of the fustian of pseudo-historical and mythological plays, we have such plays as an opera on Hitler and Lenin who have more or less substituted the bad and the good angel of the old allegories.

Anti-groups also exist and more than exist, little concerned with pressing socio-economic problems of the day. Popular revivals of smacking old comedies—such as *Vyapika Bidaya* by Amritlal Basu—and love stories interspersed with devotional singing as in *Anthony Kavial* have run for hundreds of nights. Buddhadeva Basu's recent poetic plays, mostly variations on the oldest passion known to mankind, but percolated through European or modern decadence and old Indian nuances, have yet to find their stage.

The latest to arrive on the Bengali stage is the theatre of the Absurd. Its wellknown protagonist, Badal Sarkar, reveals a remarkable sensibility even if a play like *Ebang Indrajit* (And Indrajit) may not be, at bottom, that absurd. But this and other plays in the genre, still lack a vital relationship with the life of the people who do not recognize themselves in the deliberate distortions of values, themes, and the very mode of perception.

Bengali literary criticism had always gathered force around literary journals. Pramatha Chaudhuri's *Sabuj Patra* (Green Leaves) played a very distinctive role in this sphere and succeeded in attracting a good number of intellectuals who later became celebrities. The *Kallol* group was the first to familiarize the criticism of poetry by poets. This became obvious, almost a policy, with *Kavita* which Buddhadeva Basu edited with distinction for decades. Mohitlal Mazumdar's critical essays, quite unrelated to his poetry, appeared in the reactionary journal *Sanibarar Chithi*. The *Parichaya* group, under Sudhin Datta's editorship, introduced a cosmopolitan note in Bengali criticism, which has been sought to be maintained by subsequent editors. The post-independence period saw the disappearance of literary criticism centring round groups and journals. Its place was now increasingly usurped by academic research. The amount of research produced from year to year is astounding. Yet no viable school of criticism has developed, only individual efforts and achievements.

Anthropologically, the Bengalis belong to a non-Aryan stock, characterized by emotional and imaginative abundance. This has made for aesthetic riches rather than a balanced social living. The



Bengali mind and society today, a foiled, circuitous wanderer, is yet to master and assimilate the multiple forces beating upon it from all sides. It is better to believe that it will succeed in being the master in its own house, or home, rather than echo the despair of epigones, the numerous victims of nostalgia. Perhaps the Bengali's greatest challenge is before him. Crisis is an opportunity.



LOKENATH BHATTACHARYA

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## A Passion Spent on an Increasing Futility



SAMUEL Beckett is not exactly my cup of tea, though like many of his readers I too find one particular statement by him both alluring and intriguing. And that statement is this : 'I can't say to what extent I have nothing to say'. The irony, however, is that to say this, or rather *not* to say this, repeatedly as well as effectively, he had to go on producing quite a few volumes of plays and novels, in which strange people are found to do and utter strange things, till he was reconciled, apparently happily, to the idea of accepting the Nobel Prize in Literature for saying things which he desperately feels he can't say to what extent he hasn't anything to say about.

In spite of the first person singular of the statement just quoted, Beckett, while saying this, might not have spoken for himself alone. His comment, on the contrary, might be related to the predicament in which the writers in general find themselves today. The situation is not very different in our country also, though not at all for the same reasons which might have provoked the author of *Waiting for Godot* to make the statement. But before coming to a discussion of our problems, it might be of interest to elaborate the initial point a little further.

Based on the existing human condition which provides raw material to writers, a literature of nothingness, more particularly of

the absurd, has emerged in the West and has already travelled much beyond its adolescent frontiers. Indeed, however genuine in the region of its origin, this form of literature is by now a fashionable Western item of export. There is also another side of the picture heralding a decay of literary values, particularly in those countries where technology and affluence have made deep inroads, basically transforming the landscape of human relationship. In some of the Western countries which until the other day were famed for their literary masterpieces, a considerable section of the enlightened public have started raising anti-literary slogans. Indeed we are increasingly finding there a poetry calling itself anti-poetry, a novel which is anti-novel and a play which is anti-play—in short, a literature which is anti-literature. The gradual decline of literature in these highly developed countries has certainly something to do with much talked about alienation between the individual and the society, the latter being more and more governed by the primary concern over material well-being and acquiring goods, though seemingly there might not be any contradiction between the material well-being of a society and the scope therein for the continuance and unceasing growth of good literature. For, wouldn't it be preposterous to claim that a country must put an end to its aspirations for a better, healthier and wealthier society and condescend to remain in a perpetual standstill in order that its literature may continue to thrive? On the contrary, the relationship between literature and society being obvious, a thriving literature would, most legitimately, presuppose a thriving society producing it. But the fact remains that actually what is happening is the opposite of what one would have expected to happen under similar circumstances.

When we are at it, we might also refer to another interesting point relating to the problem. During a recent interview Jean-Paul Sartre remarked that one of the main reasons why he has stopped writing creatively is that after the spectacular progress of Marxian studies and the tremendous achievements of sociology and psychology, the writer's task of interpreting his society has become virtually impossible. All that he may attempt to say now can never add to what the reader might get by reading a sociologist thinker—on the contrary, it will fall far short of the expectation that a Durkheim or a Levi-Strauss alone has the means to fulfil. Particularly a writer of fiction these days, therefore, is bound to look either trite or his contributions more and more contrived—in both cases he is doomed not only to a minor but a growingly insecure as well as insincere

role. The simple verities of the human heart which William Faulkner glorified so well in his now celebrated Nobel Award speech are perhaps not that simple any more and which also has contributed to the difficulties of a writer.

If I have chosen to start my discussion of Indian literature with arguments which at first sight may not seem to have much relation to this country and its present circumstances, it is principally for two reasons. First, an essential point I wish to make is that no matter what the motivating forces are in various different societies, it is a troubled time for literature almost everywhere. Secondly, as we have been accustomed to hear and at least partially accept the much repeated contention that Indian literature is one though written in many languages, which may no doubt appear to be a bit too far-fetched at times but all the same is true to some extent, there is little reason why we should not prepare ourselves for a further leap forward and agree to extend our human loyalties to regions which are beyond our immediate frontiers. The human community may not be one, at least at the moment, but in this world of gradually shrinking distances, both physical and spiritual, the humanity at large is inseparably tied to a destiny which ultimately is common to all of us. And it is certainly not today that we have suddenly started hearing of the influence of one region of this globe on another, not only in creative endeavours or artistic attempts, but in many other spheres of human interest as well.

The time, however, is yet to come for much generalization in this regard and it is better to accept the differences where they exist. Needless to say, ours is the opposite of an affluent and technological society and though an alienation does prevail here also, between the individual and the society, its nature is drastically different from the one plaguing the Western countries. Did I say plague? Then the alienation we are here suffering from is also a plague, but only of a more deadly nature.

Our alienation is broadly of two kinds : one between the generations, and the other between the individual and the society. It might be argued that the first type of alienation, which is between the generations, has existed from time immemorial; but there is no parallel in recent history to what is happening today. One or two examples might illustrate the point. Our first example, unfortunately, concerns no less a figure than Gandhi, still revered by quite a few individuals of a fastly withering, dying generation as

the Father of the Nation. Recently, the screening of a documentary film on the life and teachings of the Mahatma, made and released by the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi in connection with the Gandhi centenary programme, produced some extremely untoward scenes and such shouting comments by a section of the audience, consisting mostly of young students, as are unutterable. Quite a few cinema houses have been considerably damaged by an unruly mob just for showing the film, till, at least in one State, the authorities were forced to take steps to withdraw the film from circulation. Several exhibitions of books on and by Gandhi had also to be closed down hurriedly. It is, indeed, difficult to imagine of a greater irony than the fact that armed guards have to be kept posted, day and night, around the statues of the apostle of non-violence in his centennial year, for protecting them from damage and disfigurement.

The issue here is deeper than what is suggested by the personality of Gandhi, about whom it is often said these days that one of the most fortunate things that could ever happen to him was his merciful assassination which made him a martyr, saving him from the inevitable agony and disgrace he would have suffered were he to live today. It is also true that there is much in Gandhi's ideas which may seem outrageously naive in the present context, but that in itself is not enough and does not explain the eruption of violence in some quarters at the very mention of his name. The fact is that Gandhi so supremely represents a past and a set of values which have no relevance today and are despised and rejected in their totality by the present, up-coming generation. There are a few other father figures in the country who are more fortunate and are still venerated very distantly, but it is a sure prediction that their days are also numbered. If a father himself in a house is still tolerated, it is more because of the demands of the still lingering, though already much dilapidated, joint family system than anything else; but even in such cases two or more generations living together only co-exist in an atmosphere which may remind one of the days of the Dreyfus affair in France. In short, the past today is there like a rotten, worm-eaten plank, only to be called names and spat upon.

I am tempted to cite another example, which may seem a bit crude, to illustrate this changing time. In our student days the college and university urinals used to be full of obscene words and designs, which must have been a general practice for a very long time and certainly had its origin much before our generation ever came into being. No more of it today. Instead, you'll find there boldly

scratched on the wall, 'Mao Tse-Tung, Red Salute', which is also the most common graffiti elsewhere. Though from it, it is obvious that something terrible must have happened to the young generation, one should not jump to the conclusion that all this is merely and exclusively politically motivated. More than anything else, it also represents the same revolt against the past generation and a desire to crush the existing social system which the rebels think is not only immoral but an endless exercise in futility.

It will be improper to brush these examples aside as something totally irrelevant to literature. On the contrary, we are approaching fast towards such a complete breakdown of all accepted values and norms of living, creating an unprecedentedly grave situation, which must concern every writer worth his name. The old tools of a writer are not serving him any more, with each day that passes bringing unexpected gleamings of a future whose meaning he cannot decipher. Echoing Beckett, therefore, our writers here today may as well say that they can't say to what extent they have nothing to say.

Here again, we may draw a universal parallel between our student unrest or the revolt of our young generation and its counterparts elsewhere, especially in the Western countries. But there is one big difference between the two : while what is happening in the West is in reality an inevitable tempest of spiritual unrest of a civilization wedded exclusively to the concept and practice of affluence, ours is an inhumanly impoverished country which is still far from winning even the battle for a handful of grain. In both cases, therefore, the unrest may be a common factor, but the causes of it differ violently.

The second type of alienation we are suffering from, which is between the individual and the society, is also of a very special kind. The practice of creative arts and the circulation of the products of our efforts in the artistic field, including literature, are of necessity strictly confined to an infinitesimal section of the middle class elite, which in itself is a great minority in the country. Moreover, apart from the obvious alienation between the middle class writer and his vast society to much of which he is a complete stranger, the middle class itself is in the process of disintegration. Economically, morally and socially, it is being constantly pushed into a dark and deadly dungeon from which there is no escape. This Indian middle class, the product of an English education and the nineteenth-century renaissance, was inevitably designed to be alienated from the very beginning of its coming into being. But the forces of history are such

that the social boundary walls have already started falling down with a bang and that the middle class, due mainly to suffocating economic pressure, is gradually but surely dissolving into the vast community of the under-privileged. The gentle behaviour, manner of speech or way of thinking— in short, all that is associated with the term gentry—run the risk of soon becoming a thing of the past.

However, the irony of the situation is that in spite of all these considerations, even a superficial look at the current literary scene will convince anyone of the growingly impressive quantity of our writers' output. Here I would like to quote an excerpt from a controversial article on Bengali poetry by Ashok Mitra, a perceptive critic, which might be accepted as relevant to the Indian scene in general. Moreover, there is apparently no reason why an example of a particular region should not be taken as representative of the country at large if we are prepared to accept this basic contention that Indian literature is one though written in many languages.

'As they were used', writes Ashok Mitra, to do some forty years ago, or twenty/thirty years ago, or in 1958, young boys go on writing poetry. So the background in Bengal—that truncated, rotten, withered country—has not changed. Only, even at a faster pace than the over-all population growth, the young ones are more numerous today than ever before. And what is more surprising is that some of those beautiful girls, who were once only stupidly reverent in front of the poetry by young boys, have not remained quite immobile either. On the contrary even those golden brass-dolls themselves are writing poetry today.

'I love, or used to love, poetry since my childhood. Nor am I averse to beautiful women. Yet this spate of Bengali poetry, I must confess, makes me nervous and sick; before it, I feel like vomiting. Standing at the crossing of Calcutta's Gariahat or Rashbehari Avenue, I have an irresistible desire to hurl vulgar abuses at the authors of those poems. The clever diction of some of these teenager-poets is to me pure frivolity, their mutual talk about their indigested Baudelaire and company is loathsome to my ears. If only I could get at some of their exercise books, I would, under each poem, have unhesitatingly inscribed the remark: "Herds of pigs, you get less than zero out of a hundred".

'But there might still be time to check the disaster that is happening in the name of poetry. And it is still possible to write poetry even in, this suffocating atmosphere. But what should the nature of that poetry be? I would certainly kick at it, should it seek



its imageries elsewhere than in the all-pervading reality of this dirt-ugliness-storm-flood-disaster. In the world of Bengal stand thick rows of helpless clerks and school-masters ; beyond the structure of the middle class society are vast crowds of refugees, thousands of unemployed new graduates, retrenched labourers, evicted share-croppers or peasants on daily wages. In the same Bengal are the want of rice, rise in prices, the vulgar show of might of the capital from outside and its domination, appalling sanitary conditions and horrifying malnutrition. In it also are despair, violence, outbursts of frustrated anger and the agony of helplessness. But simultaneously, in this very Bengal are dreams of a revolution, political build-ups and processions. Also, there are radiant faces in processions, strikes, clenched fists raised above in protest and those who have the courage to hope and work for a future which will bring beauty-equality-prosperity to everyone's life. All this can—at least, should—be the subject of poetry.

Those writing poetry today do not seem to be interested in this coarse unornamental Bengal. Taking who knows what hidden, underground way, all their symbols escape to another world, so much so that the nature and appearance of these symbols could be assumed as imported from the planet Mars. They have no interest in the world of clerks and schoolmasters or in that of peasants and unemployed labourers. They have no interest either in that world in which I have seen a heroine dying, slowly but surely, and literally, of malnutrition. Is, then, their poetry meant solely for those few of the fine society, whose number, alas, is so easily countable ? If the poets can say it bluntly and declare that their poetry is not for you and me and that their heroine belongs to this parasitic, impotent society alone, all discussion, naturally, becomes pointless. But in that case we can also be equally blunt and say to them: "Herds of pigs, come, let us carry your poetry to the crematorium and, after that, engage ourselves in our exclusive poetry—the poetry that is allied to the procession." Indeed, our earnest and most sublime prayer is that may our poetry be completely identified with the procession.

One may take exception to the angry tone of this article by Ashok Mitra, but its content is bound to evoke sympathy of many honest thinkers. His emphasis, clearly, is on what has come to be termed progressive literature, however unsatisfactory and inadequate the expression may be. But my point is that the little that is already there of the so-called progressive literature, it also provides, in the

context of the present helplessness of literature, a splendid example of an exercise in futility. Indeed, one may go further and say that this particular field of literature is the abode of the most stupendous frustration.

I am leaving aside the two other main forms of current literary writing, which are, one that is cheap and vulgar, mostly womanizing, and the other that has deliberately accepted the complete absence of content as its only desired content. Both are escapists *par excellence* and don't even deserve to be commented upon. We are concerned with the third category of writers who intend to remain associated, through what they consider honest and meaningful endeavours, with life and history. But alas, there is the most pitiable plight of all.

For one thing, one can't think of greater strangers in their own time and place than these writers who are in mid-stream, struggling for survival. They may either, like meek pacifists, raise bellowing cries of a calf, or, if they want to be more assertive, roar like a lion demanding justice. In both cases, they are equally ineffective, since those to whom they so badly want justice done will never accept them as their own people, nor will they ever read this literature. Outwardly, this class of people are rickety, diseased and uneducated, and their interior is being consumed by a very different fire. Lost and hidden in dirty, stingy city slums or in grey, insipid countryside, they are much beyond the reach of all middle class writing and aspirations. It is true that they are also trying to awake and are becoming increasingly loud, but no stretch of imagination will ever unite them with today's so-called progressive literature. On the contrary, if and when the great bonfire starts, it will make no distinction between what is womanizing or contentless or progressive in today's literature, but will consume all with equal greed.

Our concern for the writer's predicament is understandable, but there is certainly nothing in it which may lead us to despair. The human community, after all, is the subject of such eternally splendid possibilities and time is gloriously immortal. A new society is bound to be born and, with it, a new literature.



K. M. GEORGE

## Western Influence on Indian Literature



IN its long history, India's ancient culture was subject to various foreign influences, some sporadic, others long standing, some of which produced a sterilizing effect, others a fertilizing effect; the most important of all influences was that of the West which originated from Europe. Apart from the British, the European nations who were responsible for bringing in Western influence were the Portuguese, the Dutch and the French. But since India was destined to come under British domination, and since the English made the deepest inroads into India's culture, the term Western has come largely to mean English.

Western influence on our life and letters came through various channels like education, Christian missionary efforts, the work of European orientalist, the programmes of cultural societies, the press and progressive communication methods. Educational effort both by the Government and missionary agencies was no doubt the greatest inroad of westernism on our literature and culture.

The representatives of the British government in India had chalked out a clear-cut plan for introducing the Western type of education by the middle of the nineteenth century. Even as early as 1813, according to the Charter Act of the year, it was decided to set apart a sum of not less than a lakh of rupees in each year

for the revival and improvement of literature and promotion of a knowledge of the sciences. An important step in the reorganization of the Indian educational system was taken in 1835. The famous minute of the great statesman Honourable T. B. Macaulay, though well-known, is worth quoting again. He was astoundingly farsighted when he wrote as follows:

‘We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern—a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect. To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of the country, to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from Western nomenclature, and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population’.

They have by and large succeeded in forming a class of Indians who are English in tastes, in opinions, and in intellect and the process has been going on for over a century, even though the statement has been subject to a lot of undeserved criticism. B. M. Srikantiah of Kannada, O. Chandu Menon of Malayalam, Subramonia Bharati of Tamil, Viresalingam of Telugu, Hari Narayana Apte of Marathi, Bankim Chandra of Bengali, Premchand of Hindi, Govardhan Ram Tripathi of Gujarati and Bhai Vir Singh of Panjabi, to mention only a few, belong to this special class who became the harbingers of Western education and culture through literature. It is they, among many others of similar persuasion, who have refined and improved the languages of their region inspired by the literatures of the West, particularly English. Macaulay knew that Englishmen could not perform this special role and revitalize Indian literature.

Though the main avocation of the Christian missionaries was to spread the Gospel, they were also interested in social and humanitarian work. They founded schools and colleges for the main business of secular education. Some of them were also responsible for the compiling of grammars and dictionaries for our languages so that a scientific study could be undertaken. They also encouraged the composing of textbooks and other suitable reading matter for the benefit of students.

The people of the country also took the initiative to found educational institutions. The School Society and the Brahmo Education Society in Bengal, the Bombay Education Society, the Pachaiyappas School in Madras presidency and Jay Narayan Ghosal’s School in Benares are a few of those.

Then there were various educational and cultural societies which

functioned as channels of Western influence like the Calcutta School Book Society and the Madras School Book Society. The main object of these societies was the preparation and publication of moderately priced non-religious books in the Indian languages.

There were also numerous other associations like the Asiatic Society of Bengal, the Mythic Society, etc., which functioned as effective agencies for the propagation of Western ideas in the country. The religious movements in India like the Brahmo movement also played a similar role to a degree. The Indian Press functioned as an important channel of Western influence. The newspapers in English and in the Indian languages could claim a great share in westernizing our way of life.

The British-inspired Bengal became the forerunner with regard to many progressive movements and institutions in India. New literary types, social reconstruction movements and religious institutions originated in Bengal and spread to every other part of India. The other areas also had the direct impact of the West, but the reflex impact from Bengal was nonetheless significant.

#### LANGUAGE

Though in our present discussion we have to focus our attention on Western strands in Indian literature, it is difficult to dissociate the linguistic aspect. Just as the flower cannot be dissociated from the plant when a total view is desired, language structure becomes a complementary aspect when the general question of Western impact on our letters is taken up. The subject is indeed formidable as we have several languages in India with considerable literary output. The study on the subject available in English is scanty and even that is only about literature and not on language as such. The present writer does not claim competence in many languages. He has worked mainly on his own language, Malayalam, and so what is possible is a projection of his observations based on that language to the wider area of Indian literature. Happily, in its response to outside influences and in its spirit and outlook, Indian literature has a striking unity and hence the generalizations may not miss the mark very much.

However, a slight distinction has to be made in the case of Western impact on our languages, particularly as regards the grammatical structure. Here the Dravidian and the Indo-Aryan are to be treated separately, though not in all aspects. All the modern Indian languages have been influenced extensively and in depth by two languages,

viz., Sanskrit and English. No doubt the assimilation has been more in respect of literature than language as such. The prevailing view is that the phonological and morphological structures of Indian languages have not been subject to any perceptive influence of Western languages. However, it is worthwhile examining the linguistic aspects carefully before we come to any such a conclusion.

#### PHONOLOGY

That some new sounds have been incorporated into our languages to accommodate foreign words can be recognized if we compare the pronunciation of such words by an English educated person and by another who is unfamiliar with English.

Observe the pronunciation of the 'a' in the following *bag, bank, map, pad* when these are written in our script and read by the two types of persons mentioned above. We have no visual symbol to distinguish the pronunciation of the following pairs :

Road	:	Rod
Soap	:	Sop

Many languages do not have a correct script to represent 'f' and 't' in the following though the sounds have already been incorporated:

f	—	film, fan, fashion,
t	—	time, tea, toast.

#### MORPHOLOGICAL FEATURES

The grammatical structure of a language is not easily affected by a foreign tongue, unless the influence is dominant and of long duration. In the case of Dravidian languages, English has influenced a few aspects of its morphology to a noticeable extent. Not that they have borrowed any grammatical elements, but that their innate potentiality has assumed certain new dimensions due to the impact of English grammar.

The use of the passive voice and the relative pronoun is not according to the genius of the Dravidian languages. However, these have been introduced firstly on account of Sanskrit influence and popularized considerably by English. Dravidian languages normally use relative participles in place of relative pronouns. Now relative pronouns are not uncommon and passive voice has almost become natural by frequent and continuous use.

Translation from English for newspapers and books is such a common affair in every language that certain forms and expressions

are assimilated without much opposition. An equivalent for the indefinite article *a* has been introduced thus, though in a majority of cases it is superfluous and jarring. For many English prepositions, the Dravidian languages use a suffix, but in many cases they are not necessary. Equivalents for prepositions like *for, on, about, of, by, with*, etc., are sometimes imposed or wrongly used.

#### SYNTAX

The Indian languages have the word order subject, object, verb; whereas English has subject, verb, object. But in modern prose the English syntax is slowly, but definitely becoming popular. Similarly, parenthetical clauses and expressions are also gaining currency. No doubt these devices provide variety and increase the capacity and expressive power of the language. Comparatively speaking, Tamil and Urdu are not keen to accept such innovations, but even their structure has felt the imprint of the English prose style.

#### PUNCTUATION

The Indian languages did not bother about punctuation till the introduction of printing. No doubt several languages had a visual symbol for a stop. The important pauses necessary for easy comprehension, are latent in the structure of the sentence itself. This is particularly true of the Dravidian languages. For instance, if all the sentences end in a finite verb, is there any real need for a full stop? Anyhow, those days have gone, and the construction of sentences has become more complicated and varied. Therefore, to get the necessary precision, we have borrowed the punctuation marks from the West in toto.

#### ABBREVIATION TECHNIQUES

The technique of abbreviation was not unknown to the Indian mind. The scientific treatises in Sanskrit are full of such systems. These have been adapted to some extent by the modern Indian languages. However, the abbreviation techniques imported from the West have almost completely replaced our own system. Among these the most popular type is taking the initial letters only. The Roman letters are taken not only for English words like Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) but also for Indian language words like Sri Narayana Dharma Paripalanayogam (SNDP). All languages are not alike in this regard, as for example Tamil which

prefers to use the initial full syllable. Ex: Kaa. Naa. Subramoniam (K. N. Subramoniam).

#### VOCABULARY

Borrowing words is a natural consequence of languages coming into contact with one another. In fact, there is no developed language in the world which has not borrowed words from other languages. In their development as suitable vehicles for modern expression, all the Indian languages have borrowed considerably from English. The number of such loans in these languages run into thousands, perhaps four to five thousand in each language, and borrowing is still going on. It has now become extremely difficult for any educated Indian to speak or write his language without introducing some English words. He will not only become highly artificial, but less expressive and impressive. English words borrowed have gone into all aspects of life like refreshments, dress, ornaments, toilets, furniture, stationery articles, business, administration, politics, military science, literature, art and education.

Languages like Bengali, Marathi, Gujarati, Tamil, Kannada and Malayalam have also borrowed words from Portuguese, Dutch and French. A rough quantitative assessment can be made from the fact that Malayalam has taken about 150 words from Portuguese, 30 from French and 10 from Dutch. Bengali has over 150 words, Marathi about 100 words, Kannada about 80 words and Tamil 140 from Portuguese.<sup>1</sup> Most of such words have taken firm roots in the language.

Here are a few sample loans in Malayalam :

Portuguese	Banian	undershirt
	Kōppa	cup
	mēsa	table
Dutch	appōttekkiri	doctor (Pharmacist)
	kakkūs	latrine
French	Mēr	mayor
	kalasam	trousers

#### IDIOMS

Idioms and phrases reflect the genius of a language and are, therefore more difficult to be transplanted in a new language. However, they do cross the barriers of languages and establish themselves in a new set up. A good number of English idioms have gained currency in the Indian languages. I have collected a list of about 150 idioms that

have been accepted in Malayalam. Some of them have come from the English Bible. Here are a few samples :

Brute majority  
 Storm in the tea cup  
 writing on the wall  
 forbidden fruit  
 white washed sepulchre  
 wolf in sheep's clothing

#### REFERENCE BOOKS FOR LANGUAGE STUDY

When an adult wants to study a new language he cannot progress much without the basic instruments called 'grammar' and 'dictionary'. The non-availability of such reference books was strongly felt when foreigners wanted to make a study of our languages. Some of the languages like Tamil and Kannada had traditional grammars and subject-wise dictionaries. But these were not very useful to the foreigners. Therefore, in many languages, the initial steps to compile dictionaries and grammars on modern lines were taken by them. The first efforts were improved upon by later students and some of the missionaries had a flair for learning new languages. When we look back now, we find that a good percentage of the most important works on dictionary and grammar was done by European savants. A European design and scientific approach is clear in such works which swayed the field for several decades. Here below are some of the most outstanding works (not the earliest in every case) which promoted the study of the modern Indian languages.

#### GRAMMARS

Kannada (1864)	T. Hodson
Malayalam (1868)	H. Gundert
Tamil (1859)	G. U. Pope
Telugu (1872)	A. H. Arden
Comparative Grammar of Dravidian Languages (1856)	Robert Caldwell
Assamese (1839)	W. Robinson
Bengali (1801)	William Carey
Gujarati (1847)	W. Clarkson
Hindi (1875)	S. H. Kellog
Marathi (1854)	E. Burger
Panjabi (1838)	Rev. J. Newton



Oriya (1831)	A. Sutton
Sindhi (1872)	Ernest Trumpp
Urdu (1838)	J. R. Ballantyne
Comparative grammar of Modern Aryan Languages (1872)	J. Beames

#### DICTIONARIES

(giving meanings in the language and in English)

Kannada (1894)	F. W. Kittel
Malayalam (1872)	H. Gundert
Tamil (1842)	Winslow
Telugu (1852)	C. P. Brown
Assamese (1867)	Miles Bronson
Bengali (1815)	William Carey
Gujarati (1854)	E. P. Robertson
Hindi (1862)	J. T. Thomson
Marathi (1831)	Molesworth
Panjabi (About 1841)	J. Newton
Oriya (1874)	W. Brooks
Urdu (1888)	T. Craven

From the above list as well as from other similar works, it can be gathered that a large percentage of the important reference books for a scientific study of the Indian languages were published in the nineteenth century and mainly owing to the efforts of Western scholars. No doubt Indian scholars have assisted them in this great work, but the planning and organization was completely the contribution of Westerners. These basic instruments have been improved upon by Indian scholars since then, but it was for the missionary to do the pioneering work in every language. More comprehensive and modern dictionaries compiled by Indian scholars since have adopted the Western techniques of lexicography, such as alphabetical arrangement and citing of sources. The *Amarakosha* type of dictionary, where synonyms are grouped under a subject-wise arrangement, has gone out of vogue.

It was but natural for Western scholars to look at the structure of Indian languages with European eyes. Grammatical tools which were quite developed in the West were employed to dismantle the complicated machinery of the Indian languages. In the course of such operations they found some tools unsuitable, adjusted others with remarkable success, but they occasionally caused damage to



certain parts of the machinery by using unsuitable tools. Perhaps the difficulty was more with respect to Dravidian languages, the grammatical structure of which was very unfamiliar to them. However, some of them like Gundert, Arden and Caldwell succeeded considerably. They have also introduced the idea of comparative studies both in the field of grammar and vocabulary.<sup>2</sup> In short, the Western savants gave a firm and modern basis to the scientific study of Indian languages, not only by showing the way, but also by making substantial contributions.

#### LITERATURE

The most significant effect of our contact with the British is the intellectual development we have had in the various fields political, social and religious. This influence has made us truly modern. In other words, our modernity is bound up with Westernism to a large extent. And Westernism has spread in India not only through English, but also through our own literatures. As pointed out already, the influence of English on our languages and literatures is stupendous. That of Portuguese, Dutch and French is comparatively slight. If Malayalam is taken as an instance, there is only one novel *Akbar* which has been translated from the Dutch and even that was done from the English version. As regards Portuguese, *Chavittunatakam* (a kind of ballet in Tamil—Malayalam script) is the only prominent retaining influence. Over 60 books have been translated into Malayalam from French, the translation being done mostly from English versions and during the British period.

English exerted its influence in the last 150 years. 1947—the year in which India became free can be taken as a landmark even for our literary survey. Even after that, the influence of the West is still dominant, but it has a different complexion. I would consider a century before 1947 as the period of the greatest impact of the West. By 1847 education on Western lines became established in several regions of India and by 1857 the three major Universities of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras were founded. Also by then the Western missionaries evinced more interest in secular education and the public at large realized the value of learning Western literature and the sciences. The fertilizing flow of Western ideas widened the mental horizon of the newly educated Indians who proved to be the most vital agents for spreading the best aspects of Western culture.

Broadly speaking, the period of Western influence before 1947, can be divided into two stages. The first stage is predominantly

foreign and the contributors are mostly European missionaries. And the works which came into the languages as a result of this influence are, to a large extent, geared to the spread of Christian theology and Western philosophy.

When one comes to the second stage, the missionaries seem to have taken a more liberal attitude. For them, though the final goal remained unchanged, the means have been somewhat broadened. A liberal education was considered not only relevant, but an added incentive to being exposed to Western religious practices. Therefore, apart from compiling grammars and dictionaries which merely helped the foreigner in learning the new language, some of them like Pope, Gundert and Kittel went several steps farther and produced works of great scholarship. They also wrote several books to serve as teaching materials in secular schools. The most important aspect in the spread of Western influence, however, was the entry of native scholars and literary men in the field. Though they were considerably influenced by the Western technique and approach, their contributions are marked by their own native stamp. This is particularly relevant when one takes up creative writing. Of course, it took some time for such stalwarts, imbued with a virile composite culture, to emerge.

Even Bengal, which preceded other regions by two or three decades in the onward march, had to wait till 1865 to see a first class novel like *Durgesanandini* (Bankim Chandra) in its own language. Malayalam had to wait till 1889 to get *Indulekha* (O. Chandu Menon). In Punjabi a novel of a similar spirit, *Sundari* (Bhai Vir Singh) came only in 1897. This does not mean that novels of a kind were not written in the languages before these dates. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century<sup>3</sup> the flowering of first class fictions were seen in all the Indian languages.

It is such novels written by the enlightened Indians that spread the taste for reading fiction considerably rather than the well-known novels of the West. In fact *Durgesanandini* and its immediate successors cast a spell on the writers and critics not only of Bengal, but of all the Indian languages near and far. The influence was so moving and enduring that imitations were attempted by several writers.

Generally speaking, the impact of the West on Indian literatures during the second half of the nineteenth century was so profound that it led to an all-pervading literary renaissance. And the influence continues even today and it has become a self-generating

phenomenon, at least in certain generic forms.

It is extremely difficult to assess quantitatively the extent of Western influence on Indian literature. The influence has come directly and indirectly. It is manifest in translation, in adaptation or in varying degrees of imitation in theme, plot or form. Except in translation and clear-cut adaptation, it is difficult to assess the borrowed elements with any degree of accuracy. But translations and adaptations indicate in a general way the dominant influence.

The statistics given below regarding Malayalam may indicate the curve generally as regards translation and adaptation.

*Number of Western books in Malayalam*

<i>Period</i>	<i>Translation</i>	<i>Adaptation</i>
A 1880-1900	4	5
B 1901-1930	21	9
C 1931-1947	33	7
D 1948-1966	444	23
	502	44

The above figures do not include translations of the Bible made from English versions. They do not include all Western languages; the translation in the vast majority of cases was done from English versions (for non-English languages). Below is a break-up language-wise.

TRANSLATION

<i>Period</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>French</i>	<i>German</i>	<i>Russian</i>	<i>others</i>
A	3	—	—	—	1
B	20	—	—	—	—
C	4	10	1	8	10
D	209	50	21	112	52
	236	61	22	120	63

The books in the last column, viz., 63 titles come from 16 languages ranging from Greek and Latin to Swedish and Yiddish.

We shall not go into the many conclusions that can be drawn from the above statistics except that the literature that has dominated Kerala after English is Russian and then French. This is likely to be true of most other Indian languages.

A word about translation of the English Bible in the Indian languages will not be out of place here. Except for Tamil and Urdu,

translations of the Bible were published in all the Indian languages between 1800 and 1819. In Tamil a translation was published as early as 1714 and in Urdu, 1743. The initial publication in many cases was the New Testament only but by 1850 the complete Bible came to be published in all the major Indian languages. These translations also played a role in the shaping of a simple prose in our languages.

## POETRY

Though a generic survey assessing Western influence would be useful, it cannot be attempted within the compass of a brief article like this. So far we have been speaking about literature in general. But it is both possible and useful to make a two-fold division, viz., poetry and prose. Poetry in all the major Indian languages has had a fairly long tradition before the West cast its influence. The case of prose is considerably different. It was so to say in its swaddling clothes when the West reached us. Naturally the Western influence produced one kind of effect in poetry and another kind in prose. We may generalize and say that the West has revitalized our poetry and revealed the potentiality of our prose.

All the modern Indian languages have a substantial amount of folk and classical poetry. The classical poetry of Tamil which developed in its own way is nearly two thousand years old. The tradition of poetry for other languages extends from five to twelve centuries. In the shaping of this tradition the part played by Sanskrit is significant. Toward the close of the nineteenth century, poetry in several languages was languishing for want of a new life. Rhetoric rather than imagination had the upper hand. By and large, our poetry was of the narrative (epic and ballad) and dramatic types. All subjects were not considered suitable for poetry. Descriptions from approved lists and *alankaras* were considered a must. There was also an undue emphasis on alliteration (*prasa*). These presuppositions were challenged by our modern poets who drank deep from English poetry. Thus our poetry became more subjective, shorn of standard figures of speech and descriptions. The lyrical and romantic elements were found quite interesting. Very soon in every language several lyrical pieces came to be written. Poets also adopted forms such as elegy, sonnet, ode, dramatic monologue, etc., Shelley, Keats, Browning, Wordsworth, Whitman and Eliot are just a few who have influenced our poets.

The Western influence has gone deeper in certain other respects too. Western imagery has seeped into our poetry. It is mostly

Biblical in concept, though they have come from English poetry. Abel and Cain, Adam and Eve, Christ, the Cross, the Virgin Mary, the Christmas star, the nightingale, the hammer and sickle, all these infiltrated our poetry. Also imagery based on modern industry, science and technology is steadily coming into the fabric of Indian poetry. Modern poetry has been released from the grip of rhetoric and feats of craftsmanship. It has become a poetry of experience, has ceased to be the hobby of the leisured class and become the mouthpiece of the ordinary man. It has gained in elegance, dignity and refinement and much of its progress is due to its continuous and inspiring contact with Western poetry.

#### PROSE

When we survey the history of the various Indian literatures, we realize that prose as such was not considered good enough for aesthetic expression. In every Indian language, a kind of prose existed before the nineteenth century like commentaries of *Tolkappiam* in Tamil, translation of *Arthasastra* in Malayalam and records like *Burunjis* in Assamese, but they were by and large utilitarian. Most of these were also artificial and cumbersome. There was a wide gulf between the spoken language and the literary prose. Such stilted prose was of no use to the school children. It was equally useless to the Christian missionary who wanted to propagate the Gospel to every one. Thus the recognition of a simple prose as an effective medium for literary expression and education became an accomplished fact. And before long an expressive prose style was established and this was mainly on account of the Western influence. Our approach to poetry and prose was different. Even while assimilating the good aspects of Western poetry and prose into our literatures, our modern critics did not put them on a par. I shall explain this with reference to Malayalam.

A. R. Rajaraja Varma, who was an outstanding grammarian, critic and poet in Malayalam and one who guided the destinies of the language on modern lines, felt convinced that a good student of poetry and literary criticism should be familiar with both the Eastern and Western canons of literary appraisal. He further believed that a standard of literary criticism, in Malayalam could be evolved drawing the best elements from both. He, however, felt that the standard need not necessarily have identical emphasis where poetry and prose are concerned, particularly as regards external apparatus. While evaluating poetry, he laid stress on Eastern or Sanskrit tradition of criticism. His *Bhashabhushanam* (1902), a comprehensive

treatise on poetics, is based on well-known works in Sanskrit. There is practically no influence of the West in this work. He wrote another book to assist writers of prose, *Sahityasahyam* (1911). Every section of the book would reveal that he had been considerably guided by English models. It is quite likely that he was largely guided by Fowler, though he did not depend fully on a particular work. Other great critics also agree that two separate yardsticks, one for poetry and another for prose, are not only justifiable but necessary. I am inclined to believe that the situation in other languages is also not much different.

The growth of prose literature in the various Indian languages in the last hundred years has been phenomenal and the influence of Western literature is in a very large measure responsible for this boom. We have borrowed forms like the novel, the short story, the essay, biography, autobiography, prose drama, literary criticism, pen pictures—all coming under aesthetic prose; and also various branches of informative writing like history, travelogue, economics, social sciences, and physical sciences. Both information-packed prose and power-charged prose are indispensable for a modern society.

Reference has already been made to the germination of the Western novel in two or three languages. I shall briefly relate here the story behind the creation of *Indulekha*<sup>4</sup> (1889) in Malayalam. Its author Chandu Menon, a judge by profession, was a voracious reader of English novels. Now and then he used to relate the stories to his wife in Malayalam because she did not know English. Thus she developed a taste for Western novels and insisted that her husband should translate Lord Beaconsfield's *Henrietta Temple*, but he soon realized the inadequacy of the translation and discarded the attempt. So he decided to write a Malayalam novel more or less after the English fashion.

Menon looked at the society around and composed a novel selecting a local theme. He believed that the new generation could progress and prosper only through English education. The heroine Indulekha is pictured as an English-educated, highly independent young lady and she had a sophisticated lover in Madhavan. She knew both Sanskrit and English and could play not only the Veena but the piano also. The main conflict between the old generation and the new is centered on the relevance of English education. After the long conflict, when Indulekha and Madhavan emerge victorious, the real victory is for English education. Chandu Menon's wife was eager to enjoy the fruits of English culture, but did not know any English. He



did not want the next generation to have that handicap. What his wife lacked, he gave to Indulekha.

Though convinced about his goal, Chandu Menon was rather diffident. I do not know how my country men will be disposed to regard a work of this description. Those who do not understand English have had no opportunity of reading stories cast in this mould; and I doubt if they will relish their first experience of this kind of literature. But the readers were actually waiting for this fare. Similar was the response in other languages also when such novels were published. The novel *Indulekha* is doubly relevant in the context of Western influence and that is why so much space has been given to it here.

English novelists like Scott and Dickens were very popular everywhere in India. Continental authors were also introduced through English. In fact, some of them like Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Romain Rolland, Maxim Gorky and Hugo became the craze of our readers in the last forty years. Their works have been translated in all the Indian languages.

Among all the branches of literary works which have come into our languages by way of translation, the largest number is fiction and the smallest poetry, translatability being the main reason. The short story does not seem to have attracted the early fiction writers in most of our languages. The craze for short pieces in literature came from American authors like Washington Irving, Nathaniel Hawthorne and Edgar Allan Poe. The main consideration was to amuse the readers with an invented narrative. By about the third decade of this century, the short story became more mature and serious. It was in the vanguard of progressive literature with a Marxian accent and the tone was one of challenge. It is at this stage that Maupassant, Chekhov and Flaubert came to our languages by way of translation. The contemporary short story is more sober and subtle. The writers have gone deeper into life and the aggressive temperament has been tamed. Joyce, Steinbeck, Hemingway and Kafka are models for some of our writers.

#### DRAMA

Shakespeare has been so much a part of modern education in India that no student is able to escape his influence. A large percentage of modern writers have been influenced by Shakespeare in some way or other. Several of Shakespeare's plays have been adapted and translated into our languages with varying degrees of success.

After Shakespeare, the other European dramatist who had the greatest influence on contemporary drama is the Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen. Then come others like Strindberg, Shaw, Maeterlinck, Chekhov, Eugene O'Neill, Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller and Thornton Wilder.

As a craft and as an art, the writing of plays has been considerably modernized. Plays have become more true to life with deeper emotional and intellectual content. Any sincere critic will be able to see a high degree of westernization in this process of modernization of the Indian drama.

#### LITERARY CRITICISM

As far as I know, the tradition of Indian literary criticism is nothing but the Sanskrit tradition. One or two languages like Tamil can claim a different tradition, but they have not had a dominant influence on the Indian literary scene. Sanskrit poetics has placed the *sabridaya* as the central figure in the appreciation of literature. In contrast it may be said that the West emphasizes the intellectual component, where the critic, who is essentially a fault-finder in the original sense, is the key figure. The modern trend in Indian literary criticism is to combine both the emotional and intellectual aspects, i.e., the spirit of the *sabridaya* and the observation of the critic.

Our critics are now more familiar with the works of Saintsbury, Hudson, Caudwell, Abercrombie, I. A. Richards, Middleton Murry and Sartre, than with Dandi or Vamana or Anandavardhana of our own tradition. From a science based on analysis, literary criticism has evolved into an art based on a combination of synthesis and analysis; from an emphasis on rhetoric and aesthetics it has moved on to an emphasis on imagination and emotion which emanates from a philosophy of life.

#### JOURNALISM

The range and magnitude of Western influence which the newspapers in Indian languages reveal is simply startling. The technique of editing and featuring, the coverage of foreign news, and the language content of sub-heading—all these show a considerable impact of the West. The circulation figures of Indian language newspapers have gone up in the last forty years, and more particularly in the last twenty years. The circulation of *Mathrubhumi* (Malayalam daily) in 1947 was only 23,000. In 1967 it rose up to 2,13,000. The respective figures for the *Hindu* is 80,000 and 1,40,000. When *Mathrubhumi*



registered a tenfold increase, the *Hindu* has gone up only by two and a half times. Whatever the language, Indian newspapers have adopted Western methods of journalism. In its growth and expansion as an important medium of mass communication, journalism has been indebted to the West for its progressive ideology as regards the role of journalism, for streamlined methods of acquiring reliable news, for advanced techniques of editing and presenting news and views, and above all for the highly perfected and efficient production machinery. Considerable benefit has been derived from contacts with Western literatures in other branches of prose writing too.

So far, we have been dealing with the nature and extent of the cross-fertilization in the field of language and literature caused by direct and indirect contacts with Western civilization. Two other factors considerably accelerated this process. One was the establishment of printing presses and the other the increasing facilities of communication between different parts of India by improvement of road and transport, especially the extension of railways. Printing presses were first established in Goa (1557) and Malabar (1577). But the printing press set up by Christian missionaries at Serampore in A.D. 1800, proved to be the great hub of linguistic and literary activities. It was for the first time that all the great Indian languages were brought together at one place for analytical and comparative studies. By about 1830 all the major Indian languages had printing facilities.

It is true that the Western authors and Western books were basically responsible for initiating the leavening influence of the West on our languages and literatures. But for its extensive and perhaps intensive impact, it was the Indian authors and Indian books that were more responsible. Great writers like Tagore, Bankim Chandra and Premchand were responsible for propagating a more palatable and easily assimilable form of Western modes and thoughts. In other words, it was the “class of persons Indian in blood and colour but English in tastes and opinions” that were largely responsible for this cultural osmosis. The reflex influence, however, is sometimes more potent than the direct influence. For many of our literatures, it was both reflex and direct influence simultaneously. Bengali happened to be the catalyst of the West as far as Assamese, Oriya, Hindi, Gujarati, Marathi and Telugu were concerned. Similarly, Urdu functioned as a transmitter to Hindi, Punjabi and Sindhi.

In conclusion, I should sound a note of warning against a possible impression that modern Indian literature is nothing but a

rehash of Western literature. This is definitely wrong. We only mean that Indian writers were open to influences from outside which, though alien, were stimulating, and continue to oscillate between them and the traditional sources, which seem to have been dried up now and then.<sup>5</sup> The contact between East and West has been mutually advantageous. The beneficial influence has never been a one-way traffic, but a kind of osmosis in the cultural realm, and inter-culturation which resulted in reciprocal assimilation.

#### NOTES

1. Influence of Portuguese vocables in Asiatic Languages (Gaekwad's Oriental Series, Vol. LXXIV).
2. A notable work in the Dravidian Etymological Dictionary (1961) by M.B. Emeneau and T. Burrow.
3. Marathi—*Madgli Sthite* (1885) By H.N. Apte, Telugu—*Rajasekhara Charitra* (1878) by Viresalingam, Oriya—*Chhaman Athaguntha* by Fakir Mohan Senapati.
4. An English translation of the novel by W. Demurgue is now available with Mathrubhumi Publications, Calicut.
5. *Contemporary Indian Literature* (Sahitya Akademi) p. 97, Article on Kannada by V.K. Gokak.

ARABINDA PODDAR

## Lord Byron and the Literary Renaissance in Bengal



THE area of Western impact upon Indian literatures is admittedly vast, and an attempt to trace it even in respect of only one literature, let us say, Bengali literature, would run into volumes. As such, no attempt to accomplish that gigantic feat has been made here. The purpose of this paper is to indicate the area as well as the extent of that impact from an outline account of the influence exercised by only one English poet on the architects of the Bengali literary renaissance in the nineteenth century. The poet of my choice is Lord Byron. I chose Byron because to my astonishment I had found that even Shelley was little read and admired in those days, whereas there was a strong infatuation for Byron.

In contemporary Europe, Byron's poetry caused a stir, augmented perhaps by his pilgrimage to places of ancient glory, then in utter desolation. For India or for Bengal there was no possibility of a direct contact, but the vibrations felt there reached Calcutta through the English lovers of poetry, and quickened a new germination and a new awakening.

The first acknowledged convert to the Byronic spell was not a Bengali, but a Eurasian, H. L. V. Derozio (1809-1831), born of a Portuguese father and an English mother. At the age of seventeen he was appointed a teacher in the senior department

of the Hindu College, and was thus destined to be the centre of a violent intellectual and social commotion that shook the whole of Calcutta. Before joining this assignment he had earned local fame as an aspiring poet, and was affectionately called by friends 'the Eurasian Byron'. His unbounded adoration of Byron produced a long poem entitled the *Fakeer of Jungheera*, composed in the vein of the Turkish verse-tale *The Gaiour*, and at least a dozen short pieces on Greek and Italian themes. These were his immediate responses to stimuli received from *Childe Harold* and *Don Juan*, and revealed as passionate a love of freedom and as strong a resentment of wrong as enliven the pages of those two works. He was the nucleus of a literary circle styled "Academic Association" formed by himself and composed mostly of his pupils, which frequently met and fruitfully debated literary, social, religious, moral and political problems. Himself an upholder of the values of free thinking and social justice, he inspired his young admirers to uphold the same, and instilled in them the spirit of patriotism through lamentations in his own poems for the present fallen state of India and through indignation at the mis-government by an alien power. Byron's angry outbursts at tyrants and his equally loud evocations of the spirit of freedom were echoed and re-echoed by those ardent hearts, and thus a Byronic literary atmosphere was brought into existence. One of his pupils, Kashiprasad Ghosh earned popularity for his English compositions in both verse and prose which sang of India's glory and dreamed of independence.

Derozio, however, had a brief stay at the Hindu College; but we can well presume that the impetus he gave to the spirit of enquiry and the Byronic atmosphere he created continued to prevail even after his departure and death. So, when in 1833, Madhusudan Dutta, Bengal's epic poet and the innovator in Bengali of the blank verse and the sonnet, entered the College and moved, blazingly, to the upper forms, he could not help being enamoured of Byron, more perhaps of the personality than of his poetry. Byron was his 'noble favourite', as he told his friend Gour Dass Bysack in a letter. In another, he fondly called him 'my Lord Byron', and on yet another occasion he described pilgrim Harold—hence also Byron himself and following his own words—as 'an orphan of the heart'. This fascination was the spontaneous overflow of an instinctive kinship he felt with the English poet, and his letters which discussed Byron are so revealing as deserve to be considered as mirrors to his own inner self. In a letter dated the November 25, 1842, Madhusudan wrote: 'I am

reading Tom Moore's life of my favourite Byron—a splendid book upon my word ! Oh! how I should like to see you writing my “life” if I happen to be a great poet—which I am almost sure I shall be, if I can go to England.’ And two days later he continued, “I have done with Tom's *Life of Byron*. The chapter, wherein the death of my noble favourite is detailed, drew forth tears from me rather in an abundant degree—So interesting it is, that nothing can be pleasanter—at least to me, than its pages—full of everything to make the reader—gay—sad—thoughtful and so forth’.

Equally ‘proud, silent, lonely man of song’ (Madhusudan's own words about himself), he imbibed many of the character traits that go with the name of Lord Byron, except perhaps the latter's ‘glowing sensuality’, such as recklessness, impetuosity, etc. Not only in these, but in his hatred of the philistinism of a settled and contented life also was Madhusudan truly Byron-like. For even after the publication early in 1861 of his epoch-making epic *Meghnadbadh Kavya* (The Fall of Meghnad) and even after achieving renown as ‘the Milton of Bengal’, as ‘the Goethe of Bengal’, we find him writing to Rajnarayan Bose on August 29 of the same year, ‘Or must I sink into a writer of occasional lyrics and sonnets for the rest of my life? The idea is intolerable ! . . . I like a subject with oceanic and mountain scenery, with sea-voyages, battle and love adventures. It gives a fellow's invention such a wide scope.’ These lines immediately call to mind the image as well as the poetry of Byron. And so, like Byron, he did not rest and moved on to explore new forms and idioms for Bengali poetry. It is, however, to be admitted that the influence of Byron on Madhusudan is most discernable in what we may call his English period, till his return in 1856 to Calcutta from Madras, when he wrote only in English. But the changes brought into the perceptions and being of a sensitive person by the impact of a dynamic personality remain an overlasting possession, from which his personality or self cannot be isolated.

To my mind, of greater emotional significance and of more sustaining value had been the influence exercised by the freedom-fighter in Byron in moulding Madhusudan's temperament. In 1854, Madhusudan gave a discourse in Madras on ‘The Anglo-Saxon and the Hindu’. In course of it he referred to Byron and his works in passionate tones of appreciation. Here are his words: ‘See the wild Macedonian rushing forth like a mountain torrent, carrying everything before him, as the tempestuous wind carries the dark cloud onward’; and again, ‘The pilgrim Harold wept over desolate Rome—for he was an orphan of the heart and turned to her; and the

eloquence of his grief, the sweet and soft voice of his sorrow, swelling like a stream of rich yet mournful music, still saddens the soul; and yet he was an alien, a wanderer from a colder, a cloudier clime ! *What would he have done, had he stood where I stand; had he been what I am?* (emphasis added). I have emphasized the last sentence, for these are crystal musings, which reveal the agony and the suffering he had so long kept concealed. These also indicate the dimension which his reading of Byron's poetry had taught him to achieve. From these musings to Ravan's bewailing the death in a notoriously unjust war of his beloved son Meghnad in *Meghnadbadh Kavya* and, later, in the gloomy hours he spent at Varsailles, to his recollection of his childhood memories of nature's green expanse, the chirping birds, the river Kapotaksba, the immortal mythological poets of Bengal, etc., and to the 'tears welling up, blind these eyes of mine', etc., of his last sonnet is a logical and facile journey. He was doing what Byron in a similar position would have done — shedding tears for freedom that was no more, and brooding over the dignity and identity that were definitely lost. That he embellished Bengali, the tongue of his forefathers, and looked back to Bengal with a heart full of love and devotion points to the fact that Madhusudan desperately sought to re-possess his identity as a Bengali, as belonging to his own people, though largely alienated from them through a change of faith and the unchecked Anglicism of his early life. Repossession of one's identity is the first step towards regaining independence.

This quest for identity elevated Madhusudan to the height of Byron. Both of them had known calumny and disaffection; both had tasted torments in abundance. But suffering in their cases were preludes to sublimity. Just as in Byron the crust of his ego in the end broke to absorb in himself the passion and sorrow of people fighting for their freedom, so in Madhusudan we notice the gradual annihilation of his ego to absorb in himself the agonized cry of his motherland.

Madhusudan's friend and contemporary Rangalal Bandyopadhyay (1827-87), a pioneer poet of Bengal's renaissance, also came under the influence of Byron, though no direct link either of influence or of imitation may be clearly established. He himself, however, confessed to his being under the spell of English poets who undoubtedly also included Byron. Madhusudan also testified to this in a letter to Rajnarayan Bose wherein he complained that Rangalal only read Byron, Scott and Moore. In the light of this information, it may be concluded without any fear of contra-diction that Byron's

evocations on freedom served as a source of inspiration for Ranggalal's patriotic poem *Padmini Upakhyān* (The story of Padmini), although the quality of the verse is rather indifferent. His heroic poem *Sura-Sundari* (Beauty Courageous) also resembles the heroic verse-tales of Byron and Scott in spirit, style and in the general feudal structure.

Two other poets, Hemchandra Bandyopadhyay (1838-1903) and Nabinchandra Sen (1846-1909), next only to Madhusudan in both fame and popularity, were deeply indebted to Byron. Hemchandra's first volume entitled *Chintatarangini* (Stream of Thought), an elegiac poem occasioned by the suicide of a friend, at one place so distinctly echoes the following lines from the grieving Julia's letter in *Don Juan* that his lines could be taken as a literal translation of the same:

Man's love is of man's life a thing apart,  
Tis woman's whole existence, man may range  
The court, camp, church, the vessel, and the mart;  
Sword, gown, gain, glory, offer, in exchange, etc.

(Canto I, 194)

His next poem, *Birbahu* (The Strong-armed Hero) has for its motto this memorable stanza from Byron,

Italia ! Oh Italia ! thou who hast  
The fatal gift of beauty, which became  
A funeral dower of present woes and past, etc.,

(Childe Harold, IV, 42)

which serves as the clue to the spirit and the fire incorporated within the body of the verse.

But, it is with Nabinchandra Sen that we reach the apex of Byron's influence. His vigorous epic *Palasir Yuddha* (The Battle of Plassey) came as an enthralling surprise to his contemporaries, who immediately hailed him as the Byron of Bengal. The lead was given by Bankim Chandra, who wrote a short but penetrating review of this poem in his journal *Bangadarsan*. The salient points made by Bankim Chandra may be reproduced here in order to show the general trend of Byron-appreciation in Bengal. According to him, 'Byron's poetry is extremely forceful, vehement, fire-like; so also is Nabinchandra's Bengali poetry. Their emotions are like the lava-flood of a volcano, like fireflames; the moment they break loose they become irresistible'. He then quoted these lines from *The Giaour* :

But mine was like the lava flood  
That boils in Etna's breast of flame  
I cannot prate in pulling strain



Of ladye-love and beauty's chain:  
 If changing check, and scorching vein,  
 Lips taught to writhe but not complain,  
 If bursting heart, and madd'ning brain,  
 And daring deed, and vantageful steel  
 And all that I have felt and feel,  
 Betoken love—that love was mine,  
 And shown by many a bitter sign.

He than observed, “these very words characterize Byron’s as well as Nabin-chandra’s poetry. Whenever his patriotic emotions overflow, Nabinchandra also abandons himself to the erupting lava-flood. If loud evocations, sad bewailings, a fearless and bold love of truth, or scorching indignation be taken as expressions of the love of one’s own country, then Nabinchandra has it in great abundance. He also is as skilful in description as Byron himself, like whom he can paint pictures with minimum effort and words.’

Not merely this, *Palasir Yuddha* abounds in Byronic exclamations, exhortations, and lamentations, in a way hardly permitted by the exigencies of his art. But the intensity of his passion and the keen urge to resist Clive and his men have almost an electrifying effect, the kind of thrill we experience when we read Byron’s stanzas on *The Isles of Greece*.

These stanzas of Byron moved great many people in Bengal, and imitation of Byron became the current literary vogue. Whoever aspired to write poetry, aspired also to write it in the Byronic vein. This is corroborated by a comment of Bankim Chandra’s *Bangadarsan*, which, while reviewing a book of poems by Akshay Chandra Sarkar, commented, ‘Byron’s poetry is highly appreciated these days. Everywhere we notice the imitation of Byron.’ (Sept-Oct. 1874). Quite a few volumes were published by enthusiastic young hearts in literal imitation of the aforesaid stanzas, although the poetic achievement was anything but pleasing. Rabindranath also has recorded in his *Reminiscences* that Byron was one of the gods worshipped in the Bengal of his youth, while D. L. Roy (1863-1913), the dramatist, has mentioned in a short essay on ‘The Beginnings of my Dramatic Career’ (in Bengali) that in his youth he could at ease reproduce from memory the whole of *Manfred* and two cantos from *Childe Harold*. This revealing confession provides substantial strength to my argument that throughout the whole of the nineteenth century Byron kept the English-educated youths spellbound with his animated poetry.



It is not to be understood that Byron's was the only influence at work. Other influences, equally invigorating, were converging to further the same end—that of transforming the Bengali language into a supple and rich vehicle of expression. Indeed, within a few decades of Western impact Bengali grew flexible enough to assimilate the grace and dignity of, let us say, Sanskrit, as well as the vigour of English. It began to be regarded by Englishmen as 'one of the great expressive languages of the world, capable of being the vehicle of as great things as any speech of men'. There was, it is needless to say, a corresponding flowering of Bengali literature.

But so extensive an influence as that of Byron could not be expected to remain confined within the bounds of literary activities alone; it was working, even if imperceptibly, for more significant transformation touching the intellectual, moral and spiritual lives of Bengali youths. In the eighth decade of the century, this was fully recognized and gratitude expressed for it.

But before we come to specify the recognition and draw adequate conclusions thereof, we would do well to remind ourselves of the socio-cultural implication of the impact of English literature upon Bengal's social climate. A few lines from Rabindranath's *Reminiscences* would serve our purpose. He wrote, "Glancing back at the period of which I tell, it strikes me that we had gained more of stimulation than of nourishment out of English literature. Our literary gods then were Shakespeare, Milton and Byron; and the quality in their work which stirred us most was strength of passion. . . . The spirit of this bechchanalian revelry of Europe found entrance into our demurely well-behaved social world, woke us up, and made us lively. We were dazzled by the glow of unfettered life which fell upon our custom-smothered heart, pining for an opportunity to disclose itself". This slowly awakening consciousness received the full thrust of Byron's 'dance-rhythm' and 'the impetuosity of his passion'. Awakened thus, the recipients of that influence found strong inducements to form newer intellectual attachments, newer notions of value and of social standards.

Long before Rabindranath wrote those lines, Haraprasad Sastri, the famous Indologist and one of the most eminent products of Bengal's renaissance, in an admirable essay written in Bengali, styled 'Bengali Youths and the three poets' and published in *Bangadarsan* in 1878, elaborated at length Byron's contributions to Bengal's intellectual heritage that was instrumental in transforming their character and personality. In it he singled out Byron as the only

English poet to have made the widest, deepest and the most lasting impact, the other two poets to have similarly influenced were Kalidasa and the Bengali novelist Bankim chandra. In Haraprasad's view, Shakespeare, although he was the most widely read author, was rather ineffectual in this particular sphere. For, he argued, 'Shakespeare's aesthetic mission was to please'; even his villains pleased no less than his other characters. As a result, the emotions generated by these two separate groups of characters cancelled each other. Milton's puritanism no one dared to imitate; Dryden and Pope were frankly didactic, while Wordsworth so elaborated his emotions as to render them tasteless. Thus the stage was left free for Byron to cast his magic spell and captivate the minds of youths. 'He was the friend of the oppressed, enemy of the oppressors, a repertory of love, youth incarnate, superbly spirited, ever restless, resentful of sloth and social oppression'; and so he could be a natural charmer of the plastic minds. With these preliminary observations Haraprasad went on to give a fuller analysis of the three poets concerned, Byron having been apportioned the largest share of the printed space occupied by the essay. The following paragraphs give a resume of his analysis of Byron—man and poet, as also of his message to humanity.

'. . . Europe is Byron's object of depiction. Whatever there is noble and beautiful in art and nature finds a place in his poetry. In the depiction of scenes made immortal by history Byron is peerless. Therein we get a complete portrayal of his big and courageous heart, and his exhortations attendant upon these descriptions are so penetrating as get permanently engraved upon the hearts of youths. . . . Byron, however, knows no repose. Changes, nay, innumerable changes, are occurring every moment, one scene yielding place to another, then to yet another; as if the craving for the beautiful could never be satiated. And if ever satisfaction arrived in the form of delight and pleasure, it evaporated in a Moment. . . .

'. . . He is asking us to take to the road, leaving behind the confinement at home. If you want to enjoy the prettiest objects of nature, then go to her. How can you hope to gain peace and contentment staying at home and having all the deceits of the world showered on you? . . .

'. . . Byron is the child of the French Revolution. So, he bears no love for the present-day social order. He is firm in his conviction that only oppression exists here. His finest characters are, therefore, outcasts; some of them are sworn enemies of society, others are misanthropes. None of them is happy. . . . They know for certain that

their misery will not end so long as this social order subsists. But they will not turn back in repentance. Some are rending their solitary prison-cells with piercing curses for its destruction, while others are wildly roaming to break its laws. They are sad and miserable; so they must have their revenge on it and against the arbiters of this society. But, at the same time, their hearts are glowing with sympathy for men, for the powerless and for the womenfolk. They want to love men, but the inhuman and oppressive social laws do not permit them to love them in the way they wish to love. . . .

‘. . . With every picture of Byron goes some message. Behind every lovely descriptive passage there are two lines of anger against social oppression. Wherever you may choose to go with him, you will find a message dressed up in satire. But his message exists like inscriptions on our hearts. . . . Some people argue, “What nonsense! moral lessons from Byron! He is a very vulgar poet”. Indeed, he has no message for men of such an outmoded school of thinking. Byron belongs to the school of Rousseau. All men are equal. Only a handful of men have the reins of society in their hands, and they, through oppression and arbitrary measures, emasculate the rest of mankind and render them absolutely spiritless. This state of affairs has got to be changed. These ideas animate his poetry. True, Byron and his characters appear to us as misanthropes. But a little reflection will reveal that his hatred is entirely against the society of today, and that behind it lies the deepest sympathy for mankind. So, love of men and the joy of breaking social fetters are Byron’s message to us’.

### III

Haraprasad’s essay is an eloquent recognition of the responses evoked by Byron and his poetry in the minds of the elite of Bengal. The immensity of his influence, whether by way of stimulation or nourishment, is a tribute not to his poetry alone, but is a tribute to the awareness of our writers who had received their first lessons in emulating the great in the field of literary creation. But what is striking and surpasses calculation is this—if only one poet who rarely attained the sublime in poetry could have exerted so extensive an influence what then might have been the cumulative effect of all the influences of all the Western gods worshipped in those days. They, comprising a whole, broke the spell of the traditionally introvert modes of perception and prepared the soil for men with the gift of imagination to exert themselves. The result was the emergence, with astonishing rapidity, of the modern Bengali literature.

That the message of Byron was also well taken need hardly be stressed. Most of our nineteenth century litterateurs started their career as devout Anglicists, egotistically absorbed in the thoughts of their own preferment and prosperity. They sought to Westernize themselves thoroughly so that they could gain a recognized place in the society of the conquerors. In the name of India they loved Europe, as Bipin Chandra Pal commented. But both because of the non-fulfilment of their aspirations and of the stimulation they had received for breaking the fetters of bondage from English literature, they underwent a metamorphosis similar to that of Byron himself. They gradually came out of their shining shells of Anglicism to become in the end the builders and leaders of nationalist movements and of literary renaissance in Bengal. Passionately did they seek to regain their identity as the voice of their own people and land, in the same way as the egotist in Byron transformed himself into a voice of suffering humanity. Like him they too could record their

‘ . . . plain, sworn, downright detestation  
Of every despotism in every nation.’

*(Don Jaun, IX, 24)*

*Section B: Folk Literature*

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A. K. RAMANUJAN

## The Indian ‘Oedipus’



### INTRODUCTION

Searching for stories of the Oedipus type some years ago in Indian myth and folklore, I found very little that looked like the Sophocles play. The very few instances I found were of the following kind: (a) an anecdote about Ganesa<sup>1</sup>—once Parvati asked him whom he would like to marry; he replied ‘Someone exactly like you, Mummy’, and Mummy got outraged by such an open incestuous wish and cursed him with everlasting celibacy; that’s why he’s still a bachelor; (b) In certain versions of the *Ramayana*, Sita is Ravana’s daughter, born with a curse on her head that she would bring death to her father. Ravana tries to get rid of her, and she ends up in a strange northern land where she marries Rama, gets abducted by unsuspecting Ravana, and Rama of course kills him. (c) In the *Mahabharata*, Arjuna fights with his own son Babhru-vahana who slays his father in battle, but Arjuna is later revived, (d) In the Bengali *Ramayana*, Rama’s sons Lava and Kusa kill Rama in battle. And there are instances in the *Rigveda* (quoted by Spratt, p. 106): ‘who, O Indra, made thy mother a widow? What god was present in the fray when thou didst slay thy father, seizing him by the foot?’ (Rg. IV. 18.12)

But all these instances are rather obscure, generally not known or preserved in the most influential versions of the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata* or the popular lore.

Others have searched before me, notably psychoanalytic writers<sup>2</sup> and concluded that Indian narrative has no Oedipal tales, and therefore of course, Indians have no Oedipus complex; and according to one writer at least, the unfortunate lack of an Oedipus Complex has prevented Indians from developing a form like the novel, or from overthrowing the Mughals or British by a bloody upheaval, etc .

I'm not a psychoanalyst, though I believe psychoanalysis, specially the father-figure of all psychoanalysts, Sigmund Freud, is crucially relevant for any study of myth and folklore, especially for his insights into symbolic codes and messages.

In the present short paper I wish to summarize and report on a few Oedipus-like patterns that I by myself and other inquirers before me have found in Indian myth and folklore.

#### THE OEDIPUS TYPE

We have not found any but the above sporadic examples of 'the positive Oedipus' where (as in Sophocles) a young man accursed to kill his father and marry his mother tries to escape the curse of fate but ironically, unwittingly fulfills it.

We have not found parallels before because we have been too literal-minded, and not seen that in a different cultural context a familiar pattern may appear standing on its head—the great Indian image of the cosmic tree is the tree with its branches in the earth and the roots in the air.

For the purposes of our search we may define the 'Oedipus' tale as a tale of intergenerational conflict, born of rivalry and desire, containing one or several of the following:

1. The relations of father and son.
2. The relations of mother and son.

Example: Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*.

We may add what's essentially the same relational pattern, often called the Electra-story:

3. The relations of father and daughter.
4. The relations of mother and daughter.

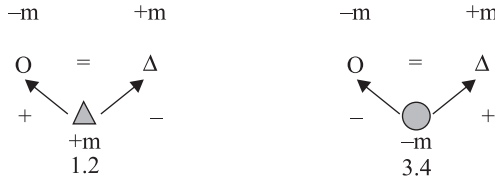
Example: Sophocles' *Electra*.

The Greek Oedipus-pattern may be summed up in the following way:

1. son kills father
2. son marries mother
3. daughter loves father, wishes to avenge his death, etc.
4. daughter hates mother, wants her killed, etc.



If we call 'love, pursue, desire to marry, or wish to do any or all of these' Relations, and 'hate, castrate, kill, or wish to do any or all' –Relations, and males + m, females –m, we get the following patterns:<sup>3</sup>



Or in a matrix form,

Child	Parent	Relation
+m	+m	–R
–m	–m	–R
–m	+m	+R
+m	–m	+R

Where they are of the same sex, they have a –Relation; where they are of different sexes they have a +Relation.

*Indian cognates*

In the Indian repertoire, we find the following:

*Relations of father and son:* In the *Mahabharata*, Bhisma, the first son of Santanu, renounces both kingdom and his reproductive sexual life, so that his father may marry a fisher girl and continue his (father's) sexual/reproductive life (C. V. Narasimhan: *The Mahabharata*, 1965, pp. 741).

Yayati, a king cursed to senility wishes to prolong his life of pleasure and asks his five sons to transfer their youth to him. The youngest son exchanges his youth for Yayati's age for a 1000 years.

An even more extreme instance of a father's aggressive rivalry towards a son is the following: The sage Brihaspati desired his elder brother's wife, Mamata. She protested that she was pregnant, that he was one of those whose seed never goes in vain, and that the embryo, which already knew all the Vedas, would not allow his seed to grow in her womb; he should therefore wait till she had delivered. Nevertheless he insisted, but the embryo cried out and prevented him from fulfilling his desire. Brihaspati, therefore, cursed the embryo with blindness. The child is called Dirghatamas, deep darkness (P. C.

Roy's *Mahabharata*, Vana Parva XLIII, 21; also Matsya Purana XLVIII, 32-82; summarized by Spratt p. 127).

It is significant that the Dirghatamas story is told by Bhishma, and in the *Ramayana* the Yayati story is told by Rama when he is exiled by his aged father. Such replication and reminiscence, such evocations of precedent at a crucially parallel moment by a character participating in the very patterns set by the precedent—these are part of the literary technique as well as evidence for a major ‘imprinting’ of themes.

Many more instances may be cited of the father-son conflict with the father as victorious aggressor.<sup>4</sup> I shall add only one more: the story of Ganesa. Parvati went to bathe, and stationed Ganesa, her son, at the door, telling him to let nobody in. Siva wanted to enter; when Ganesa tried to stop him, Siva cut off his head, which was replaced by an elephant-head. In some legends, Ganesa already had an elephant-head, and Siva broke off one tusk (as seen in the iconography). (Spratt, p. 126, interprets this as castration).

*Relations of father and daughter:* The most ancient myths bear witness to a father's desire for his daughter. We shall cite here only two: The *Shatapatha Brahmana* 1.7.41-4 has the following: Prajapati, the father of the Gods, the creator, cast his eyes upon his own daughter, desiring ‘May I pair with her’. So saying, he had intercourse with her. This was a crime in the eyes of the Gods, who said, ‘He is guilty who acts thus to his own daughter, our sister: pierce him through.’ Rudra aimed at him and pierced him. Half of his seed fell to the ground.

In later times Prajapati became Brahma. A new version of the above, “positive Oedipus” story appears:

When Brahma began his work of creation, the goddess Gayatri appeared in the form of a girl from one half of Brahma's body, who mistakenly took her for his daughter. Seeing that form of exquisite beauty, he was fired with love. . . The sons of Brahma, taking Gayatri for their sister, expressed indignation and contempt. . . Gayatri began to circumambulate him in reverence. . . he felt shy of turning his head in her direction, as his sons were close by. He therefore created four heads, each facing one of the directions, so that he might see her undisturbed. Seeing Brahma in this state, Gayatri went to heaven, and as she journeyed upward, Brahma put on a fifth head on top. . . After this Brahma lost the powers that he had acquired by asceticism. (Matsya Purana III, 30-41, Spratt III-2)

In the Kannada *Vaddamdhane* (a Jaina work), a king falls in love with his youngest daughter, and asks his wives and counsellors, 'If there is a lovely thing born in my kingdom, to whom does it belong?'<sup>5</sup> They say, "Of course, the best horses, elephants, pearls, precious stones and the loveliest women in a kingdom belong to the king.' Then he asks the sages the same question, who (being sages) answer, "You'll have to tell us what particular thing you are thinking of. Then we can tell you what belongs to whom and what doesn't.' The king gets angry and drives them out for dissenting and asking inconvenient questions. Then he marries his youngest daughter. She bears him children. Her son, Kartika goes for some sort of boy's picnic in the woods where all the rest of the boys get (apparently according to custom) food, flowers and clothes from their parents, and specially grandparents. When Kartika doesn't receive anything from either parent or grandparent, he comes home and asks his mother, 'Mother, where is your father, my grandfather? Do I have one or not?' She tells him in grief, 'What shall I tell you, my son? Your father is also my father.' As soon as he hears it, Kartika finds it reason enough to renounce the world and become a wandering ascetic.

Note here, as in the Greek Oedipus legend, the emphasis on the confusion of normal kin-relations, especially the conflation of generations (grandfather-father-son), resulting from incestuous relations—and the son's horror at such a discovery.

A Tamil tale has a similar father-daughter pattern, except the father doesn't get the daughters. A king has no children. He prays to Siva, who appears to him and tells him, 'You have a choice. You can either choose one ordinary son or four beautiful talented daughters.' The king chooses the daughters (note the preference!). They do grow up to be four divinely beautiful, many talented young women. One day while a clumsy tone-deaf masseur is rubbing oil into the king's body with all the wrong rhythms, they are disgusted with the unmusical performance, come down from the balcony, dismiss the lout, and proceed to give the delighted father an oil-bath, all four of them massaging and patting oil into his limbs in pleasing rhythms, conducting a very orchestra of touch. After the bath, which sends the king into an ecstasy of pleasure, he is filled with desire for them and goes into the dark room reserved for doldrums, tantrums and sulks in ancient Indian palaces. When the family and counsellors gather to ask him why he is sullen and unhappy, he asks a question,

similar to the Jaina legend: 'If I have something precious, should I enjoy it myself or give it away?' The unsuspecting ministers tell him, 'Go ahead. Enjoy what you have.' Delighted, he answers, 'I'm in love with my daughters. I want to marry them right away. Make the necessary arrangements.' The ministers think he is mad, but humour him by saying that they would take care of it. Then they rush to the daughters with the bad news; they pray to the goddess Parvati who transports them into a sealed lacquer palace in the heart of a jungle—a seven-storyed palace, with living quarters on the first, and food and clothing of every kind stored up in the six upper storeys to last several years. The palace has no doors or windows. Several years later, a prince strays into the jungle and hears strange vina music which lures him to the sealed palace, and it opens miraculously to let him in. He falls in love with all four of them and marries them.

The tale clearly expresses a common Indian folktale theme, the sexual assault of the young woman by non-marriageable kin (here a father, in many tales a brother) and non-kin (e.g., a lecherous guru, or Ravana as in the *Ramayana*—in some early versions the actual father of Sita) ; the young woman is tested for her chastity by such incestuous and adulterous assaults (e.g., the tale of Hand<sup>7</sup>) ; she withstands them till she meets her legitimate husband.

Such and other chastity-ordeals for the young woman parallel the long exile, or symbolic castration (or heroic ordeals) of the young heir, usually required by the father. Sita's abduction, Draupadi's disrobing in a public place by her cousins, Sakuntala's repudiation, the many tales where ascetic father-figures or brothers desire the young woman, are all instances of this basic pattern.

*Relations of Mother and Son.* In a North Kannada tale, a girl is born with a curse on her head that she would marry her own son and beget children by him. As soon as she hears of the curse, she wilfully vows she'd try and escape it: she secludes herself in a dense forest, eating only fruit, forswearing all male company. But when she attains puberty, as fate would have it, she eats a mango from a tree under which a passing king has urinated. The mango impregnates her; bewildered, she gives birth to a male child; she wraps him in a piece of her sari and throws him in a nearby stream. The child is picked up by the king of the next kingdom and he grows up to be a handsome young adventurous prince. He comes hunting in the self-same jungle, and the cursed woman falls in love with the stranger, telling herself she is not in danger anymore as she has no son alive.

She marries him and bears him a child. According to custom, the father's swaddling clothes are preserved and brought out for the newborn son. The woman recognizes at once the piece of sari with which she had swaddled her first son, now her husband, and understands that her fate had really caught up with her. She waits till everyone is asleep, and sings a lullaby to her newborn baby:

Sleep  
 O son  
 O grandson  
 O brother to my husband  
 sleep O  
 sleep well

and hangs herself by the rafter with her sari twisted to a rope.

The tale is strikingly parallel to the Greek Oedipus, but the narrative point of view is entirely different. It is the mother, the Jocasta-figure, who is accursed, tries to escape her fate, and when finally trammelled in it, makes the discovery and punishes herself with death. The son is merely a passive actor, part of her fate—unlike the Greek Oedipus. Such reversals of narrative point of view are yet to be studied in comparative and structural mythology. The Greek-Kannada pair of legends is one of the neatest examples of a structure being the same in two tales, but the narrative point of view being exactly in reverse.

There is a related recurrent motif in Indian folktales: a father returns from a long exile or journey and enters his bedroom to find a strange young man sleeping next to his wife. He draws his sword to kill them both, when either his waking wife or a remembered precept stays his hand. The young man is really his son grown to manhood during his long absence, but still sleeping innocently in the same bed as his dear mother.

One clear example of mother-son relations in mythology is the Bengali legend about goddess Durga,<sup>8</sup> whose intercourse with her son is watched and noisily interrupted by peacocks. Durga gets angry with the peacock for being a peeping Tom and curses the peacock with impotence and an ugly squeal of a voice. She relents later and allows peacocks to have offspring by means of their tears. I could also add the Joseph-and-Potiphar's-wife type of tale—of which we have many examples in India. A stepmother desires her stepson who rejects her advances. She accuses him of making improper advances to her, and his father punishes him by blinding his eyes.

*Relations of mother and daughter*, I have not yet found striking examples of a mother's hatred for her daughter—though I could cite numerous common tales of stepmothers exiling their daughters, and cruel mothers-in-law trying to kill or harm daughters-in-law. Mother-goddesses as well as stepmothers and mothers-in-law could reasonably be mother-figures specializing in the terrible aspects of mothers toward the daughters. But I must admit the case is not as neat as in the above three, especially because in all these tales the cruel mother-figures do not win.

*Generalization.* If we consider the above four relationships, especially the first three, we see that the Indian and Greek/Western tales do not differ in the basic pattern: (a) Like sexes repel, (b) Unlike sexes attract, across generations. But they do differ in the *direction* of aggression or desire. Instead of sons desiring mothers and overcoming fathers (e.g., Oedipus) and daughters loving fathers and hating mothers (e.g., Electra), we have fathers suppressing sons and desiring daughters, and mothers desiring sons and exiling daughters or daughter-figures.

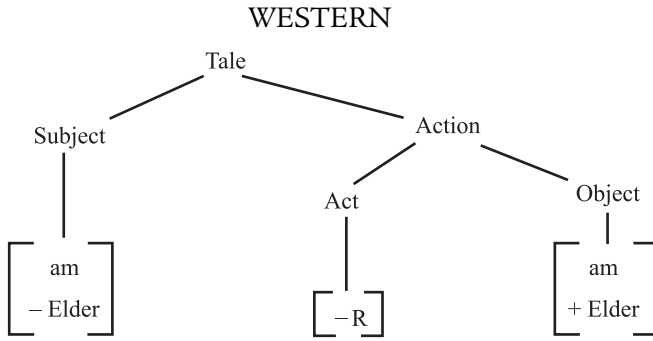
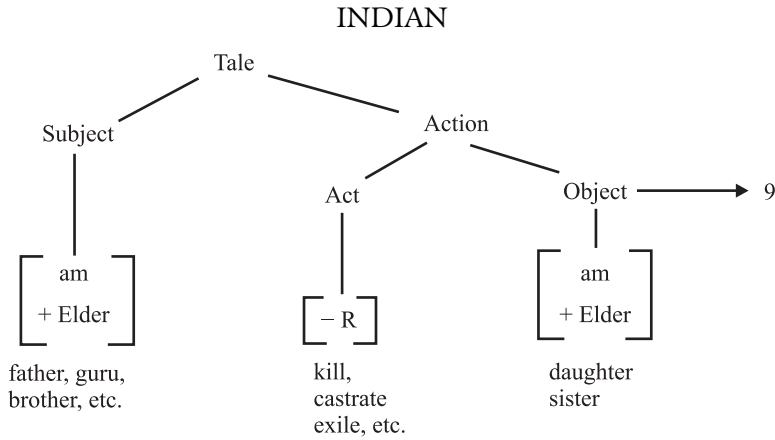
*The Greek (or Western) 'Oedipus' Types*

Generation 1	Generation 0	Relation
-m	+m	—
-m	-m	—
-m	+m	+
+m	-m	+

*The Indian 'Oedipus' Types*

Generation 1	Generation 0	Relation
+m	+m	—
-m	-m	—
-m	-m	+
+m	-m	+

The matrix of relations and actors is the same, but the *direction* is in reverse. Using a different model, we might express it transformationally:



In both, if we have a m and -m, the R is +R.  
is a variable with the range + or -.

### CONCLUSION

Patterns similar to the Indian appear elsewhere in world mythology and folklore. In the intergenerational competition, who has the upper hand depends, of course, on family and other cultural patterns. In the Irish Cuchulainn (according to Paul Friedrich), and the Iranian epic about Sohrab and Rostam, fathers kill sons. (cf. also Lessa, Kluckhohn).<sup>10</sup> Italian courtship practices and father-daughter relations as reported by Anne Parsons, also show a partial 'Indian' like pattern. I'm not claiming here that there are clear-cut Western or Indian Oedipus-types—I'm only claiming that the *dominant* patterns of the Western and the Indian are in reverse of one another. Counterinstances in Western<sup>1</sup> as well as Indian materials are welcome, and if offered, would fulfil one of the functions of this short paper.



Significantly, there is no central Oedipus like tale in India; the 'Indian Oedipus' had to be composed as a composite picture from widely diffused sources and strong recurrent patterns.

But that it exists does seem beyond doubt. Other cultural patterns seem to corroborate the mythic and folk materials. A common Indian scandal-type (N.B. a new genre for folklorists) is that of the father getting his idiot or near-idiot son married to a young woman who becomes the old man's mistress. In the long history of India, there have been Hindu and Muslim dynasties: In Hindu history no instance (to my lay mind) seems to be recorded where a son overthrows or assassinates his father and usurps the throne. (The unconscious taboo may be so great that Hindu historians have repressed any such instances.) But in Muslim (Moghul and pre-Mughal) history, fathers or elder brothers are regularly imprisoned or assassinated—it is almost a *rite de passage*, a ritual of succession.<sup>11</sup> The rule of the elders in India, the general pattern) of political gerontocracy, and even the long tolerance of foreign rule (noted by Spratt) are patterns that are too tempting to pass by. There are no Prometheus or Cronos figures overthrowing or defying the elder gods in Indian mythology.

Where in earlier versions we have traces or elements of Greek-like or other patterns, later and more popular versions invariably change them to what we have identified as the "Indian Oedipus" pattern. For instance, in the earliest *Ramayana* Sita is the daughter of Ravana cursed at birth to bring about her father's death, which she does through Rama. The most popular and widespread Valmiki version does not have this episode at all. (The case of Indra is also significant).

Furthermore, it is significant that Freud (with his overwhelming emphasis on the Greek Oedipus pattern) has received little attention, or shall we say recognition, in the Indian psychological circles (Spratt) who probably did not recognize the pattern as theirs at all.

Lastly, the patterns persist and resonate through the modern literatures I know. I shall give only two examples. In a long poem with 'modernity' itself for its theme, a young Kannada poet Kambar adapts a folktale of his region for his allegory. A village chief, the hero's father, is killed by a tiger-demon who returns to the village in the shape of the chief himself. The demon-father impregnates the hero's mother, and speaking from her womb, sends the hero out for impossible quests like tiger's: milk, etc., to satisfy her pregnancy longings, till finally she asks him (or he, through her) for his five



senses. At the end of the poem, the young heir is blind, deaf, and mute, unable to reach out for the elixir that would make him whole. Shankara Kurup's moving celebrated Malayalam poem, 'The Master Carpenter' (Perundaccan), speaks of the bitter rivalry of a father and the young talented son; the poem ends with the father killing the son by 'accidentally' dropping a chisel on him from above, while the son is working below him on the same pavilion. The Yayati story, where the father borrows the youth of his son, is a favourite among modern dramatists in Kannada. The persistent popularity of such themes in movie, novel, play and poem adds further weight to the pattern presented here. The next thing to do is to talk to an Indian psychoanalyst, armed with a passage like the following:

Finally, as the time of the human being's death approaches he sees a bright light, and being unaccustomed to it at the time of his death he is perplexed and confused. He sees all sorts of things such as are seen in dreams, because his mind is confused. He sees his (future) father and mother making love, and seeing them a thought arises in him. If he is going to be reborn as a man he sees himself making love with his mother and being hindered by his father; or if he is going to be reborn as a woman, he sees himself hindered by his mother. It is at that moment that the Intermediate Existence is destroyed and life and consciousness arise and causality begins once more to work. It is like the imprint made by a die; the die is destroyed, but the pattern has been imprinted.<sup>12</sup>

## NOTES

1. As this is basically a reading version, I have omitted all diacritics, on common Indian names; a minimal bibliography is indicated by the footnotes.
2. cf. especially P. Spratt, *Hindu Culture and Personality*, A Psychoanalytic Study, Bombay, 1966; and the bibliography in the book; also Dharendra Narain's *Hindu Character* (1937); G. M. Carstairs' *The Twice-Born* (1957).
3. I've adapted the form of these diagrams from T. Turner's 'Oedipus: Time and Structure of Narrative Form', in *Forms of Symbolic Action* (1969).
4. For more examples, but all told from a psycho-analytic point of view, cf Spratt.
5. An informant tells me of an almost verbatim contemporary parallel. In his north Karnatak village, there was a great scandal and lawsuit in recent memory, in which a father was accused of fathering a child on his own daughter. The father is supposed to have silenced the judge by one overwhelming question; 'Don't I have any rights to the corn that I grow on my land?'
6. All the folktales cited here are from my field-notes.
7. Southern Folklore Quarterly, XX-3 Sept., 1956.
8. Personal communication with Akos Oster.
9. The arrow expresses a synchronic, not a diachronic, relation.

10. William A. Lessa,, 'On the symbolism of Oedipus' in *The Study of Folklore* (ed. A. Dundes), Englewood Cliffs, 1956; and C. Kluckhohn, 'Recent Themes in Myths and Mythmaking', in *ibid.*
11. cf. Spratt has also noted this remarkable divergence.
12. From the *Saddharma—smrtyupasthana Sutra*, ch. XXXIV, in *Buddhist Texts* (ed. E. Conze), N.Y., 1954, p. 283, quoted by Herbert Fingarectte in *The Self in Transformation*, Basic Books, Inc., N.Y., 1963.

ASUTOSH BHATTACHARYYA

## Indian Folk-Literature with Special Reference to Bengali Literature



IN THE oldest available Tamil grammar entitled *Tolkappiyam* written by Tolkappiar more than two thousand years ago, we find for the first time in India reference to Folk-Literature. The author has defined some of its aspects and classified them in his own way. Definitions have been given of the riddles, proverbs, myths and folk songs. According to the ancient author, the folktales and folksongs were used to be told and sung by the divine mothers for consoling the hearts of the maidens who were deeply devoted to them. The elements of folk-literature existed in the oldest Indian literatures like the Rig Veda and it also seems that the study of folk-literature in India started at a period when no systematic study of the subject was undertaken in any part of the world.

Folk-literature as we know it today is the product of an integrated social life as opposed to disintegrated urban or industrial life. It is believed to be the product of the community as a whole. But that community life is fast disappearing. Nay, the basic character of the society is in the process of transformation, from the agricultural to the industrial. As such, folk-literature today is passing through the most critical period of its existence. With these words let me discuss various items of folk-literature as are found in areas still resisting change.

### DOGGERAL VERSES

There are different types of doggeral verses which serve different practical purposes in life. First, the cradle songs sung by the members or nurses to induce children to sleep. These are compositions mainly of the mothers or elderly women and, therefore, embody beautiful and mature filial sentiment. These are very common throughout the whole of India, and sentiments and imageries are everywhere the same. Secondly, there are game songs which are the creation of the children themselves. Therefore, they are different in character. Cradle songs are more lyrical while the game songs lay more emphasis on rhythm than on music or meaning. More than three quarters of a century back Rabindra Nath Tagore wrote an illuminating article on this subject on the basis of a collection which he himself made from some parts of Bengal. He analysed some Bengali nursery rhymes and gave his own appreciations of them in the most inspiring language characteristic of him. Credit goes to him for collecting for the first time a number of doggeral verses from the vast extensive area of Bengal. He gave due recognition to the folk-metre used in these doggeral verses in his own compositions. In many cases he was himself inspired by their ideas and forms.

In course of ceremonial worship performed by women of the different States certain doggeral verses are recited. They have naturally developed a ritual character. But in view of the fact that the ceremonial worships of the women aim at worldly happiness, the verses convey sentiments partaking to real life instead of anything spiritual or supernatural.

There are also other doggeral verses which are based on other subject matters. They are not always composed on trite or frivolous themes, but often express the deepest feelings of the realities of life.

### FOLK SONGS

In every State of India folksongs have their widest varieties. They practically cover the entire life of an individual, beginning from the pregnancy songs and ending with funeral songs. On the occasion of celebrating the fifth or the seventh month of pregnancy a class of songs are sung by village women particularly in East Bengal. The pregnant woman is extolled as Sita, the heroine of the *Ramayana*, but realistic sentiments peculiar to domestic life of Bengal is expressed through these songs. Such songs are also sung by tribal women, practically throughout central India from Chhota Nagpur in Bihar upto the Bhil areas of western India. Extensive collections have been

made from the tribal areas by scholars like the late Dr Verrier Elwin, though no appreciable collection has so far been made from the rural areas of the other parts of India.

Songs are also sung during the birth of a child in the family. Over the Hindi speaking areas they are known as 'Sohar'. Sometimes they are also known as 'Mangal. Birth songs are divided into two groups—'Sohar' and 'Khelwana' in Bhojpuri. 'Sohar' describes the actual physical pain undergone by the mother and 'Khelwana' describes the joy of having a child in the family. In Bengal, as in other places, birth songs are also very common.

'Mundan' or Chudakaran or ceremonial shaving of the head is another important purificatory rite of life. In Bengal it is not separately observed now-a-days, but in some parts of India it is still observed independently with due pomp. Over the Hindi-speaking areas observance of 'Chaudakaran' is always accompanied with songs sung by village women. Tulsidas in his *Ram-Charit-Manas* has described in some detail the 'Chaudakarma' ceremony of Ramchandra and his brothers. The same is true of the sacred thread ceremony, still current among Brahmins in northern India. Songs related to this function have Rama and his brothers as heroes.

Marriage songs form an attractive item of folk culture over the whole of India including tribal areas. In the latter areas, songs are integrated to dance, as also among some caste Hindus of Assam and parts of East Bengal.

Two separate sets of songs are sung, one on the occasion of a son's marriage and the other on the occasion of a daughter's marriage in a family. Songs of the brides' families are more elaborate and extensive than those in the bridegrooms' families.

Though most of the marriage songs are ritual songs, yet the songs known as farewell songs are full of delicate emotion and pathos. They are, however, divided into two parts—songs sung by the village women on behalf of the bride and songs sung by the brides themselves on the occasion of their departure from parental houses. Though songs sung by others on behalf of the bride are most common everywhere, yet Orissa in general and some tribal areas of Chhota Nagpur in particular are extremely rich in songs sung by the brides themselves on this occasion. Russia and some of the Baltic countries in Europe are also rich in songs sung by the brides. Such songs are known as bridal farewell songs. Pathetic feelings of separation of the little daughter from her parents form the basis of these songs and, as such, they express the finest sentiments of domestic life. With the

funeral songs the ritual life of an individual ends.

There are a type of regional songs connected with the worship of some popular gods or goddesses, confined exclusively to the areas concerned. Tusu, Bhadu, Gambhira are such instances from West Bengal.

There is a class of folksongs known as *Baramashi* They describe the sentiment of frustration in love among the heroines. They are almost universal in India including the tribal areas. They are also the seasonal songs, and are composed on the basis of the description of the changing phases of nature covering the twelve months of the year. They sometime cover eight months and are known as 'Astamashi' and also six months and are known as 'Chhaymashi. The content and the spirit of the songs vary in accordance with the changing mood of nature.

In Bengal folksongs are divided into two groups—Sari and Bhatiyali; Sari being group-song is more rhythmical, while Bhatiyali, being a song of loneliness, is less so.

Work-songs sung during their work by the weavers, cultivators, boatmen, women while husking paddy are also common throughout India. Manual work is integrated with these songs and as such they have very little lyrical value.

Folk-songs are still composed in far off villages where community life is still an active force, withstanding change. But due to the infiltration of transistors and radio-sets and spread of English education their basic characters are often lost or sacrificed.

There is a section of folk-songs which is classified as religious folk-songs. But religious folk songs are not considered as specimens of folk-literature inasmuch as they are sectarian in character and aim at something spiritual and otherworldly. Folk-songs are integrated into the social life of the people and they develop with the development of social life. They are never rigid or static in ideas and forms. But religious folk-songs, associated as they are with rituals or some static ideas, never yield to any change in ideas nor in form due to any external factor. They belong more to philosophy and metaphysics than to literature proper. Baul songs of Bengal are considered religious folk-songs, because they are sung by the members of a religious sect known as Baul, but they are sometimes included in folk-songs of Bengal because of the literary quality and appeal of the verses.

## FOLK-TALES

India is particularly rich in folktales. It is on the basis of the Indian folktales that the compilations like Gunadhya's *Brihat-Katha*, *Buddhists' Jataka* or the birth stories of the Lord Buddha, Jainas' *Dhamma Katha*, Somadeva's *Katha-Sarit-Sagara*, Dandi's *Dass-Kumar-Charita*, Visnu Sarma's *Panchatantra* and *Hitopadesha*, etc., were made. Besides the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata* and the *Puranas* have incorporated in them a number of folktales of different characters from oral traditions.

Tribal India is as rich as other parts of the country in folktales. Collections made by the European missionaries and the administrators from many parts of tribal India are indeed remarkable. Indian folktales are generally divided into three specific groups—Fairy or Romantic tales, Animal Tales and Ritual Tales. In many States there are professional story tellers, but they are finding it difficult to carry on their profession due to lack of patronage and under modern conditions of life.

## RIDDLES

Riddles are believed to be the earliest and the most widespread types of formulated thought. Each riddle bears an idea or meaning clothed in allegorical or indirect language. There is also some sense of humour in it. They are based on realistic experience and observation of various objects of our day to day life. They indicate wisdom and intelligence of the common people.

The riddles have some ritual value also. During marriage riddles are still asked in some parts of India in order to test the intelligence of the bridegroom and the members of the marriage party. Among some tribals like the Oraons of Chhota Nagpur, scheduled castes like the Bauri and the caste Hindus of West Bengal it is still a common practice. Besides these, there are death riddles also. They are prevalent in Maharashtra and also in some other places of India.

There are mystic or religious riddles beginning from the Vedic literature upto the old and medieval Indian literature. Mystic ideas of religion have in many places been expressed through riddles in the belief that their mystic character would be retained best in that way. Riddles of the Mahayana Buddhists and the Nath community of the early and medieval Bengali period express in allegorical languages the religious ideas which were preached by them.

## PROVERBS

Proverbs are also an important subject of Indian folk-literature. It is rightly claimed that the genius, wit and spirit of a nation is discovered by their proverbs. Wisdom of Bengal as of other States of India has found its expression through the proverbs of the country. Some of the proverbs which are still used in day to day life are a thousand years old. Some proverbs have also been borrowed from Sanskrit and in more recent times some have been borrowed by translation from European and Arabo-Persian sources. Over the tribal areas of India use of proverbs is extremely rare.

## MYTHS

Myths are also an important subject of folk-literature of any country, civilized or primitive. Myths have been defined as 'science of an unscientific age'. From the very dawn of human intellect man has been trying to solve the mystery of creation. This has given rise to myths. India being an ancient country and its culture mainly being based on religion has a very rich heritage of myths, written and unwritten. In folk-literature of almost every State creation-myths have been described in detail. Besides creation-myths there are animal myths, myths on plants and trees, gods, and goddesses, and various other objects of the universe. But it must be admitted that no appreciable collection and compilation of myths have so far been made in this country. A rare exception is Dr. Verrier Elwin's *Myths of Middle India*, published in 1949. In this book the author confined himself to Madhya Pradesh and Orissa in general and the tribal areas in particular. Only very negligible work has been done as far as the other parts of India are concerned. Monographs on various Indian tribes written mostly by the European missionaries and administrators contain some collection of myths of the respective tribes. Immediate collection of myths from the different areas of India, tribal and non-tribal, is imperative for an adequate study of Indian folk-literature as a whole.

## LEGENDS

Some of the States of India are particularly rich in legends. The heroic legends of Punjab, Rajasthan and Maharashtra and the religio-romantic legends like the legend of Gopichandra of Bengal were at one time very widely known. A legend is based on some historical character specially on the life and achievement of any saint or martyr.



History compromises here with poetic imagination. The legend of the prince Gopichandra of Bengal who belonged to the eleventh century spread as far as Panjab and Maharashtra not because of its affiliation with the Natha sect, but mainly because of its essential human appeal. Legends of Gorakshanath and Matsyendranath crossed even the northern borders of India and entered Nepal and Tibet. The heroic legends of Rajasthan inspired the nineteenth century Bengali writers to introduce patriotic feelings in poetry and drama of the period.

#### BALLADS

Ballads like legends are narrative, but like the latter they are not based on any historical character. They are shorter in length and more dramatic in character. Bengal, particularly East Bengal, is extremely rich in this form of folk-literature. *Mymensing Ballads* and *East Bengal Ballads* were collected from oral traditions more than half a century back by the University of Calcutta and had also been translated into English as *Eastern Bengal Ballads*. They have been highly appreciated by the folklorists all over the world. These ballads expressed the, finest sentiment of worldly love in the most poetic language and the most lively imagery. They were composed and appreciated in an age when secular love had no place in art literature.

Ballads from some other States also have been collected and published. Ballads from Punjab, Rajasthan and Maharashtra have their own characteristics. Ballads from Bengal are more romantic while those from other places are heroic. Some ballads collected from the coastal areas of south-east Bengal and published by the Calcutta University with English translations have adventure and valour as themes.

#### FOLK-DRAMA

Folk-dramas play an important role in folk-literature. In most cases texts of folk-drama are not written, the dialogues which consist sometimes of vocal music only are expressed from memory. Older types that still exist in Bengal are known as *Krishna Yatras*, the more modern types are known as *Yatra*. In Madhya Pradesh the folk-drama is known as Mach, in Gujarat Bhaoyani, in Assam Ankia, in Canarese Bayalata or Yakshagan, in Tamil Nadu Therukuthy, in Andhra Kuruvaiji and in Maharashtra Tamasha. Modern themes and dramatic techniques are entering into the performances much

to the detriment of their traditional character. Yet they are the most popular throughout India even to this day.

There was a time when folk-drama used to adopt themes from the Indian Epics and the Puranas and had something of a religious appeal in them. In most cases they used to be performed on the occasion of religious festivities. But they are now being deprived of their religious character and have developed a tendency for secularization in themes and techniques. Some have been transformed through direct influences from modern theatres.

Varieties of subject matter have now found their way into *Yatra* of Bengal. Themes having political and educational value, instead of mythological and historical ones, are now preferred. Recent records show that operas based on the lives of Vidyasagar, Madhusudan, and on international figures like Lenin and Hitler drew vast audiences and were highly popular.

#### STUDIES IN INDIAN FOLK-LITERATURE

It is undoubtedly a fact that Indian folk-literature is deeply indebted to western scholars for their study of the subject in the modern scientific and systematic method. Col. Tod, the author of the *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan* was the pioneer in this line. He collected, compiled and translated into the most inspiring language the heroic legends of Rajasthan and unearthed the richest treasure of a very vital aspect of Indian folk-literature. It has now been proved by historians that the annals recorded by Tod have little or no historical basis. Therefore, they come under legends instead of history. Tod had a literary talent and a very powerful style of writing. His work has, therefore, not been a catalogue of events only, but a real piece of literature which inspired many Indian writers of a subsequent period. L. P. Tessitory also collected a number of legends and folk-songs of Rajasthan and published them in the pages of the volumes of the *Indian Antiquary*.

During the last century a number of European civilians and missionaries engaged themselves in collection of the various elements of Indian folk-literature over different parts of India. C. Swynnerton devoted himself to the collection of romantic tales from Punjab and published them under the title of *Romantic Tales from Punjab*. R. C. Temple published *The Legends of the Punjab*. C. F. Osborne published *The Punjabi Lyrics and Proverbs*, F. A. Steel published the *The Tales of the Punjab*. A collection of Kashmiri folk-tales under the title *Hatim's Tales* were also published during this century.

The most valuable service in this direction was rendered by Sir George Grierson, the distinguished civilian linguist. In the course of his conducting a linguistic survey of the whole of India, he collected and published a number of other materials also concerning Indian folk-literature. In 1884 he published 'Some Behari Folk-songs', in 1886 'Some Bhojपुरi Folk-songs', in 1883 'Folklore from Eastern Gorakhpur', in<sup>1</sup> 1885 he published 'Two versions of the songs of Gopichand', in 1884 'The Song of Bijai Mal', in 1885 'The Song of Alhas' Marriage' and 'A Summary of Alha Khand', in 1878 'The Song of Manik Chandra'. Collection and publication of proverbs started as early as 1832 in Bengal. Reverend. W. Morton published his first volume of collection in 1832, the second volume entitled *Bengali Proverbs* in 1835. Reverend. James Long published his first volume on *Bengali Proverbs* in 1868, the second volume in 1872. In 1891 the first collection of Bengali proverbs was published by a Bengali scholar Kanailal Ghoshal following in the footsteps of the above missionaries. The proverbs of other States were also collected, first by the Europeans and then by Indians. In 1896 'Some Assamese Proverbs' were published by Gurdon. He was followed by Jamsetjee Petit who made a 'Collection of Guzrati Proverbs'. Natesa Sastri published 'Familiar Tamil Proverbs'. P. Percival published *Tamil Proverbs* as early as 1874 from Madras. Even earlier than this, in 1868, Ravidpati Guruvayuru published a *Collection of Telegu Proverbs*. In 1845 G. Rochiram published *Handbook of Sindhi Proverbs*. In 1872 G. G. Speaker published a collection of *Marat hi Proverbs*, and in 1899 a *Dictionary of Bengali Proverbs* was published by P. P. Sen Gupta from Calcutta.

In the twentieth century besides Bodding, Bompas, Elwin, Archer and a few others collections in most of the subjects of folk-literature have been published by Indian scholars closely following in the footsteps of their European predecessors.

On the eve of the Swadeshi Movement in Bengal during the first decade of the present century, the study of folk-literature in this State got its first impetus from Rabindranath Tagore. In spite of the fact that folk-literature at that time did not create any interest among the educated people of this country, Rabindranath with his indomitable energy not only collected a number of doggeral verses commonly known as *Chhada* from different parts of the Bengali-speaking area, but also gave an illuminating exposition of his collections from the literary and artistic points of view. This easily attracted notice of all sections of people to this hitherto neglected

subject. A number of field-workers appeared and within a very short period of time a huge collection appeared in periodicals and booklets. Since then the study of folk-literature has been steadily developing through the efforts mostly of the University of Calcutta and the Vangiya Sahitya Parishat, Calcutta. But due to various factors—economic, social and political, it declined to a very great extent and ultimately the mission propagated by Rabindranath lost its vitality and almost came to a standstill. The Second World War brought famine, epidemic, communal upheavals in its trail and the cradles which used to nurture folk-literature were consequently destroyed.

The second phase in the study of folk-literature of Bengal started with the attainment of independence. By that time Bengal was divided into West Bengal and East Pakistan and these two wings renewed their study of folk-literature, one independently of the other. With the establishment of Bengali Academy in Dacca in East Pakistan the study of folk-literature there began to follow a systematic method on a broad basis. But the condition in West Bengal was different. By that time the University of Calcutta which had hitherto rendered remarkable service for the cause of folk-literature of Bengal by collecting, compiling, translating and publishing them at great cost had lost her interest in the subject after retirement from service of the pioneer worker in this field Dr Dinesh Chandra Sen. Vangiya Sahitya Parishat also, with the inspiration of Rabindranath, devoted the earlier years of its existence to collecting and publishing materials of folk-literature from various sources, but soon turned its attention to the development of art literature mostly in the absence of any genuine worker in this field. Therefore, any institution that could be mentioned along with the Bengali Academy of Dacca hardly existed in West Bengal. But piecemeal attempts began to be made at this direction by different newly established organizations with their most limited resources unaided by private or public resources.

In 1950 was established Vangiya Loka-Samskriti Parishat or the Bengal Academy of Folk Culture under the Presidentship of Dr Kalidas Nag. At the beginning it rendered remarkable service by making field collections not only of literary materials but also of objects of folk art and crafts. Within a short period of time a valuable field collection was made. An appeal signed by the late Dr Shyama Prasad Mookerjee was distributed among the members of the East Bengal displaced persons' colonies. It was most readily responded to and a number of folk songs of various character was recorded. Professor O. C. Ganguli, the distinguished art critic, became the

next Persistent but he also failed to improve its financial position as a result of which it ceased functioning. But the collection of oral literature and the objects of art and craft are still maintained in a small museum situated at the Natore House, Calcutta.

Gambhira Parishad of Calcutta originated almost at the same time with Vangiya Loka Samskriti Parishat, but it follows a less ambitious plan. Its main interest is in collecting and demonstrating a particular regional folk-song only known as *Gambhira* which is current among the peasantry of the district of Malda in North Bengal. Sri Tarapada Lahiri, the demonstrator of Gambhira song is the founder of this Society, and he is well-known among the lovers of music of West Bengal. But in spite of his best efforts he has failed to establish a school of folk music on a sound basis. Research Institute of Folk Culture, West Bengal, established in 1962 has made a wide collection of folk-songs and has already published an *Encyclopaedia of Bengali Folk-songs*<sup>1</sup> in four volumes.

Besides these organizations there are a few individuals also who pursue the study of folk-literature in their own way. In view of the fact that there is no coordination of their work and cooperation among themselves, they follow diverse methods mostly arbitrary and inconsistent. In East Bengal, as far as I know, some scholars trained in American Universities on the scientific study of folk-literature have already devoted their attention to the study of the materials they had collected in the light of that training. But in West Bengal no such attempt has so far been made and, therefore, the individual efforts are creating confusion among the students of this subject. Only recently the University of Calcutta and the Rabindra Bharati University have introduced some papers for specialized study of folk-literature of Bengal in the M.A. courses for Bengali and it is now expected that a systematic study of the subject may be followed and a standard established within a reasonable period of time.

JAYAKANTA MISHRA

## The Maithili Vratakathas



IT IS necessary to study our folk literatures both as local units requiring a detailed analysis and description of the local conditions in which they are produced as well as universal literature whose *motifs* and forms may be found throughout India or even throughout the world. The more we investigate the local conditions, it is my firm conviction, the more the universal picture would emerge to the discerning scholar, though in some cases there may be some absolutely unique types in some areas.

In many cases we need not go very deep indeed. In several fields we may find Indian folk literatures even on superficial examination to have a basic pan-Indian unity. I am particularly reminded of stories like that of Lorika and Bihula and Alha-Udal. There is no need to find any complete parallelism in all matters concerning these but broadly speaking they are so widespread that they embody the unity of the land, the common heritage and common values cherished and shared by the people—at least by large chunks of people—of India. It is a most interesting field of study through which one may get to know by and large the essential unity of India, if not of entire mankind.

One such form of folk literature that has not yet been fully studied is made up of what are called the Vratakathas. These Vratakathas are found in the countryside throughout India. They are primarily based on the pattern of the Sanskrit Vratakathas such

as the *Satyanarayana Vratakatha*, but they go beyond it and embody all types of human aspirations, sentiments and desires associated with various types of worships and *Vratas*. Usually these vernacular Vratakathas are prevalent among women-folk. Girls who have not yet married, girls who have just married and married women and even widows undertake fasts and various kinds of worships and either themselves recite these Vratakathas or hear them from others—particularly from some elderly lady of the village. These Vratakathas are treated with great respect and their recitation is in almost a set language. Frequently these Vratakathas are in prose but here and there they are interspersed with verse—*mantras* (called in Bengal *chhadas*). Frequently there are stories within stories and many of them are stories of moral truth and values. It is a highly cultural, illustrative and most interesting form of folk literature in India alive today and I do not think that this form is easily going to die. For the entire folk worship is based on human aspirations, ambitions and desires natural to all women-folk who are anxious to lead a good and happy life.

There are five purposes of these Vratakathas so far as I could understand them from Maithili Vratakathas.

First, there are those Vratakathas which seek, like the *Satyanarayana Vratakatha*, *Ananta Vratakatha* or *Shivaratri Vratakatha*, merely to establish the glory of a Vrata, a fast or festival and embodying certain ideals and values inculcate the love for it among those who hear it from fear of disasters by not observing it or by condemning it. Such is, for example, the *Barisaii katha*. This katha is recited on the day when *Batasavtri Vrata* is observed by newly married girls. The excess hot water from cooked rice was placed by a lady in the holes of a serpent used to kill all its young ones and therefore all her sons were cursed by the serpent with death. This curse was eradicated by her youngest daughter-in-law when she began worshipping the Nag-deity. One peculiar way of stressing the glory of a vrata or worship is to demonstrate how no evil could come to those who observe the particular Vrata. This is, for example found in the *Jitiya-vratakatha* (*Jimutavahana Vratakatha*).

Secondly, there are Vratakathas which describe in detail the origin of the earth, the story of creation, the legends of various gods and goddesses, ancient kings and queens and famous heroes and heroines of ancient India. The entire cycle of such Vratakathas consists of the stories of many *Puranas* and *Upanishads*. Thus, there is the famous cycle of Vratakathas in Mithila called *Madhusbravani*



*vratakatha*. This Vratakatha is told in fifteen cantos and is completely recited in about fifteen days on the first *Madhusbravani* vrata of a newly married girl.

Thirdly, there are Vratakathas containing many Pauranika injunctions and directions for making a householder's life beautiful and cultured. Thus, there is a long *Karttika Vratakatha* which is recited for about a month in Karttika. It contains many of the ancient Indian values enjoined by the Shastras for leading a happy life of a householder. Through such Vratakathas the people are required to imbibe good habits and good ways of living—petty things like cleaning clothes and body as well as noble things like remembering our lord the creator and valuing truth, and goodness as essentials of civilized life, they are all illustrated through didactic folktales.

Fourthly, there are Vratakathas embodying the aspirations and desires of the people, particularly the desires of the womenfolk to have a good match for their daughters, a good progeny, a long, happy and contented married life. Thus the *Harison Vratakatha* told in the month of Karttika aims at praying for the long life, prosperity and large family of the devotee.

Finally, I would like to draw attention to such Vratakathas as are really made up of folk-tales of great poetic beauty. Such is the *Sapta-Vipeta Vratakatha*. It is recited throughout the month of Chaitra and is made up of the story of Nala-Damayanti, cast as a story illustrating the glory of the Fates. Apparently this Vratakatha celebrates the worship of the Fates, Sapata-Vipata (Sampatti and Vipatti), but actually it seems to me that it embodies most poetically a deeply moving story of courage and forbearance. Such is also, for example, the story of *Salhes* the deity of the *dusadhs* (who are a Harijan caste believed to be made up of thieves). It is a story of adventure and heroism and is told to arouse the sense of wonder and heroism of the listeners. The Vratakatha of *Salhes* was published by Sir George A. Grierson long ago. I consider the story to be greatly poetic and educative. Such Vratakathas, however, are not many but in all of them there are intensely human situations, both mirthful and tragic, which enrich the emotional and sensuous life of the people. They are not merely entertaining tales told as folktales but more, they are rich incentives to follow noble ideals and values of life.

I have pointed out these features in order to draw attention towards this branch of folk literature as literature, as I believe that these have not yet attracted much attention of our sophisticated scholars. Folk songs, folk-tales, and folk-lore of all types are valuable



but I think these Vratakathas are in a sense the richest and by far the profoundest part of folk literature that has continued to exist in Indian life as a community which we should not allow posterity to abolish. I plead that a large-scale collection of these Vratakathas may be undertaken at an early date in various parts of India so that their proper study and evaluation could be made before urbanization, secularization and the so-called modernization have completely wiped them out of existence.

KSHITIS ROY

## Folk Literature Highest Common Denominator of Indian Literature



‘THE WORD Sahitya implies’, according to Rabindranath Tagore, ‘the idea of coming together’. ‘In a country lacking in literature’, he said, ‘the people are not knit together by a living bond. They remain separate.’

Taking India as a whole, we do not seem to lack in literature. Literature is being written in seventeen different languages whose claim as literary media has formally been recognized by the Sahitya Akademi. Now, the question is: Is this diversity conducive to unity? In these days of regionalism and linguistic chauvinism, the question assumes added importance. India, that is Bharat, is a concept as old as Indian history. In our struggle for freedom against the colonial regime the concept was re-affirmed on a political level. But the post-independence partition and virtual exchange of population on communal basis have brought in their train a spirit of separateness. As literary men firmly believing in Communion we are duty bound to combat these fissiparous forces. This we can best do, as the sponsors of this seminar have pointed out, by examining and analyzing the contention that ‘Indian Literature is one— though written in many languages’.

In their search for a common denominator amongst the regional literatures and finding out what is Indian, as distinguished from regional, in Indian Literature, our participating friends will have advanced a variety of views and theories. I do not propose to enter the list either to champion them or contend against them.

I would only like humbly to reiterate the case for discovering 'the common denominator' in our folk literature. I use the word 'reiterate' advisedly: Rabindranath Tagore addressed such a plea to the intelligentsia of Bengal nearly ninety years ago. And whatever he said then applies as aptly today to this all-India audience in respect of the language-areas they represent.

Tagore's contention was that what one missed was really and truly Bengali in most of what was being written<sup>1</sup> in modern Bengali. If such literature were given to read to masses who have no English, they would be able neither to understand the language nor the ideas—and far less penetrate into the essentials. If it was indeed our desire to acquire the words and ideas essentially Bengali, we must look to where the people of Bengal poured out their hearts in literary self-expression—unreservedly and uninhibitedly. Therefore, if we all made a concerned attempt to collect and compile typical specimens of our folk literature—both traditional and contemporary—the language and literature of our country would get vastly enriched in the process. That would help us identify ourselves with our own people and claim our due share of their joys and sorrows, hopes and aspirations.

Through the pages of *Bharati* and *Sadhana* and from the forum of the newly established Bangiya Sahitya Parishat, Tagore carried on a tearing campaign for the collection and publication of folk rhymes and folk-songs. Not content with the mere work of collection and compilation, he wrote a series of critical essays to assess the literary qualities of such folk literature, and assign them a place alongside 'art' literature as contrasted with, the 'folk' variety.

Tagore was painfully aware of the schism that was progressively taking place between the educated gentry and the common mass who really constituted the country and its people. Our English-based education of the colonial regime brought about a new kind of class distinction. Previous to this, the difference that existed between the rich and the poor, the high and the low in matters of knowledge and belief was a question of degree—some had more knowledge than the others, some held beliefs a little different from what the others held. The contrast was not so pronounced as to lay the path

open for a veritable conflict of ideologies. That which separates the English-knowing Indian from his less fortunate brethren is no longer a difference of degree—it is almost a difference in kind. The two are almost races apart. The distinction has had not only social but also economic repercussions, and as an inevitable corollary to these, seeds of class conflict. Tagore was fully alive to the danger of this separateness on one hand. On the other he saw the deeper danger from an amorphous class lacking in identity with the country and the people jockeyed to a position from where they could beg and wheedle favours from the British overlords ostensibly in the country's cause but actually for advancing the narrow interests of their own class. If political leadership went into such hands as these, as it was bound to, woe unto the country. Tagore took warning, therefore, and sought to educate the intelligentsia into getting to understand the country not as an abstraction but as something real and tangible. On the literary level, therefore, he called upon them to go to the grassroots of Folk Literature, to be able to establish their identity with the country and the people.

Tagore's forewarning nearly ninety years ago, applies to us today with a double appositeness. We must of necessity try to understand and establish a rapport with the folk-mind as reflected in Folk Literature—not only to discover a common denominator but also for the sake of mere survival. The phenomenon of democracy with its adult franchise and single non-transferrable vote, makes it incumbent on us to know the mind of our real rulers—the people. And what better way can there be to gain such knowledge than through the literature that sways their emotions and sentiments and shapes their attitudes and value-judgments.

Folk Literature, in the same way as 'Art' literature or sophisticated literature, is bound to be of two kinds: traditional or classical and modern or contemporaneous. On the traditional side, there are the vernacular variants of the epics and puranas, tales and legends, poetry and rhymes, proverbs and fables, songs and plays, etc. Now, my contention is that a comparative study of the classics of Folk Literature undertaken on an India-wide scale will reveal not only interesting points of similarity and contrast of themes and their treatment on regional basis, but it will also help us discover the common denominator which characterizes the literature in all our regional languages—probably in a more effective manner than our study of the classics, ancient and modern, of the sophisticated variety.<sup>1</sup>

Since space will not permit an elaboration of the thesis, I shall content myself with three basic themes generally shared amongst the folk literatures of different language regions, broadly to indicate the value-concepts which they inculcate and which have become part of our collective national psyche. The themes chosen to illustrate the point are the same as what Tagore indicated in one of the essays of his *Lokasahitya*. The value-concepts upheld by the themes are the same as what he summed up:

- i. *Hara-Gauri Theme*—Ennobles Siva as the ideal householder who can rise above the poverty of material circumstances. Upholds the institution of marriage as a sacrament, dignity of domestic love, nobility of Gauri as the ideal of the chaste wife, and a mother's love for the married daughter.
- ii. *Radha-Krishna Theme*—Romanticizes the beauty of love in defiance of social conventions and draws a contrast between the conflicting claims of what Brindaban and Mathura symbolize.
- iii. *Sita-Ram Theme*—Sings to the praise of love and devotion of the wife for the husband, brother for brother, son for father, friend for friend. Upholds heroism, nobility, self-abnegation, kingly virtues and a sense of duty.

The value-concepts that these themes inculcate, the didacticism of fables, the practical wisdom of the proverbs, the sheer beauty of the rhymes and poetry and songs—all have become a part of our being. It is in these, to my mind, that we may discover the highest common denominator of our Indian literature—involving the great mass of our countrymen.

Nor can we disregard the growing corpus of contemporary folk literature which is still being turned out or being disseminated through the various modern media of mass communication. Not all of it may be in educational, and most of it may not stand the test of time. Nevertheless, it is good to recognize that side by side with what may be called as 'art' literature, folk-literature too is being written holding up the mirror to the contemporary life of our people.

In our own better interest and in the interest of our national integration on a literary and cultural level, we should reckon with the *fact* of folk literature as it has come down and as it is shaping today. I suggest that some of the more effective ways in which we may register our recognition of the common denominator would be through:

- i. Encouraging the study of and research in comparative folk literature;
- ii. Prescribing folk literature as a part of the graduate and post-graduate course in the literature of a regional language.
- iii. Compiling dictionaries and glossaries of words in folk vocabulary.
- iv. Promoting literacy, and systematic publication of literature suitable for adult neo-literates.
- v. Providing free education to nation's children up to the age of 14, and making the mother-tongue the medium of such education.

The above measures will help us to get a better perspective of the folk literature of the past and a better chance of improving the quality and level of folk literature of the future. We owe it to our greater interest and better sense to pay more attention to folk literature as one of the most powerful of the common denominators of our Indian literature—if not the greatest.

#### NOTE

1. About the folk elements he 'naturalized' in the forms and contents of his works, and the attempts he made for correlating the philosophy of folk religion with that of the Upanishads, this can hardly be called the occasion for dilating on them

*Section C: Literary Genres*

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MYTHILI KAUL

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## Tulsidas's *Ramcharitmanas* and Some Epic Traditions



I SHOULD like to begin this paper with a word of apology. Being a newcomer to the field of Hindi literature, professionally speaking, I am only too conscious of my limitations and hope that this paper will be read with indulgence.

The *Ramcharitmanas* is assumed to be an epic and is referred to as such by all scholars. This paper is a modest attempt to approach Tulsidas's poem in terms of the genre to which it is said to belong; to see whether it is an epic and, if so, what kind of an epic; to try and judge the 'purpose' or animating principle behind Tulsidas's work, to see the ideas and ideals that control and give it its individual form. Such an approach will inevitably involve a comparison, brief for the purposes of this paper, with Valmiki's *Ramayana*. I shall also make use of certain well-known critical concepts and categories devised by some Western scholars of the epic tradition. I believe that a study of this kind will help one to arrive at a just appraisal of the literary merits or otherwise of Tulsidas's poem.

The greatness of the *Ramcharitmanas* has seldom been questioned. Both Indian and Western scholars have paid eloquent tribute to this 'noble' work. One of the most extravagant of these, to give just one instance, considers the *Munasa* superior to the best books of the Latin and Greek languages.<sup>1</sup> The best books of Greek and

Latin I presume are the epics of Homer and Virgil and I shall start accordingly with a brief consideration of some of the attributes of epic poetry in general.

The epic is, broadly speaking, a species of narrative poetry possessing high seriousness, amplitude, and control over a vast range of materials.<sup>2</sup> For quite some time now Western critics have distinguished between two kinds of epic, the Primary and the Secondary.<sup>3</sup> The Primary epic (examples would be Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and the Old English poem *Beowulf*) is oral and musical, sung by a bard or minstrel in a heroic court. Besides being poetry themselves, these epics describe poetical performances (at feasts or on festive occasions) in progress at the courts of which they are writing and thus give us an idea of what the epic was in the heroic age. The Primary epic is lofty and grave and gains solemnity from the setting of the court in which it was performed. It stresses the greatness of the individual and the tragedy of a hero who is limited because he is human. For instance, Beowulf overcomes the monster Grendel and destroys Grendel's mother in the depths of the bog which is her home. But his great physical strength is subject to age and it is an enfeebled hero who goes forth to battle the dragon, kills it, but himself succumbs to his wounds. This sense of tragedy would not of course obtain in Indian epics—the fact that there is no tragedy in Sanskrit literature is only too well-known—and hence the hero remains triumphant and undefeated at the end.

The Secondary epic—so called because it grows out of or comes after the Primary epic—deals with a consciously vast theme. The individual hero is still important but he is now implicated in a larger process, the history of a people or nation. The Secondary epic owes its origin to Virgil who, in his *Aeneid*, deals with a national legend and involves the national question he raises with still larger divine or cosmic issues. The Secondary epic attempts an even greater solemnity than the Primary but it has to achieve this without the external aids of setting and festive occasion which were an integral part of the latter. It is much more literary in character. Hence the recourse—in the Secondary epic—to the grand style and elaborate description.

Valmiki's *Ramayana* would fall into the category of the Primary epic. We are told in Chapter 4 of the Bala Kanda that this 'marvellous' poem was sung by Kusha and Lava, the sons of Rama, first before the sages and then before Rama himself:

In the assembly, surrounded by his ministers and brothers, Rama looked approvingly on those handsome and learned youths and addressed Lakshmana, Shatrughna and Bharata, saying —

‘Listen to this historical poem sung by these celestial and brilliant minstrels, a poem which portrays incidents of wonderful meaning!’

Then Ramachandra commanded the two musicians to sing, and the princes, moved by his words, tuned their Vinas and chanted the poem they had learned, sweetly and clearly; whereupon the whole assembly listened to the music which was wholly gratifying to the mind and heart.

Thereafter Rama said:—‘I admire the music and the verse sung by these two minstrels who appear endowed with royal attributes.’

In this way, praised and encouraged by Ramachandra, the two brothers, demonstrating their skill in music, sang on. and listening to them in the royal assembly, Ramachandra was profoundly moved.<sup>4</sup>

The *Ramayana* is heroic in character, a fact stressed in the opening lines when Valmiki asks Narada:

‘In this world today, who is there endowed with excellent and heroic qualities, versed in all the duties of life, an actor of many parts, one who is truly great, free from envy, and who, when excited to wrath can strike terror into the hearts of Celestial Beings? O Sage, I would hear of such a man from thee’<sup>5</sup>

The focus is on the hero, the *man*, possessed of immense physical strength coupled with great virtue and wisdom, able to hold his own, if need be, with the gods. Narada’s reply again underlines this fact: ‘he is named Rama and is valiant and illustrious’, ‘a slayer of his foes, broad-shouldered, long-armed . . . skilled in archery, having a muscular body with arms extending to the knees . . . of mighty prowess’, as well as ‘benevolent to his subjects, omniscient, famed for his good deeds, pure, devout, and one who ever meditates on his own essence.’<sup>6</sup> The very title indicates the epic’s concern with the history or story of the hero, with his actions or accomplishments.

In other words, the Rama of Valmiki is not a god. Jacobi and other scholars have ably demonstrated that the passages on Rama’s divinity, his descent from Vishnu (together with most of the Bala Kanda and Uttara Kanda) are interpolations. But in any case, such passages are few and far between and the emphasis falls heavily on Rama as a human being. He performs prodigious acts—he subdues the rakshasas who are troubling Vishwamitra. He breaks the great bow at Janaka’s court, he destroys the mighty Ravana—all the actions being entirely within the range of the epic hero’s abilities. Hence—and I am stressing this point simply because of what happens to Rama in Tulsidas’s poem—the figure that emerges is essentially that of a

man, a man of grandeur and great prowess but subject nevertheless to human passions and human frailties. Valmiki's Rama is after all the man who kills Bali from behind a tree, who teases Shurpanakha; the Rama who on being told that he is to go into exile, approaches his mother "deeply distressed and sighing like an elephant," who, on seeing Sita, is "unable to conceal the suffering of his soul," and gives way to sorrow; who, notwithstanding his love for Bharata, advises Sita thus: 'Do not speak in praise of me in Bharata's presence; in times of prosperity, men do not suffer the praise of their rivals gladly. . . . Have a care never even to utter my name, so that it may prove possible for thee to live in peace with him.'<sup>7</sup>

It might be pointed out here that since there is this conflict in him, Rama's fulfilment of his father's 'word' becomes infinitely more meaningful. He *chooses* to obey his father, he *decides* to renounce the throne and go into exile. He knows exactly what he is doing and rises through deliberate valour to a great height of resolution.

Thus, in Valmiki's *Ramayana* divine preordination plays no important role. Even if the gods wish certain events to happen the epic shapes them in such a way that the responsibility for actions is still attributable to human beings. Crisis occur as a result of what the human actors themselves have done in the distant or immediate past. Dasaratha brings about Rama's banishment by deliberately breaking his promise to Kaikeyi and her father that her son would be made king. Sita in a sense exposes herself to Ravana by dismissing Lakshmana with harsh and unjust accusations. And with the idea of human responsibility the concept of struggle and conflict enters the world of the epic, thereby investing its structure with dramatic interest and power.

Turning to Tulsidas's *Ramcharitmanas* after Valmiki's epic we find ourselves in very different territory. Nominally the subject is the same but several centuries have passed, several works like the *Adhyatma Ramayana* have intervened, and the treatment is certainly not the same.

There are glimpses of the heroic Rama of Valmiki in such moments as before the *swayamvara* at Janaka's court or before the battle with Ravana. But for the most part Tulsidas de-emphasizes the heroic aspect. One has only to compare the opening of the Valmiki *Ramayana* with the opening of the *Ramcharitmanas* to see the difference. Valmiki's preoccupation with the hero is replaced by extended invocations to all the gods and sages and, indeed, each book of the *Manasa* opens with an invocation.

Again, Valmiki's minstrels, Lava and Kusha, are supplanted by four sets of narrators (sets because in each case there is a character telling the story and a hearer who asks questions): Shiva and Parvati, Yajnaalkeya and Bharadwaj, Kakabhushundi and Garuda, and, of course, Tulsidas and his hearers. At first glance this might seem a more sophisticated procedure than Valmiki's simple method of presentation. But the question to be asked is: does it serve to make the structure of the poem any tighter, or does it make for a better ordering of the vast materials, a more rigorous control? Does it enrich the poem in any other way? Or is the narrative scheme forced on the poem in the interests of some Other purpose that the poet may have in mind? I shall discuss the structure of the poem, and answer some of these questions, the last particularly, as we go along in this paper. Here I shall merely convey my sense that the diversification of narrators serves to dissipate the effect of tightness rather than create it. Furthermore, it makes for a certain amount of confusion since some of the narrators are also actors in the story. In fact, the only reason for their introduction seems to be to show a Rama who is worshipped and venerated not by ordinary mortals alone but equally by rishis and the gods themselves.

From the above it is clear that Tulsidas's poem cannot be classified as a Primary epic. But does it fit into the category of the Secondary epic? True, it is the conscious and consciously literary treatment of a great theme, but once again what exactly is that theme?

Several critics have pointed out that the *Ramcharitmanas* is pre-eminently devotional in character. Hence the elaborate introduction to the Bala Kanda and the whole of the Uttara Kanda which are in the nature of hymns in praise of Rama. The subject of the poem is not the history of Rama in the sense of the story of the hero and his wanderings but the 'mountain lake' or quintessence of his character. Hence even the numerous physical descriptions of Rama in which the poem abounds underline the divinity in him and suggest that he bears the same marks on his person as Vishnu.

Since Rama is so clearly a god—one has only to remember the "Bal Leela" or his showing of the 'Chaturbhuj' form to Sutikshna or Kakabhushundi in his stomach (a singular lapse of taste in Tulsidas)—the poet tends to suppress anything that may possibly detract from this divinity. Thus Rama's sorrow at Sita's loss is passed over lightly and the killing of Bali is described briefly and an attempt at justification is made. Similarly, the 'improper' or quite simply human actions of other divine or semi-divine characters—

Sita's tirade against Rama when he is going into exile and later her vituperations against Lakshmana, or Dasaratha's concealment of Rama's coronation from Bharata—are eliminated from the poem.

But more important, with Rama's becoming a god the element of conflict disappears completely from the *Ramcharitmanas*. His enemies, even Bali and Ravana not to mention the numerous rakshas, rejoice that they have committed evil deeds because these have resulted in their being destroyed by Rama, so that they can die happily, having achieved salvation. In Valmiki, it will be remembered, Rama went through his ordeals like a man. In Tulsidas we are told time and again that Rama is beyond happiness and sorrow and therefore does not respond to any external events as a man would. Thus at the height of each crisis, for instance when he is informed that he is to be banished, he contents himself with an inward ironic smile—मन मुस्काई भानुकूल भानू<sup>8</sup>—and serenely accepts the situation. Rama knows what is going to happen and the poet never allows us to forget this fact. For instance, in Valmiki, Rama is himself fascinated by the golden deer but Tulsidas Rama, fully knowing the identity of the deer, gladly follows it in order to fulfil what the gods desire:

तब रघुपति जानत सब कारण ।  
उठ हरषि सुर काजु सँवारण ॥<sup>9</sup>

Again, whereas Valmiki's hero is beside himself at the loss of Sita and has to be consoled and restrained by Lakshmana, Tulsid's Rama is not so downcast that he cannot tell his brother that the only men honoured by the brave are those who withstand the armies of Kamadeva, and that woman is the basis of desire. As though this were not clear enough, the poet has the divine narrator Shiva comment:

गुणातीत सचराचर खामौ । राम उमा सब अन्तरजामी ॥  
कामिन्ह कै दीनता देखाई । धीरन्ह कै मन बिरति हटाई ॥<sup>10</sup>

Once again Rama the all-knowing lord speaks in order to show the pathetic quality of those who are subject to desire, and to make the enlightened firm in their resolve to be free of the bonds of the world.

Unlike Valmiki's epic then everything here is preordained. If Rama's divinity makes his part in the poem a sort of enacted allegory, in human terms a sort of shadow-boxing engaged in for the benefit of mortals, the part of other characters in the poem becomes even less than that, just as they themselves get reduced to the status of puppets. There is no human responsibility for action. This includes even Kaikeyi's actions because as Bharadwaj tells Bharata, तात कैकइहि

दोसु नहीं गई गिरा मति धूति, Saraswati corrupted her mind so that the plan of the gods might be executed.<sup>11</sup>

With the exclusion of the human will, of the human right to exercise choice, drama and dramatic interest are automatically ruled out. It is interesting here to compare Tulsidas with Milton who too wrote a “religious” epic—an epic with a sustained theological framework. Milton’s theology was infinitely less flexible than ours, particularly as regards the central Calvinist dogma of preordination. If he had worked his poem out only on the basis of this assumption, *Paradise Lost* would have been without any sense of paradox, conflict, and struggle, devoid of human and dramatic interest. But Milton in fact emphasized still more the idea of free will. Adam and Eve *choose* to disobey God, thereby deliberately bringing about their “fall”, and the poem becomes a moving account of the tragedy and glory of their action. It becomes an epic. In Tulsidas’s *Ramcharitmanas*, on the contrary, the divine predetermination of events reduces the action to an allegorical fight between good and evil, the field of the medieval Morality play rather than the epic.

A poet’s omissions and additions are important clues to his theme, his attitude, and his motives, and Tulsidas is no exception. He obviously wrote as he did because he was motivated by certain ideas and ideals. These are summed up rather neatly as follows by Baba Beni Madhavdasa in his *Mula Gosain Charita*:

Seven ships (cantos) were prepared to row us  
 across the ocean of the world,  
 To wash away arrant hypocrisy and establish the  
 pure and highest religion,  
 To destroy the accumulated sins of Kali and show  
 the beauty of devotion to God,  
 To erase sectarianism and dissension and teach the  
 lesson of love,  
 To create enthusiasm in the hearts of the holy and  
 increase the joy of the good,  
 To explain how devotion to Hari depends upon Hara  
 And to point the way to the Vedic path.<sup>12</sup>

The key phrases are: ‘establish the pure and highest religion,’ ‘show the beauty of devotion to God,’ “to erase sectarianism and dissension,” ‘to point the way to the Vedic path’. These are the animating principles behind *Ramcharitmanas*.



It is not difficult to see why Tulsidas wrote as he did if one remembers the contemporary historical and cultural situation. Muslim rule had been established in India and Hinduism was being threatened and weakened. Hindus were an oppressed and dispirited people. What the situation called for apparently was a message that would uplift them and provide them with hope and Tulsidas sets out to do precisely this in *Ramcharitmanas*. We see him, to use Lascelles Abercrombie's words regarding the function of the epic poet,

accepting, and with his genius transfiguring, the general circumstance of his time . . . symbolising, in some appropriate form whatever sense of the significance of life he feels acting as the accepted unconscious metaphysic of the time.<sup>18</sup>

Tulsidas must, indeed, be regarded as the mouthpiece of the convictions and way of life of a multitude of men, and he does express their 'unconscious metaphysic' through a clear and authentic story, a story known and already part of the mythology of his audience.

The Rama legend serves Tulsidas's purpose admirably in this respect though he must in the process transform it somewhat. The heroic story could not be taken seriously by his age. Helpless and oppressed as Hindus were, they could no longer believe in man's prodigious deeds or his ability to overcome the obstacles in the world through his own actions. Only one superior to man could perform such wonders. Accordingly, we find humanistic awe being replaced by divine worship and the hero being transformed into a god. The divine scheme is naturally benevolent and hopeful, and evil and hardship are therefore bound to simply disappear.

Tulsidas, however, had a serious problem on his hands, a problem which Beni Madhavdasa does not fail to mention in the verse quoted above. With so many sects existing in India, Tulsidas's foremost problem was to make Rama attractive and acceptable to all. Thus in view of the strong 'Krishnabhaktishakha' adherents it was not enough for Rama to be simply Ramavtara. He had to be identified with Vishnu and it will be recalled that Mandodri specifically tells Ravana that Rama is the same lord who assumed variously the forms of Vamana, Varaha, Narasimha, and so on. But this again was not enough since Rama/Vishnu had to be made acceptable to the powerful Shaivite group to whom the name of Vishnu was anathema. Tulsidas very cleverly made 'devotion to Hari depend on Hara'. The opening section of the *Ramcharitmanas* deals almost entirely with Shiva's greatness. We are told that Rama loves Shiva *सिव समान प्रिय*



मोहि न दूजा<sup>14</sup>—only to find that Shiva himself is a narrator of Rama's story and a devotee of the latter. The resolution of the Vishnu-Shiva controversy did not, however, end all problems.

There was the Nirguna Saguna split and Tulsidas is at pains to suggest that there is no difference between the two: जो गुन रहित सगुन सोईकैसैं। जलु हिम उपल बिलग नहीं जैसे।<sup>15</sup> Hence one may as well subscribe to the Sagunrup which he himself favours, and which Kakabhushundi wholeheartedly accepted even though he had to pay for it the penalty of being changed into a crow. Further, recognizing the differences between the 'Gyanmarg', the 'Yogamarg', and the 'Bhaktimarg', Tulsidas points out on the one hand how difficult the way of 'gyana' is, how easy it is to slip up following it, and, on the other, what severe effort and control are required by the 'yogamarg'. As against these difficult paths, he stresses the effortless nature of 'bhakti' which ensures salvation almost without the devotee's desiring it. And finally Tulsidas attempts to overcome the prejudices of the rigid Hindu caste system, to eradicate the idea of जाति. He is here giving a poetic and literary expression to Ramananda's teaching. Thus the *Ramcharitmanas* mentions several characters of low caste who are beloved by Rama and thereby liberated. When Shabari tells Rama that she is unworthy to praise him because of her 'अधम जाति' (a fact not mentioned in Valmiki) Rama replies that if a person is of the right caste but has no devotion he is without lustre or glory.<sup>16</sup> Again, Hanuman specifically mentions that he is not of a high caste (परम कुलीना) is in fact the lowest of the low, but is loved by Rama on account of his devotion.<sup>17</sup> In sum, it can be seen that Tulsidas's aim was to group all the forces of Hinduism about the theme of Rama and to construct a faith that would safeguard tradition and maintain its identity against the threat of external forces.

In order to be effective, this faith had to be essentially pragmatic; the ideals and values it proclaimed had to be such as could play a part in everyday life. It had to confine itself to the realm of the possible. Since the heroic seemed ruled out in the existing historical situation, the only values possible in Tulsidas's time were domestic values and duties and these are ultimately what his narrative stresses. Kaushalya praises Rama for obeying his father because: पितु आयसु सब धरमक टीका,<sup>18</sup> it is the supreme righteousness or dharma; Sita speaks of a wife's duty to her husband and is a practical illustration of the 'pativratas' of whom the poet speaks elsewhere; Sumitra rejoices that Lakshmana is accompanying Rama and Sita to the forest in order to serve and obey them; Bharata likewise demonstrates his

love and devotion to his brother; Rama discourses on friends and friendship and states that the company of good people will help achieve salvation. Thus Tulsidas is providing certain standards of behaviour and conduct for everyday life.

Besides this ethical slant, the work had to be pragmatic in the sense that it had to succeed in attracting people to Rama who embodied this ethic. Tulsidas recognized, realistically enough, that to the mass of people Rama as a means of spiritual salvation would hold no appeal. They would be attracted only if they felt that the devotion to Rama held the promise of material benefits. Tulsidas in fact mentions four kinds of “bhaktas”: two who worship God for spiritual reasons, who worship Him either in order to realize Him or, having realized Him, go on worshipping out of pure love; and two who worship Him for more practical reasons, for either wealth and other benefits or in order to avert evil and trouble. He adds that all four are without sin and of pure heart.<sup>19</sup> Further, since Rama was born for the sake of his devotees and is their slave, he will provide happiness to all of them, and fulfil all their desires if they have faith in him. And he concludes with a picture of the famed ‘Rama rajya’ where everyone is free of pain and affliction: दैहिक दैविक भौतिक तापा । राम राज नहीं काहुहि ब्यापा ।<sup>20</sup>

These then are the considerations which shaped Tulsidas’s work. To understand a poem’s historical reference is not, however, to justify either its present relevance or its literary quality. For there it must stand by its own internal strength, not take refuge in the greatness of the message it contains.

No one will deny to the *Ramcharitmanas* the high seriousness of the epic as far as subject-matter is concerned, nor the amplitude or breadth of epics, nor even the choric quality, the expression of the ‘unconscious metaphysic’ of the time. But even as far as the theme is concerned there is a sense that the paradoxes in the poem are too easily resolved. More important still, nowhere does Tulsidas’s work exhibit the control and tightness of structure so necessary to epic poetry.

In the course of this paper I have pointed out some of the literary failures of the *Ramcharitmanas*. But, of all these, I should like in the end to emphasize just one—the lack of real conflict. Take the example of Ravana, the evil principle in the poem. As I have pointed out, he is hardly given a case, much less the sort of case one expects of the antagonist in a great action. Either as the embodiment of evil or as just a credibly motivated human agent, he can hardly prove

effective when in fact, as already mentioned, he is only too happy to be destroyed by the hero, when not the poet but he himself sees this destruction as his supreme self-fulfilment. Compare this with Milton's Satan whose ultimate defeat is in a sense as divinely decreed, as preordained as Ravana's. But the difference lies in the nature of the struggle as it is enacted. In Milton's poem there is a real struggle in the sense that Satan's challenge engages some of the deepest passions and aspirations of man: the desire for power and supremacy, the force of pride and the strength of the will, the refusal to submit even when a cause is lost, and so on. By these means we witness and participate in a human and dramatic action that, while theologically sound, even orthodox, cannot be equated just with theology, nor just with matters of spiritual salvation and after life. *Paradise Lost* is a social and political as well as religious poem. It deals with the real problems and responsibilities of post-renaissance man.

Tulsidas's poem, lacking this first quality of drama, comes to lack dramatic structure too, and with that, an enduring power to move in the manner of the world's great epics. It is ultimately the work of a proselytizer and a reformer too completely dominated by the noble and edifying purpose which is his goal. Hence the *Ramcharitmanas* must be considered, not an epic, but a great achievement of sustained, unswerving, untroubled devotion.

#### NOTES

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4. *The Ramayana of Valmiki*, tr. Hari Prasad Shastri, III vols. (Shantisadan, London, 1962), I, 17.
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6. *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 213, 231, 232.
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12. *Ramcharitmanas*, p. 862.
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14. *Ibid.*, pp. 738-39.
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16. *Ibid.*, p. 424.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 32.
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JAYAKANTA MISHRA

## Forms of Genres in Indian Literature (With Special Reference to Maithili, Bengali and Hindi)



FORMS OF literature are really the differentia of literature. That which makes any expression artistic is its artistic form and not any particular subject-matter or philosophy or vision. For science and art differ just in this. Science is the embodiment of the acutest, the subtlest, the minutest and the finest of human visions including, of course, “beauty, truth and goodness” of all types and all climates. Art, on the other hand, enriches human life by the embodiment of all these in and through forms that are sensuous and beautiful. It is possible and indeed frequently seen that artistic ‘forms’ are able to express more easily and powerfully the aforesaid values than non-artistic or scientific ‘forms’. I do not think that it is in any way useful to speculate whether one is superior to the other or whether it is possible to reach the same heights through both science and art, but it must be said that there is a difference between the two approaches and that the difference is just that which constitutes art, including the art of literature.

It is in this sense that the study of forms and genres offers an endless pursuit of a most fascinating kind. Unfortunately the common man understands them to be mere additional or even

accidental ornamentation. He thinks that these are just like clothes which one puts on, changing them when one pleases, according to the fashion or usage of the age. It is true that forms and genres are chosen according to the socio-aesthetic demands of an age and that in several cases ordinary writers adopt forms and genres according to the fashion or usage of an age. But the great writers have always made their greatness felt by suitable modification and significant contribution to the current forms and genres.

There is much value in a tradition, however, and many traditionally handed down forms of literature have been borrowed and interchanged from country to country in the course of centuries. It is perhaps the easiest and simplest kind of study of forms to be able to trace the evolution of particular genres or forms. Thus, it is interesting to note how prose fiction, particularly the short story, was taken from India to the West in ancient times and, again, how it was borrowed back by India in modern terms. Even more interesting is the history of the journey of forms from one language or one region in India to another region. But this journey seems to have been a more homogeneous evolution because the common emotional and cultural heritage of India as a whole was modified by minor local conditions to a very small extent. I shall illustrate my remark by referring to some of the forms and genres in Indian literature with special reference to Maithili, Bengali and Hindi literatures in this light.

One of the earliest literary forms which came to be used all over northern India was the Pada. Its origins go back to the *Caryapadas* of 8th to 12th centuries A.D. Later Jayadeva of *Gitagovinda* fame popularized it and Vidyapati became the most eminent exponent of it. Throughout eastern India, Vidyapati set the fashion of these Padas. Their chief quality was their singability, their musicality, their sweet arrangement of rhythms, words, emotions and highly artistic qualities. In Bengal, Assam, Orissa, Nepal and Mithila all literature came to be permeated with the charms of the Padavali literature. Hundreds of imitators and experimenters took up this form and turned it to manifold uses. All over eastern India there was a craze for this form and even in western India Hindi writers like Suradas adopted this form with great enthusiasm.

There were many great qualities in this form of poetry. It had breadth, suppleness, pliability, and capability of greatest effects in a variety of subjects. While it usually dealt with the life and deeds of Lord Krishna, there were various kinds of sentiments—erotic,

devotional, friendly and servile—based on them that formed the subject matter of these Padas. They were all, however, based on the celebrated works *Bhagavata* and *Brahmavaivarta* which form the sheet anchor of Vaishnava literature. The greatest names in medieval Indian poetry in the North are associated with the writings in Pada form: Vidyapati, Umapati, Ramapati, Sankara Deva, Madhava Deva, Chandidas, Narahari Sarkar, Chaitanya, Govindadas, Ray Ramananda and others. In Nepalese manuscript libraries hundreds of collections of these Padas called *Ragamalas* are lying awaiting publication by some diligent researcher. One important aspect of these padas is that they are bound with a particular Raga or Ragini each, and that their distinction from one another mostly depends upon their melody more than upon anything else. In Bengal they form a part of kirttan songs and have to be presented even to this day with musical instruments. So also in Nepal. But not so in Mithila today, though in the past in Mithila also this was the case. See for example the early 18th century Maithili work *Ragatarngini* describing them more as part of music than literature. In Mithila Pada continued to be written till recently. The last great writer of Pada was Chanda Jha who died in 1907.

Another genre that has travelled from one region to another and become different is the drama. It took its birth in Mithila. On the ashes of the classical Sanskrit drama, the edifice of the vernacular drama was built by introducing vernacular translations of Sanskrit verses in the Sanskrit dramas of Mithila. Gradually a new type of drama came to be written in Maithili. Music, dance and poetry were taken together to make the new drama. Prose was used sparingly. It developed into what came to be called the Kirtaniya Drama. It was a kind of opera, a song drama, devotional in content and frequently capable of quite effective appeal to the sentiments of the people. The subject matter of this drama was Pauranika, but in course of time the praise of the Lord usually in his form of Krishna or Shiva became its chief motif. There was a lot of variety in its developments: some that may be called Regular Maithili Drama, some that may be called Irregular Maithili Drama and some that may be called more or less pure Kirtaniya drama. There was simplicity and directness of appeal in these works unknown in any other genre so far.

Now this dramatic tradition went all over eastern India along with the Mithila school of music and Maithili scholarship. Centres of dramatic activity developed in various parts of the country. At Tripura and in Assam Maithili musicians founded a new school of



music and the great tradition of *Ankia Nats* came into being. The difference, however, was great. The Assamese dramas used prose more than verse and almost from the very beginning abolished Sanskrit and Prakrit. The drama further changed when it went to Bengal. There a new development took place; it became a continuous lyrical drama called the *yatra*. I do not suggest that the *yatra* was purely a borrowed form from Mithila—there was much in it that was different but as the evolution of the vernacular drama, particularly as song drama and lyrical drama, from Sanskrit drama took place in Mithila, it has to be considered to be a further development of the drama of Mithila. The original Maithili drama started with the intention of the writer to sing the praise of the Lord (Krishna) but in later years it also took up secular themes, and certainly widened the scope of it to include the works written in the praise of Shiva and Parvati, but the development in Bengal and particularly Assam was largely devotional—relating to Krishna and remarkably different from the original ‘regular’ play-structure of Maithili dramas.

In the Rasalila of Uttar Pradesh we witness a similar development but it cannot be traced to the development in Mithila and other parts in Eastern India, though it also deals with the praise of Lord Krishna and his deeds as given in the *Bhagavat*. The Rasalila is more connected with the tradition of *Rasakas* given in the *Natyashastra* of Bharata and that of *Rasa* literature in old Gujarati. It could be further connected with Apabhramsha and Jaina tradition in quite early days. The common points between the Rasalila and the eastern Indian tradition are nevertheless important, apart from the devotional character of Krishna’s life and deeds, there was the predominance of song and dance and absence of prose. The Yatras and Kirtanias on the other hand had prose farces as their relieving feature. Moreover, they were not merely devotional literature but also recreational literary forms.

A very old form of prose was the Varnana (set passages of description). It was found in Jaina literature and later taken up by Maithili poets and writers like Joytirishwara Thakur (14th century), the celebrated author of *Varnaratnakara* containing an ‘ocean’ of ‘Varnanas’. These *Varnanas* were used in the dramas of Mithila. Thus, a *varnana* occurs in Nandipati’s *Krishnakelimala*. There are *Varnanas* in verse in the Nepalese Maithili dramas. In later years the kathakas of Bengal used these *Varnanas* in narrations of Pauranic stories. These Varnanas are set passages of great poetic beauty and they exercised a great influence on the poetic and emotional sensibility of the



members of the audience. They were usually inserted in stories or dramas with the intention of heightening the literary or poetic effect of the piece. It may be said that such conventional and stereotyped passages would normally evoke no response of a deep or profound character. They look like formulae or recipes and seem to have no individual propriety or appropriateness to the themes. But it must be pointed out that these passages are excellent summaries and their diction is made up of sweet and sonorous Sanskritized and chaste vernacular. I think that in this way they produced a picturesque effect of something elevated and elegant and their high-sounding consonants and succinct syntax produced an effect of chanted music. They used to describe the stock characters and scenes in the drama or story, the gods or heroes and heroines, and, the chanting of these *Varnanas* would appeal to the audience like the *dhyana* of these characters in traditional literature.

It may be said that the forms and genres in Indian literature, generally speaking, fall into three groups and each group is based on a mighty tradition which forms its main source of development. It would be interesting to study any unit of Indian Literature and see this threefold pattern of its forms and genres in detail. I feel that though each unit has progressed independently and now and then differs in details, the basic pattern of their development and growth has been the same.

The first and in certain ways the foremost kind of form is that which can be assigned to the tradition of ancient Indian literature. Thus most of the ancient forms of Mahakavya Khandakavya, Mukta (including the Shatakas, etc.), Dashavatara, Carita, Nataka, Prahasana, and Gadya in modern Indian literature are based on the ancient types and forms. In this connection it is interesting to note that Sanskrit forms have so influenced Maithili literature that even today the *Sutra* form is being used for writing the best grammar of Maithili, and frequently stories are written in the form of *Akhyayika* or *Katha* instead of in that of the modern short story. A very interesting form of poems called *Vatahvana-kavya* was cultivated in Maithili which is based on the belief that if it is read aloud the wind would become active during intensely hot and stuffy days of summer; I find this also based on Sanskrit poetry of this kind.

It must be pointed out that Maithili, Bengali and Hindi forms have however deviated a good deal in many cases from their original in Sanskrit or Apabhramsha. Thus the Mahakavya in modern

Indian literature is taken much more broadly than the Sanskrit type: so that Tulsidas's *Ramacharita manas*, Chanda Jha's *Ramayana*, and Krittivasa's *Ramayana* are all quite reasonably called Mahakavyas, despite deviations from the ancient standards. Medieval Maithili Mukataka form has frequently the Bhanita in it but earlier no such practice was popular. Sometimes the ancient forms underwent such change as made them appear almost as new forms. Thus the *dashavatara* of Sanskrit, the *charita* of Apabhramsha and the *svayamvara* of Prakrit became quite new forms in Maithili as 'charita' and 'sammara' and 'dashavatara'.

The second dominant strain in the modern Indian literary forms and genres is based on those of the European tradition. Thus, forms like the sonnet, epistle, novel, short story, modern one-act play, essay, travelogue, radio play, and parody are entirely new forms as embodied in modern Indian literature. The most versatile of the modern forms is perhaps the *free verse* (used in a larger sense to include all varieties of experimentations) which seems to have invaded it and occupied in a general sense all literature. Many of these forms have come to us through translations and in some cases they have appreciably changed also. Thus the Maithili short story is known as 'Gappa' and it is perhaps the best Maithili word to indicate its character as a form of 'fiction'. But in some cases we unnecessarily ascribe Western origin to our forms particularly when we had them in our literature in the past. Thus it may be pointed out that *elegy* was known and cultivated in Maithili but it is held by some that it is a new form borrowed from the West. A fine example of *elegy* (*shokogita*) is found in the *elegy* written by King Pratapamalla for his brother-in-law Chandshekhar in the seventeenth century Nepal. Some-times, however, ancient Indian and European traditions mingle so that as a consequence we have in modern Indian literature almost a new literary form. Thus, the modern Indian *farce* is made up of ancient *Prahasan* and European *farce*; ancient Indian drama and modern European drama mingle to produce the present-day prose drama in Bengali, Maithili and Hindi—giving up the early verse and many out-of-date fashions in the writing of plays. Even the one-act play of Europe and the one-act plays of India have mingled, though today the European tradition predominates.

The last great source of forms and genres in modern Indian literature is perhaps the most fruitful and deserves our careful study. It is the elevation of folk forms to literary level that has given the

greatest forms to our literature. These forms are indigenous and come from the soil. They have a freshness and appropriateness that cannot be paralleled by those based on ancient Indian or European tradition. Sometimes they may be traced back to some sort of Indian tradition but frequently they are not known to have any parallel or original in ancient Indian or European tradition. The ancient Indian tradition or European tradition itself might have been, however, based on native folk forms of literature. Thus the folk form *Jhoomara* prevalent in Maithili, Bengali and Hindi was also known to the author of *Sangitadamodara* (Shubhankara of early seventeenth century) but it is my firm conviction that even in Sanskrit it was elevated from a folk form of lyric. In recent times this aspect of the study of the background of our Indian literature has attracted the attention of scholars and many important studies have been made. I should like to commend the works of Dr Shyam Parmar and Dr Ravindra Bhramar in Hindi and should like to plead for a more wide and deeper study of the problem. Many of our famous lyrics in particular and novels and short stories owe their inspiration to folklore. But what is more important, many of the fine literary forms have been either based on folk forms or are refinements of them. Thus, *Nirgun* of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar and *Baul* of Bengal, have been cultivated, for example, one may see the poems of Kabira; the *daha-gita* of the Musalmans in Mithila are the basis of wonderful *marsiyas* in Maithili; the *Prati* and *Nachari*, devotional Maithili forms of lyric are just folk forms elevated like say *Bhajans*, *Stutis*; and *Prabhati* in Hindi or *Ktrttana* in Bengali or *Baragita* in Assamese. Among the forms of love lyrics that have evolved from folk forms in Maithili-Bengali-Hindi one may mention *Tirbuti Ma'ara*, *Mana*, *Batagaman* and *Baramasa* (or for that matter *Chhaomasa* and *Charmasa*) as fine illustrations. The *Nautanki* or *Bidesiya* has been taken up by Hindi films with quite a measure of success. The entire Indian literature that is sometimes called *Santa Sahitya* is based on folk forms and to this day there are two kinds of scholars—those that think it below their dignity to consult and read the Santa Sahitya because it smacks of the illiterate and rough rural atmosphere and those that think that these are honest and important philosophical utterances of saints, inspired perhaps by the same earnestness as that which made up the Upanishads.

Recently the influence of 'New Writers' has brought about a change in our attitude towards these so-called rustic forms and

genres. Under the influence of the so-called 'progressive' writers we have started giving some importance to the things pertaining to folk culture and some of the new writers have wonderfully refined old tales, nursery rhymes, lullabies, parting songs, riddles, seasonal songs like phaga, chaitabara, holi, ballads, etc.

In the past the Indian writers writing under the shadows of Sanskrit did not make a very hard and fast distinction between folk forms and literary forms, provided they could use them with refinement and taste. I plead that this tendency may be revived—not for the sake of any pseudo-Indian patriotic revivalism or even progressivism referred to above but from a genuine feeling of being after all one and the same with the common folk of our land, unreservedly and unashamedly. Despite the cloud of Sanskritism the old vernacular poets of India thought that they did not lose dignity in using the folk literary 'forms' in serious literary writing. Thus, we have fine examples of *Sohara*, *Kelouna*, *Samadauni*, *Bujhauaali*, *jhoolan*, *rasa*, *kajari*, *uchiti*, *yoga*, etc., by some of the greatest poets such as Vidyapati, Govindadas, Nidhi, Vindhya-matha Jha, Chanda Jha, etc. The modern gentleman's urban snobbery like the medieval Sanskritists' snobbery for Sanskrit must die in the context of democratic values of today.

KABIRUL ISLAM

## A Note on Modern Bengali Poetry



LITERATURE is a river that flows on and on. But it never follows a straight line. Rabindranath once likened a turning point in a rivers home-ward journey to what may be called 'modernity' in literature. This simplification requires a bit of explanation. In fact, it is not every turn that is an enrichment, a pointer towards a new direction.

Every literary mode exhausts itself in due course. But then, how does one distinguish the modern? It is not the same thing as being a contemporary. Nor is it rootless in the sense that it has no relation to-tradition. On the contrary, it is this poetry which is vitally linked to the past and out of which the future is taking shape. 'Sanatana eva nitya nutanah', the eternal alone is ever new. Hence, to be true to both tradition and modernity is the task of the modernist who in reality can have no quarrel with the past. But one does not see any reason why one should merely repeat it and not go farther. The great past should be followed by a greater future.

A survey of modern Bengali poetry has of necessity to start with Rabindranath. Indeed, the last phase of Rabindranath extending over a decade has been immensely fruitful in contemporary Bengali poetry. Modern Bengali poetry includes much of Rabindranath. All the metres now in use were standardized by him. He also gave Bengali poetry the prose-poem.

To the world outside, Bengali literature means almost exclusively the work of Rabindranath. This is not surprising because it was the

genius of Rabindranath which lifted a language of an Indian province to the status it enjoys today. His work stretches over a period of more than sixty years and covers almost every phase in the modern development of Bengali language and literature. His pre-eminence is unquestionable but it would be wrong to think that he exhausted the infinite variety of the language and literature of Bengal.

II

The following paragraphs are meant as a brief introduction to modern Bengali poetry after Mohitlal and Nazrul and are addressed especially to those who do not know the Bengali language and the history of Bengali literature. It does not presume to give a complete or even an extensive survey of modern Bengali poetry; the most that it can claim to do is to indicate its dominant trends only.

Among a host of other poets who belonged to the school of Rabindranath, Mohitlal and Nazrul stood out. They tried to break away from the Master both in theme and diction. They struck new notes and covered new grounds. They enriched the language of Bengali poetry by pressing into service quite a fair number of Persian and Arabic words which lent a masculine vigour to their voice.

Mohitlal Mazumdar (1888-1952) is said to be the priest of 'modernity' in Bengali poetry. He was a romantic with a classical diction. His emphasis on the physical side of love, that is, his 'fleshliness',

*Hāi deha ! nāi tumi chhādā keha*

Oh body ! there is none but you

registered a significant departure from Rabindranath who had transformed physical appetite into blissful love. Though he did not deny the demands of the flesh, Mohitlal's spirit was not, however, incarcerated within its narrow confines; he heard the cry of the soul, too, beyond the bounds of the flesh.

Nazrul Islam (b. 1899) is the apostle of youth. His meteoric appearance in the firmament of Bengali poetry with his far-famed poem, Bidrohi (The Rebel), once for all, established his reputation as a poet. Bidrohi (1922) took the literary scene of Bengal by storm and made him famous almost overnight. This is how the poem opens:

*Balo bir—*

*Balo unnata mamo shir*

*Shir nehāri āmāri, nato-shir oi shikhar himādrir!*

Say, O hero,  
 Say, my head is ever high  
 Even the Himalaya lowers its head to see mine!

Nazrul became a great force in the fight for freedom, his chief weapons being his poems and songs which breathed an uncompromising opposition to tyranny and oppression, in every form. Like Walt Whitman he too was and is a poet of democracy—of the people—out and out; the people also understand him and feel the pull of his upsurging sentiments.

The pulse of the troubled times in which Nazrul lived beats loudly in his works, yet he has been able to write for the ages. In spite of the many blemishes in his writings—immaturity and orator-like loudness—he has been hailed as a people's poet *par excellence*.

### III

The muscular Mohitlal and the strident Nazrul may be called the precursors of modernity in Bengali poetry, bridging the gap between their mighty predecessor, Rabindranath, and a band of young poets who followed them in the thirties of the present century.

Among Rabindranath's successors there certainly was none who had the gift of his supreme genius but the variety and vitality of Bengali poetry in the last fifty years would bear comparison with almost any literature of the world. It has been customary to associate the excellence of Bengali poetry of the thirties with the names of Jibanananda Das, Buddhadeva Bose, Sudhindranath Datta, Bishnu Dey, and Amiya Chakravarty. But a reference to these names only, though undoubtedly they still dominate the contemporary poetic scene, leaves the picture incomplete. We should mention at the same time others too, who were no less important steerers of the chariot of Bengali poetry in the period under discussion. I am sorry to note here that they have not yet received their meed of praise and recognition from eminent scholars. They are Premendra Mitra, Ajit Datta, Sanjoy Bhattacharya, and Samar Sen.

These poets did not conform to the tradition of Rabindranath; they were after 'fresh woods, and pastures new'. They struck out new paths of their own. In place of Rabindranath's serenity, their poems breathed the air of unrest and cynicism. His sense of unity was replaced in the younger poets by a consciousness of the broken fragments of life. Sentiment and feeling, social problem and controversy, satire and intellectuality had all contributed in different degrees to give a



distinctive tone to much of their writing which marked it out from the poetry of Rabindranath.

Modern Bengali poetry is said to have been born and have flourished in the interwar years. 'From Nazrul Islam to Subhas Mukhopadhyay', writes Buddhadeva Bose in his *An Acre of Green Grass*, a review of modern Bengali literature, 'these twenty blessed years, as they now seem, between the two wars'. As regards form and content these rebels have sought to steer clear of the haze of Rabindranath's influence, thereby opening up new avenues for themselves, a poetic world of their own. They have often tried to derive inspiration from and established their affiliation with some of the Western poets in their bitterness and disdain for the sorry state of things in the modern world. They knew Hopkins, the Imagist group of poets, Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot. They knew Auden, Spender, and Day Lewis. They knew Baudelaire, and Mallarmé, and other continental poets, too. But it is unfair to call them imitators of Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot as the Poetry magazine of America unwisely thought them to be. Granted, these poets have not been dead to thoughts and ideas which come from abroad but they give to what they received their peculiar turn and imprint. Modern Bengali poetry is a spontaneous creation.

Some of the poets under review began as contributors to the new magazines of the time; they were *Kallol* (1923) *Kālikālam* (1926) and *Pragati* (1927), followed by *Parichaya* (1931), *Purvāsā* (1932) and *Kabitā* (1935).

#### IV

New poetry was born with Jibanananda Das (1898-1954, b. Barisal). One of the most controversial poets of recent times, he has attracted the attention of critics by the richness of his imagery and his subtle power of drawing music out of everyday words. Today he is variously described as the first of our modern poets, or the only true exponent of pure poetry in Bengali. The impact of his poetry on some of his contemporaries and especially on his successors is unmistakable. It is said that he has inspired a school of poetry exerting strong influence on the development of the verse forms and poetic diction of the poets who came after him. Keeping this point in mind Srikumar Bandyopadhyay has called him a 'poet's poet'. Be that as it may, after Rabindranath he is, to quote Sanjoy Bhattacharya, 'our poet' because he has adequately expressed the mind of his times.



*Prithibir gavir gaviratara asukh ekhan;  
Mānush tabuo rini prithibiri kāchhe.*

Now the earth suffers from a deep, deeper, sickness;  
Man is still indebted to this earth alone.

The poetry of Jibanananda radiates originality. Marks of his age are writ large on his poetical thoughts. His poetry holds up the mirror to the sad face of twentieth century humanity. There has been an endless void in our life with no haven of faith. Jibanananda has given a poignant expression to this grey void and the painful feeling born of it.

A lonely sadness permeates all his writings, especially those of the earlier phase. The words, the sounds, the environments, the imageries— all carry a suggestion of an encircling gloom.

We may here mention his sense of history. As he had been unflinching in his faith on the ceaselessness of life and time, he did not see them piece-meal, he wreathed the present with the past in an untearable thread:

*Hājār bachar dhare āmi path hāntitechhi  
prithibir pathe,  
Sinhal samudra theke nishither andhakāre Mālay sāgare  
Anek ghurechhi āmi*

A thousand years I have wandered upon the earth  
From the sea of Ceylon to the midnight sea of Malay  
Much have I wandered.

The poetry of Jibanananda with his repose and absorption in nature opened up a new horizon, hitherto undiscovered, both in thought and expression. He was tireless in his experiments with words, sounds, and imageries, but it is curious to note that he was not interested in technical Innovations and preferred the traditional *payar* metre with variations and free verse. He has freed the language of poetry from the prejudice of mere ‘poeticity’ and has drawn it nearer to prose. He had a genius for ‘the common word exact without vulgarity, the formal word precise but not pedantic’.

Rabindranath was struck by the pictorial quality of Jibanananda’s work; he characterized it as ‘Chitrarupamay’. ‘Tender green light like young lemon-leaves’, ‘ducks, smelling sleep by the pond at dusk’, etc., abundantly illustrate his point. Indeed, Jibanananda is marvellously pictorial.

Premendra Mitra (b. 1904, Benaras) is one of the foremost poets of contemporary Bengal. His early writing was realistic and marked

by deep sympathy with the down and out. Like many poets of his generation he started as a contributor to *Kallol* (1923), an avant-garde magazine of the nineteen-twenties. With his love for the common people and his sympathy for their sufferings, Premendra Mitra was not unlike Walt Whitman and the early Masfield. He expressed his credo thus:

*Āmi Kabi yata kāmārer ār kānsārīr ār chbutorer moto majurer,  
Āmi Kabi yata itarer!*

I am the poet of the blacksmiths,  
of the brass-workers, of the carpenters, of the day labourers,  
I am the poet of the low.

This was a new note in Bengali poetry. Mitra was a dreamer with a robust romanticism.

*Uttar meru more dāke bhāi, dakshin meru tāne  
Jhatikār megh more katāksha hāne*

The North pole calls me, O brother, the south pole attracts  
The storm-cloud makes eyes at me.

He combined the modern realistic mood with an elusive lyrical wistfulness, a genuine artist of vision.

*Ekta mukh ek nimeshe akul strote bhāsāi  
Kar se mukh, kar?  
Jāne ki tārā-chhitono andhakar !*

A face in a moment floats me on the shoreless waves  
Whose face is that?  
Does the star-sprinkled darkness know!

Buddhadeva Bose (b. 1908, Dacca) is one of the leading poets of today who writes prose and poetry with equal facility and distinction. He established his reputation as a poet in early youth. He edited *Kabita*, a poetry quarterly, for more than twenty-five years. He was at first ridiculed by the official critics for his views on sex and society (at that time he was a pronounced Freudian), but has now been accepted by both traditionalists and experimentalists.

After Jibanananda, Buddhadeva with his joyous consciousness of the gift of poesy is perhaps the most popular of the moderns with a touch of Baudelaire and Day Lewis about him.

Love is his constant theme. Nearer to Rabindranath than most of his contemporaries, his work is sensuous and close to the earth, and is full of lyrical beauty. He is a tireless singer of life and love:

*āhā, sundar e-prithibi e-jiban,  
Binā mulyei amulyatama dān*

... ..

*Kata bhāgya ye benche āchhi, benche āchhi.*

Oh, how beautiful is this earth, this life,  
A priceless boon without any price.  
How lucky am I that I live, I live.

Buddhadeva's is a life dedicated to the cause of poetry which is him another name for Life, his second self:

*Nārire, bānīre ek mane hai.*

Woman and poetry seem to be one.

Sudhindranath Datta (1901-1960, b. Calcutta) was a rare personality in modern Bengali poetry. Known mainly as a poet, he was also a perceptive critic and one of the few Bengali poets who have consciously used scholarship as an ingredient of poetry. Widely read in modern European literature, he was aware of what is to be learnt from Donne, Eliot and the French Symbolists. 'Goethe. Hoelderlin, Rilke, the novels of Thomas Mann'—so runs one of the most evocative lines in Sudhindranath:

Goethe, Hoelderlin, Rilke, Thomas Mann-er upanyas

Sudhindranath was a born romantic who wielded a classical diction. Readers often find him obscure, but this charge seems untenable. Difficult he may be but never obscure. His habit of coining new words and introducing erudite Sanskrit terms, partly explains this. In that case a good dictionary may help a reader cross the barrier.

He was with Mallarme who had said, poetry is made with words and not with ideas. The significance of the medium, of the vocabulary used, has not been so emphatically stated by any one before him. His poetry, Sudhindranath claimed, is to be considered as experiments in the use of 'words'. He made significant conscious efforts to narrow down the barrier between prose and poetry.

His poetry is recognized immediately for its powerful diction and has been compared to that of T. S. Eliot for its intellectual and muscular quality. He was one of the first of our moderns who discovered darkness all over the world. His lines often contain words and phrases like 'nikhil nasti' ('Universal nothingness'), 'haito ishwar nai, ('perhaps there is no God'), 'nikhil sarbanash' ('Universal

doom'), 'anatmiya ama' ('Strange darkness') and so on. Man for him was lonely and helpless in a hostile world,

*birup bishwe mānush niyata ekāki*

Sudhindranath probed into the profound darkness of the human soul, his soul, and set out on the most difficult of all journeys, the journey in search of oneself:

*āpanāre aharaha khunji.  
kintu yār sparsha pāi, niguda bishrambhālāp bujhi,  
anwishta se nay.*

... ..

*Se-anām chirasattā khunji āmi nijer atale.*

For my real self I search continually. But  
what I find, touch in close intimacy,  
Is not what I seek.

I search for the nameless, eternal substance deep in my being.  
His is an inner voyage into the depths of his being.

Equally widely read is Bishnu Dey (b. 1909, Calcutta); one of the first Bengali poets to be imbued with the consciousness of being modern, but his later work shows a yearning for tradition and the grassroots.

A poet of rare distinction, he also ranks high in literary and art criticism. Starting as a symbolist, he won wide recognition for the musical quality of his poetry and his ability to produce effects with the minimum of words, a symbolist virtue. His first book of poems, *Urbashi O Artemis* (1933) was prefaced with quotations from T. S. Eliot's *The Sacred Wood*. His attachment to Eliot is recognizable in the fact that he has translated quite a number of Eliot's poems into Bengali and published them in a book, *Elioter Kabita* (1953). His early works show traces of Eliot's influence. It is also noteworthy that Bishnu Dey prefaced a later book of his, *Baise June* (1942) with quotations from Lenin, showing a marked diversion from Eliot's path. 'Calcutta's Jatayu wings reach Soviet lands', he writes. That he should have embraced the communist ideology after fifteen years of writing suggests a deep inner conversion.

Though his poetry is wedded to politics, Bishnu Dey is not a political poet. His poetry is closer to life than being merely political. He has transformed political events into haunting surrealist verse. He is an artist in life, representing the afflicted conscience of the times. Thus runs a few of his lines:

*andhakāre ār rekho nā bhay,  
āmār hāte dhāko tomār mukh,  
du-chokhe diye dāo dukkha sukh,  
du-bāhu ghire gado tomār joy,  
āmār tāle gāntho tomār lay.*

Fear no more the darkness.  
Cover your face with my hands,  
Pass on your grief and joy to my eyes,  
Build your triumph within our arms,  
Weave your melody on my rhythm.

Bishnu Dey is a prolific poet. *Sanbād Mulatah Kābya*, a collection of eighty-nine poems, dedicated to the poets of East Bengal, was published in July, 1969 on the occasion of the poet's sixtieth birth anniversary. And his latest work, *Itihāse Tragic Ullāse* is awaiting an early publication.

Amiya Chakravarty (b. 1901), an associate of Rabindranath and Gandhi, is pre-eminently a poet who seeks to reflect the new experiences which modern civilization has brought to the traditional culture of Bengal. The lines that strike the keynote of the character of his poetic mission. speak of co-existence of opposing things—of stormy winds on the one hand, and broken doors of deserted houses on the other:

*Melāben tini jhodo hāoyā ār  
podo bādītār  
ai bhānga darjātā  
melāben.*

Chakravarty is a far traveller, the opposite of a tourist, for he is at home and is discovering his home through travel. To him cosmopolitanism is but a religion that has widened his outlook. He resembles Rabindranath in his multiplicity of interests, and passion for travel, but whereas Rabindranath had seldom used a locale outside Bengal, Amiya Chakravarty often brings the whiff of far horizons into the closed life of Bengali poetry. He is a cosmopolitan poet with roots deep into the soil of Bengal:

*madhya mārkinē āchhi mississippi pāre, chalechhi ye ghadi hāte  
tiktik āyu tār āne chhinna etā-otā; khunji nihsamay  
kono ghatanār chhabi bānglā bhāshāy gānthā-chirakshana yate  
shādā bak, byasta train, buke dhare ei sakāler parichay.*

At present I am by the Mississippi, somewhere in America.  
The watch on my wrist ticks memories' scraps.

I seek some timeless flashes to capture in Bengali  
For ever this stork, this train, this morning's face.

His love for his homeland remains ever strong and eloquent. He writes:

*āpan janke bhālobāsā  
bānglār smritidima bādi-ferār āshā*

My love for my own dear ones;  
And my hope, shot through with memories, to go back to Bengal.

In his poems Chakravarty often speaks of his antarjatic mon ('international mind'), 'sara bhubaner bhramaner mon niya' ('with an all-the-world-travelling mind'), apan bhashar kanther may ay ('the bliss of speaking my own tongue'), etc. His lyrics are delicate and strong; in them dream and reality interfuse:

*kendeo pābe nā tāke barshār ajasra jaladhāre.  
fālgun bikele brishti nāme.*

Though you weep you will not find her  
In the teeming streams of rain.  
It is raining this spring afternoon.

Always trying out new techniques, often daringly original, though sometimes reminiscent of Hopkins and sometimes of Cummings, he endeavours to concentrate his poetry and bring into it new words, yet at the same time bring it nearer to common speech. His distinctive use of free-verse has influenced later poets.

Ajit Datta (b. 1907, Dacca), a friend of the group but a little different in temperament, writes with power on youth, love and nature. He is one of the pioneers of modernism in Bengali poetry and co-edited *Pragati* (1927) from Dacca with Buddhadeva Bose. A sonneteer of no mean power, he has to his credit a rich store of sonnets, a sequence of love lyrics.

His poems have a rich sensuous quality and are noted for their lyrical grace and music. He has an eternal question that haunts him:

*tabu jāni prāner se charam jijñāsā  
ājo kare uttarer āshā  
ākāshe bātāshe chānde, kakhano bā mānusher ghare  
pākhir āoyāje ār pranayer mridu kanthasware.  
hay to jibane kinbā jibanero bado kalpanāy  
Se-muhūrta āchhe yena, āchhe pratikshāy.*

This final questioning of my heart  
Is still awaiting a final answer

In the sky, in the wind and on the moon.  
 Sometimes in; the homes of men  
 In the songs of birds  
 And the gentle murmur of love,  
 Perhaps in life or beyond life  
 That moment waits for me expectantly.

Ajit Datta does not sacrifice the heart to the head, nor does he derive inspiration from any of the westerners. He stands apart and is happy in the vision of his own poetic world.

Sanjoy Bhattacharya (1909-1969, b. Comilla) started as a lyric poet but soon took to writing stories and novels with deep social purpose. But he remained essentially a poet of great abilities. Even his early poems won him the admiration of Rabindranath and Sudhindranath. He was intimately connected with and played a hero's role in what is known as movement in poetry. He founded and edited *Purbasā* (1932), a literary monthly, till his last days. He also co-edited *Nirukta* (1940-1943), a quarterly journal of poetry with Premendra Mitra. He published his first volume of verse, *Sagar* in 1935. Poet, editor, friendly critic of contemporary poets and preceptor of younger ones, Sanjoy Bhattacharya dominated for quite some years the literary scene of Bengal.

He sought to blend reason and imagination with feeling: a union of the heart and the head. A lyrist and a metrician, he drew on experience and memory. Listen to his lines

*rātrike konodin mane hoto samudrer mato;*  
*āj sei rātrri nei.*  
*hayto ekhano kāro bridayer kāchhe āchhe se-rātrrir māne;*  
*āmār se-mon nei*  
*ye-mon samudra hote jāne.*

Night sometimes appeared like the sea;  
 Today, that night is no more.  
 May be, that night still has a meaning to some heart;  
 I do not have that heart  
 A heart that can become a sea.

Sanjoy Bhattacharya experimented with prose-poem as a distinct poetic vehicle, thereby carrying on Rabindranath's bold venture in this virgin field. His historical sense deserves a special mention. He consciously used scholarship as an ingredient of poetry. *Urbar Urbashi* (1965), an epic built on the Indian fertility cult was his swan-song.

Among other poets with communist sympathies Samar Sen (b.



1916, Calcutta) deserves attention. He published his first book of poems, *Kayekti Kabitā* in 1936, and was a brilliant writer of 'prose poems'. His handling of the prose-poem and his Marxist learnings have influenced other poets, but he ceased writing poetry when still young and full of promise. He is the only Bengali poet who has written only prose poems and no verse at all.

Samar Sen, a city-dweller, is a poet of city life with all its filth and squalor, its unrest and weariness. He has heard the 'foot-falls of a debauchee on the kalighat bridge' and other ills of life. But I do suspect an incurably romantic disposition behind all these. Just listen to him:

*anek, anek dure āchhe megha-madir mahuyār desh,  
samasta kshan sekhāne pather du-dhāre chhāya phele  
devadārur dirgha rahasya,  
ār dur samudrer dirgha shwās  
rātrrer nirjan nihsanga tāke ālokita kare.  
āmār klāntir upare jharuk mahuya-phul,  
nāmuk mahyuār gandha.*

Far, far away from here is the land of Mohuas. There all the time the stately Devadarus shed their mysteries on the roads. The breath of the distant sea stirs the quiet loneliness of the nights. Let the Mohua flowers fall on my tired limbs, let their smell cover me.

## V

These stalwarts of modern Bengali poetry were followed by a company of young poets in the forties who, too, like their immediate predecessors, showed their affiliation not so much with Rabindranath as with the contemporary British and continental poets. The poets of the forties share the egotism and anger of their counterparts in the West; the Marxist leaning of the 'New Signature' poets. With the opening of this decade poets like Subhas Mukhopadhyay, Arun Mitra, Monindra Ray, Birendra Chattopadhyay came quickly into notice, to be soon followed by Arun Kumar Sarkar, Naresh Guha, Nirendranath Chakravarty, Arun Bhattacharya, Ram Basu and Sukanta Bhattacharya.

The forties of the present century have been the cruellest period in the history of Bengal within living memory. War came uninvited in 1939, Rabindranath died in 1941. The passing away of Ravindranath brought an age to an end and weakened the intellectual and literary life. In 1943 a cruel famine with its economic oppression upset the country, and finally, Hindu-Muslim communalism and riots



precipitated the partition of Bengal in 1947, though in that very year India won her political freedom.

The attention of the new generation of poets was turned to leftist writing. Politics played havoc with the poetry of the time. There were, however, a few happy exceptions. The poets of the forties tried to reduce the gap between poetry and the people. But it has been common experience that despite their efforts to improve the quality of verse and bring it nearer to common speech and the actual experience of the middle class, the gap between the two remains as unbridgeable as ever. These poets with a few major exceptions may appear colourless and even anaemic when compared with their immediate predecessors, but they steal a march on some of them at least in being rich in suggestion and free from prolixity. Most of them are experts in the art of suggestion and oblique reference.

Subhas Mukhopadhyay (b. 1919, Krishnanagar) is a powerful poet. With strong Communist sympathies he is a people's poet. Though at times a little loud, he has squarely faced the challenge of his decade and felt the pulse of the masses. 'Comrade, aj naba yug anbe na?—this is a question that he asks. 'Comrade, will you not bring the new world today? The times are hard, vary-hard, he knows:

*'Priya, phul khelbār din nay adya  
dhwanser mukhomukhi āmrā'*

No time to play with flowers  
My dear, we face destruction.

Subhas poetry is related to life and reflects his times. The manifestoes and the processions and the red flags are a preparation for a greater life. Poetry has become in his hands a mighty weapon. As a poetic craftsman, he has explored the possibilities of Bengali metre. His handling of the prose-poems is equally admirable.

Sometimes Subhas uses startling images like 'pagal Babaralir chokher mato Akash' (the sky like the eyes of the lunatic Babarali): this goes back to Jibanananda. Spring has been a recurring theme in his writings since the days of *Padatik* ('The Foot Soldier'), his first book of poems. He has made a symbol of it. *Phut Phutuk* ('Let the Flowers Bloom') has a significant opening line:

*'phul phutuk nā phutuk āj basanta'*

(Flowers, or no; it is spring today').

A progressive poet, Monindra Ray (b. 1919, Sitlai, Dt. Pabna) is unique in that he has been attempting longer poems in quite recent

times. The long poem is a different medium from the lyric or short piece, and produces statements of a different kind. He has by now published two long poems, *Mobini Ādāl* (555 lines) and *Ei Janma, Janma-bhumi* (559 lines). These poems show his affiliation with the age-old tradition ('ek/bahu hate chay, se to mamatāri guda jāgarane', 'one wants to be many, that is due to the awakening of mysterious love'), while reflecting the longings and sufferings of the wretched time. In this age of broken fragments, Monindra Ray's long poems are a phenomenon.

Birendra Chattopadhyay (b. 1920), with strong left sympathies, has produced a large crop of poetry, mainly shorter ones. He wields his art as a weapon. His recent works are bald, shorn of all artificial touches and tricks, but possess an inner grandeur all their own. He lays bare his heart before us.

Arun Kumar Sarkar (b. 1922, Krishnanagar) is noted for his metrical skill. Besides writing poetry, he often writes appreciation of his immediate predecessors and contemporaries. He is a poet of love:

*baite pāri nā āmi ei gurubhār  
eto prem kena dile etotuku prāne.*

I cannot bear this heavy weight  
Why did you give so much of love in such a small heart.

Elsewhere he says.

Beloved, your youth is like the hot wind of summer  
And I burn like a tree stripped of leaves.

Naresh Guha (b. 1924), like Arun Kumar Sarkar, represents the middle generation of the modern Bengali poets. His first volume of verse, *Duranta Dupur* was widely appreciated. He was hailed to be the most musical of the poets of the forties, but he could not live upto admiring expectations. Here is a couplet:

*se jānālā bandha hay, train yāy dure māth diye.  
udo udo shonā yāy tapati sener nāki biye !*

She shuts the window.  
In the distance a train passes.  
It is rumoured Tapati Sen  
Is soon to be married.

Nirendranath Chakravarty (b. 1924, Faridpur) is a poet of distinction with fine sensitiveness to words and moods. He, too, has exploited the possibilities of Bengali metre to the full. He is a

journalist, and his profession looms large in his recent works. I do not think it is doing any disservice to poetry. On the contrary, it is opening up a new window. His latest book of poems, *Kalkātār Yishu* will bear out my contention. He is the most living of our contemporary poets in the sense that he finds poetry strewn all around. He grows with the time. The artist, as Pound has said, is the antennae of the race.

What Virendranath fails to do in life, he says in one of his recent poems, gives a new meaning and purpose to his poetry: an instrument of both discovery and expression that exists. Let me quote his lines:

*athacha nishchita jāni, rakto o mānser sei murtike yadi nā  
hāte pāi, tabe tāke shabder bhitare  
samuha photāte habe, nā-photāle e janme āmār  
paritrān nei.*

Yet I know it for certain  
If I do not get that being in flesh and blood  
I'll have to bloom it all in words  
There's no escape in this birth if I don't.

Sukanta Bhattacharya (1927-1947), a poet of much originality and promise, died at the age of twenty in 1947. His early work is pervaded by a wistful melancholy. But his mood changed and a new direction was given to his writing by Subhas Mukhopadhyay, under whose influence he came in 1940. Gradually, he acquired a social conscience and a passionate hope, throwing himself with all the fervour of his young soul into communist ideology and activity. He had an instinctive feeling for words and metre. His was a life, declared he, dedicated to the cause of the new-born,

*e-bishwake e-shishur bāsyogyā kore yābo āmi—*

Before I leave I'll make this world habitable for this baby.

## VI

We now stand face to face with the poets of the fifties and the sixties. Bengali poetry of the last twenty years is considerably more varied and alive than is generally realized or admitted. In spite of the myth about the difficulty of getting verse published, more of it has been printed than in any other two decades of Bengali literature: and one result of the large crop of published volumes of verse has been to make it difficult to see the trees for the wood.

The poetry of the fifties is a rich crop showing both variety and

experiment. It represents largely the contemporary dilemma, the malaise of modern times. They are undoubtedly poets of power; but it is difficult and perhaps premature to express any opinion as to their position in the days to come. In art, there can be no finality in judgement and least of all in respect of contemporary writing.

Some of these poets are incorrigibly egotistic; in fact, their egotism—the chief thing about them—has the power to fascinate. The poetry of the fifties by now represents the voices of maturity in the works of Shankha Ghosh, Alokeranjan Dasgupta, Shakti Chattopadhyay, Sunil Gangopadhyay, Binay Mazumdar, Pranabendu Dasgupta and Kabita Sinha. Other names that may be mentioned are Alok Sarker, Sarat Kumar Mukhopadhyay, Tarun Sanyal, Amitava Das Gupta, Sudhendu Mullick, Debiprasad Bandyopadhyay, Shanti Lahiri, Susanta Basu and Monujesh Mitra.

Coming to the sixties we find a surprising and steady rise in the number of young practitioners of verse. But it is too early to attempt an estimate of the writings of this decade. Most of the poets are very young. They are yet to take shape. Suffice it is to say for the present that the writing done in the sixties is as extensive as it is varied in quality and form. In taste and direction it differs widely. The present poetry represents the voice of youth.

Some of the young poets—of them Ratneswar Hazra, Ganesh Basu, Ashis Sanyal, Samsul Huq, Malay Shankar Dasgupta, Tushar Ray, Bijoya Mukhopadhyay, Pabitra Mukhopadhyay, Pratyush Prasun Ghosh and Nishinath Sen may be singled out—seem, however, to be quite earnest about their vocation and are likely to shape well.

All judgement of recent literature is exceptionally perilous until the years have receded sufficiently for a true perspective to appear. It is not easy at this stage to discern either outstanding new poets or new techniques, though one feels that there are few genuine poets compared with many who have talent. But one gets bewildered when some poets talk a lot about 'sashastra ādhunikatā' (armed modernity). They seem to blissfully forget that poetry is an art; it is neither an industry nor an infantry; and that craftsmanship is not all. It is the content of poems that counts rather than the structure. Happily, there are some poets who share the hope of a poetry restored to the fullness of life, renewed in spirit, and disciplined again in expression. Thus poetry moves on triumphantly.

In conclusion, the river again. In spite of its meandering movement, it remains the same river, a continuous course which like

life knows no break. Only a big map can bring home to us the unity in a river's homeward journey. And poetry, as Robert Lynd once said, is essentially a home-coming. 'Sab pākhi ghare āse sab nadi', wrote Jibanananda, 'Birds return to their nests—all the rivers flow home'.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## POSTSCRIPT: PROBLEMS OF A POET TODAY

The two problems that confront a Bengali poet of today, for that matter any Indian poet, are those of identity and communication.

The world of poetry in Bengal is sharply divided into several exclusive groups, each with its own peculiar affiliations and commitments.

The poets of today labour under the haze of Jibanananda's influence. The liberation of contemporary poetry, I am afraid, does not lie that way. The problem is, therefore, one of identity. An artist must make his own voice unmistakably heard; otherwise, he will be lost in the wilderness, defeat-ing thereby the very purpose he stands for. The same thing befell our poets of the thirties. They, however, steered clear of the magic of Rabindranath's influence and succeeded in discovering for themselves a poetic world of their

own, each significantly different from the others, thus presenting a picture of unity in the midst of diversity, an orchestra of sharply distinguished notes. This has a lesson for us. To be, or not to be: that, too, is our question. A poet must search his identity both in his theme and in his language or form in its widest sense. He has to do it every moment of his existence. A Bengali poet today is, in fact, searching his theme as well as a new structure.

The problem of communication is related to that of identity. There is no denying the fact that poets have no reading public. The matter of fact world cares little for poetry. A poet talks of his problems, of reality as he sees it, but he expresses himself in an idiom which is often essentially personal and that makes communication difficult.

A poet has to decide how much he can accept of the tradition and how much he should reject. A total acceptance of the existing poetic tradition would mean a complete merger of his identity, and a total rejection would make communication even more difficult. Therefore, I, as a poet who am concerned with both identity and communication, accept tradition only to overcome it.

One word more. Modern poetry has often been denounced as difficult, obscure, unpoetic nonsense, cut from the root, etc. I think all these charges are untrue and they have come, I am afraid, from unsympathetic critics who do not care to understand the problems of a modern poet. A poet writes simply because he cannot help writing. The quantity of poetry that is being produced in Bengal today is fantastically large—and that in itself is a clear indication of an immense vitality, if not of anything else. Today Bengal is passing through a series of political and social crises, and that makes the task of a poet both momentous and challenging. But I do not think that crisis poses any danger to poetry because good poetry can be written and, in fact, is being written in crisis-ridden Bengal.

*Section D: Literature and Ideas*

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ABU SAYEED AYYUB

## Religion and Literature



I HAVE chosen as the caption of my paper the caption of a well-known essay by T. S. Eliot for reasons which will become obvious in course of the paper.

In his opening paragraph Eliot says the “greatness” of literature cannot be determined solely by literary standards, though we must remember that whether it is literature or not can be determined only by literary standards.’ This might but does not refer to a dichotomy in the two views of art coming down to us from antiquity, viz (1) in art object is a fabrication or a structure in a certain material that the stone, colour or sound—valued in and for itself (2) that it is an imitation or reproduction of some natural or supernatural object. the former view leads to the recognition supernatural object. The former view leads to the recognition of what is called abstract art as the highest kind of art; and the latter to what had best been described as art as a revelatory theory of art.

We have today a widely accepted genre of painting and sculpture known as abstract or non-representational art: and music (apart from sculpture song) is by its nature non-representational. it has been maintained by some that abstract art is a creation of the unconscious mind, the unconscious part of our mind being supposed (rather gratuitously I maintain) to be *en rapport* with some mysterious realm of transcendental beauty or perfection. This would make abstract art too revelatory, though revelatory of the supernatural rather than

of the the natural world. This kind of abstract art is better known as surrealist art. There is some distinction between the two, but for the moment we are not concerned with that. The point to note is that both are largely non-representational in a familiar sense of the term.

Here I want to draw attention to a purer form of abstract art which I might define in the words of Herbert Read as: "the disposition on a plane surface, of lines and colours in aesthetically pleasing patterns. Logically no further definition is necessary. The pattern may have some more or less remote relation to objects but such a relationship is not necessary. The painting, like an Eastern carpet, is a decorative design in a rectangular frame. As such it is completely justified as decorative art".<sup>2</sup> In painting and sculpture this kind of art certainly has a place and value—how high need not be discussed in this paper. Amazingly, an attempt has been made in recent times to develop a kind of poetry which I can only describe as abstract or decorative poetry. The attempt began with Mallarme whose metaphysical nihilism naturally led him to view poetry as the only reality and value which man could care for. Poetry is not to be regarded as a vehicle, for what could it be a vehicle of? Pure poetry, purified of everything that is not poetry, is at once our ultimate quest and final despair. Valery pursued the chimera of pure or absolute poetry, though in theory he spoke of poetry as an organit structure in which form and content, sound and sense attained equality of power and value, and where the reader's attention swung from one to the other like a pendulum.<sup>3</sup> The movement towards abstract poetry has been carried to bewildering lengths by some contemporary poets in the U.S.A. and France. Herbert Read himself published some bizarre specimens in *Encounter* in March, 1959.

The theory of this movement has been advanced by Jean Paul Sartre in his book *What is Literature*. I quote a passage to show the drift of his ideas: 'Poets are men who refuse to utilize language. . . . Nor do they dream of naming the world, and this being the case, they name nothing at all, for naming implies a perpetual sacrifice of the name to the object named. . . . The poet considers words as things and not as signs. For the ambiguity of the sign implies that one can lienetrate it at will like a plane of glass and pursue the thing signified, or turn one's gaze towards its reality and consider it as an object. The man who talks is beyond words and near the object, whereas the poet is on this side of them.'<sup>4</sup>

If a poem were only an artefact of words made with consummate

skill—an artefact whose visual or sonal beauty were of primary and meaning—if it has a coherent meaning at all—of secondary importance, purely literary standards of criticism confined to craftsmanship would obviously suffice. Eliot, by rejecting the sufficiency of this kind of purely inside criticism, has definitely committed himself to the view that in the criticism of poetry (and *eo ipso* of other genres of literature) the worth of its import is at least as important as its technical excellence. Now the meaning of the words of a poem carries us over to the other side of the words, in the first instance to the facts and situations of the world. But poetry (and I use ‘poetry’ here to cover all varieties of works of creative writing) is neither reportage, nor history, nor science. What then is there in the poetic significance of the words of a poem, apart from their prose significance, the estimation of whose value supplies us with the other standard of criticism which is necessary to complete purely literary criticism?

A favourite reply in the nineteenth century would have been: the emotions of the poet. The excellence of the poem—over and above its purely decorative beauty as a sonal or pictorial organization—is judged by its instrumental potency as a medium through which the poet can express his emotions. The question immediately arises: Can we separate the emotion from the total experience in which the emotion resides as a sort of toning or tinting of the experience? It is good to remember that generally speaking our experiences are complex states of mind which psychologists analyse into three types of constituents—cognitive, emotive and volitional. It is hardly possible to have a thought or feeling or volition in its pure state, unmixed with the other types of mental states—in the normal course of our lives.

But artistic experience is not normal experience; it is an artificial kind of experience produced in the listener’s, spectator’s or reader’s mind through certain highly skilled technical devices for a definite purpose. This experience may well exhibit a certain purity or sublimation which we do not find in experience outside art, for one thing and that is a very important thing, experience produced by all art, irrespective of its genre, is almost wholly non-volitional. Our tendency to act in the face of a situation (either by way of changing the situation or running away from it) is held in abeyance. We do not feel any urge to inform Othello of Iago’s wily plot for his overthrow, or to rescue Desdemona from strangulation—as we would if the drama were being enacted in real life instead of on the stage. This is

what we mean by saying that even when we are watching the terrible tragedy of King Lear, our experience is tranquil. The expression 'enjoyment of tragedy' is only apparently contradictory.

All art purifies experience of its volitional or active tendencies. Some kinds of art may also purify experience largely of its cognitive constituents. I am referring in particular to music. But the point is controversial. Some musical experts hold the view that musical experience is essentially and primarily cognitive in character. Unlike speech sounds, musical sounds play no symbolic role. When we are listening to a piece of music, we are not concerned at all with the rest of the world; we must have our whole attention fixed on the timbre and pitch of the sonal elements, and above all on the wonderfully complex structure in which they are arranged. These experts insist on the listener not allowing his mind to be encumbered by any kind of emotion, except, of course, the purely aesthetic joy of apprehending the unique form of composition in which the musical sounds have been arranged.

Others maintain that the enjoyment of the structural form is not all that we get from music. Through the structure of musical notes, the composer expresses a certain structure of his emotions. This emotional structure may be said to expound a particular mood. But the point to note is that the mood is objectless. The musical composition makes us feel in a certain way, and that is the end of the matter. If we feel sad, we do not know what we are sad about; if we feel worshipful or prayerful, we do not know to what our worship or prayer is directed—to a woman, to Nature, or to a transcendent being beyond Nature. The best thing to say is that we taste the twang or feel of a certain emotional pattern, and we enjoy this unusually subjective and literally self-sufficient experience.

But when we come to poetry, things are changed. Unlike music, poetry, by the very fact that it is compelled to make use of meaningful words or sounds symbolizing concrete or abstract objects, is incapable of expressing emotions in their purity, that is, objectless emotions. What poetry is best suited to express is a thought together with the emotional field which surrounds it. The implied metaphor, I need hardly point out, refers to the magnetic field of force around a magnet, or to the gravitational field of force around a mass of matter. The volitional constituents are held in abeyance as in all art; but otherwise the experience conveyed is fuller. It consists of both cognitive and emotive elements. Furthermore, we are thinking and feeling *about something*, about an object or objective situation.

And the emotionally charged thought is expressed indirectly, by describing the objective situation not as a journalist or historian would describe it, but with a highly specialized and rather elliptical technique that is peculiar to poetry.

The object or objective situation that is described in a poem is of course circumscribed; it is the object of a particular experience—not a transitory experience, however, but an experience that is built up in the course of months or possibly years of cogitation and emotional crystallization. Nonetheless, the circumscription is incomplete—sometimes deliberately incomplete, sometimes in spite of the poet. What I mean to say is that the thoughts and the emotions of the poet spill over the circumscribed object that he is referring to in his poem. The rainbow that made Wordsworth's heart leap up with joy and made him wish that he may die the day it did not, was not just one rainbow in an autumn sky. It was representative of all the sights and sounds of Nature, and also of what cannot be seen or heard.

Let me quote a critic and a poet in support of my rather large and vague contention. Says A. C. Bradley: "About the best poetry and not only the best, there floats an atmosphere of infinite suggestion. The poet speaks to us of one thing, but in this one thing there seems to lurk the secret of all. He said what he meant, but his meaning seems to beckon away beyond itself, or rather to expand into something boundless which is only focussed in it." And this is from Tagore, translated from the original Bengali by myself: "When we experience anything aesthetically, we do not experience only that object. A sweet song confers dignity on land, sea and sky, on the whole of existence. Great poets have taken upon themselves the task of proclaiming the glory of all that exists."<sup>6</sup>

A contemplative experience in which thought and emotion are harmoniously blended, may also be called an attitude of mind if it is a durable experience. I am not, I believe, far wrong in assuming that in the best poetry we have the expression not of floating and fleeting emotions, but of painstakingly and sometimes painfully built up attitudes of the poet. And if the attitude embraces the entire universe, as A. C. Bradley and Tagore have piquantly expressed it, then the German word *weltanschauung* seems to be the more suitable word for it. Between *weltanschauung* and religion remains only one little step. That step becomes a vanishing line if we agree to use the word 'religion' to cover what is left after dogma, ritual and institutional loyalties have been taken out of its normal connotation. To convey this central and essential core of religion, we may qualify the word

by using the adjective 'personal', and call it the personal religion of the poet. My contention therefore is firstly, that the work of the best poets express—by suggestion rather than by direct statement—the personal religion of the poet, as distinguished from any institutional religion into which he was born and to which he may or may not adhere in latter life. Secondly, that purely literary criticism must be completed by a critical estimation of the personal religion of the writer as expressed in his literary work. Criticism is naturally not directly concerned with religious beliefs and attitudes which have not found expression in literature.

I call it religion rather than myth, as some, probably Yeats, would have it, because I hold that the question of belief is very materially involved here. Pseudo-beliefs or make-believe will not do. I. A. Richards was very right when he said: "Sometimes art is bad because communication is defective; 'sometimes because experience communicated is worthless; sometimes for both reasons'.<sup>7</sup> An enquiry into the source of value in the experience communicated by poetry bring in the philosophy of value. Richards is in agreement with Eliot on the point that literary criticism by itself is not enough. But whereas Eliot wants to supplement it with theological criticism, Richards would supplement it with axiological criticism.

The business of literary criticism proper is the examination of the success or failure of communication; the question of the worth of what is communicated is outside its province. But that is certainly a very relevant and important constituent of the standard by which we judge the total worth of a poem. A trivial experience perfectly communicated makes beautiful poetry but not great poetry.

My point is that it is the spiritual *Weltanschauung* of the poet, which I have equated with his personal religion, which gives worth and dignity to his poetry—to his poetry as a whole. I maintain that single lyrical pieces cannot properly be estimated in their isolation except for their craftsmanship. For complete literary estimation, they should be regarded as constituting in their ensemble a larger integral work. Yeats was often arranging and rearranging his lyrics with a view to such integration.

But to come back to Richards. Strangely enough, Richards holds that a spiritual *Weltanschauung* is necessary for poetry, but necessary only as a myth. It need not be believed in, simply because it cannot be believed in. What can be believed, in other words what goes under the dignified name of knowledge, is only what is vouchsafed by modern science. The rest is mere fancy or myth, or what Richards derogatively



describes as “the magical view of the world”. Unfortunately, the world-view guaranteed by science is so dismal and dry, so totally incapable of stirring our deepest emotions, that poets have to take recourse to the magical view, which used to serve art and literature well before the advent of modern science. However, according to Richards, it can still serve the emotional needs of modern man; but since the spiritual view of the world can no longer be believed in, it enters modern poetry and art only as a pseudo-belief.

But this is to ask for the impossible. If we ‘ordered our attitudes to the world’, in other words, reconciled ourselves to the horrors of existence, by a deep-rooted belief in a spiritual realm half-revealed and half-concealed by this world, then it is futile to expect that these supremely delicate emotional adjustments can be equally brought about by one half of our minds genuinely believing in the finality of the diametrically opposed scientific view of the world, and the other half only pseudo-believing in the spiritual view, conscious all the time of the fatuousness of that view. If we treat all poetry as purveying fairy tales retained from the childhood of mankind, then we cannot assign to it a task which is of the utmost seriousness for modern mature minds. Even an illusion or error, if whole-heartedly believed in, can serve us well psychologically; but a proposition known to be false yet whimsically entertained or propped up for a while by a *tour de force*, can do nothing of any significance to our emotions and attitudes. Still less can it do what Richards expects all good poetry to do—leave a durable and possibly a permanent effect on our minds.

Many statements—the majority of statements—in poetry have an obvious external reference. The truth of poetry does not mean the truth of all or any of these statements. Richards ridicules those readers who say ‘How True’ at intervals while reading Shakespeare. The ridicule is uncalled for. No mature reader stops at individual incidents or separate statements in a work of literature to claim truth for them. Such a remark can be meaningfully made only about the work as a whole. But even this final or basic belief embodied in the work as a whole is acceptable to Richards only as a pseudo-belief. Its truth-claim is unwarranted. It may be entertained as a psychological device for emotional adjustment, but is unworthy of any warmer reception.

Richards’s arguments in support of his view are negative. First of all, there is a challenge. Read a creative work and then state as a set of propositions what is the belief it leaves in your mind; having

stated that, lay down the method by which these propositions are to be verified. Richards seems to be on firm ground here, for indeed the challenge cannot be met. It is difficult to state clearly, still less in propositional form, the content of the belief, or rather, believing attitude, finally left in our minds by a work of literature, and it is even more difficult to indicate any method for its verification. But this only proves that the beliefs of poetry are not analogous to the beliefs of science; that there is a difference of category between the truth of poetry and the truth of science. But what if truth, like the house of my Master, has many mansions?

As to the method by which the belief embedded in a work of art can be verified, it must be acknowledged that it cannot be validated by anything outside the work. But from the inside it must feel like a revelation, not like a fancy entertained for a moment, or like a pseudo-belief. It must also feel as being in conformity with our experience of the world. A great work of art brings a profound change in our lives. It need not make us more satisfied, nor more moral; but it makes us more serenely even if more sadly contemplative, and makes us contemplate man and Nature in a slightly different light than we did before. It makes us different by making the world feel different. That is the test it has to pass. If it passes, then it is true for us; not otherwise. In the language of philosophy, we may say that the validity of art is intrinsic.

I conclude then that the best poetry is religious in the truest sense of the word, which for me is the personal sense. It need not be pious or devotional poetry. Indeed, devotional poetry, apart from Tagore's songs of the Gitanjali period, leaves me rather cold. The best poet is not necessarily concerned with religious subjects, but treats the whole subject matter of his poetry in a religious or cosmic spirit. Unfortunately, in the case of Eliot the religious spirit is identical with the Christian, and that not in the broadest sense of 'Christian', but in what I cannot but regard as its narrow sectarian sense. In the sense in which Eliot speaks of Christian literature, that is, literature based on certain specific dogma and tradition, one may also speak of Hindu literature, Muslim literature, Buddhist literature and, what this great poet and critic loathes above all, secular literature. All this literature is anathema to Eliot and should be to his fellow Christian readers.

This is an unbelievably narrow position to take, and to escape the charge of distortion I must quote from that remarkable essay on "Religion and Literature", "What I believe to be incumbent upon all



Christians is the duty of consciously maintaining certain standards and criteria of criticism over and above those applied by the rest of the world; and that by these criteria and standards everything that we read must be judged. . . . What I do wish to affirm is that the whole of modern literature is corrupted by what I call secularism. . . . We must remember that the greater part of our current reading matter is written for us by people who have no belief in a supernatural order, though some of it may be written by people with individual notions of a supernatural order that is not ours. . . . So long as we are conscious of the gulf between ourselves and the greater part of contemporary literature, we are more or less protected from being harmed by it, and are in a position to extract from it what good it has to offer us.”<sup>8</sup> It is generous of Eliot to recognize that there is some virtue, however small, in contemporary literature other than his own. But what he wishes to emphasize is that literature not based on specifically Christian belief in the supernatural order is definitely harmful to believing Christian readers, and they have to be protected from its baneful influence. Another point to note is that they are only ‘more or less protected’ by a consciousness of the gulf; for full protection should they be altogether prevented from reading non-Christian literature? I wonder if Eliot *would* say that, but that is implied by what he has said.

We are familiar with religious bigotry amongst Hindus and Muslims, but to find such unashamed and outspoken bigotry in a modern Western Christian writer who happens to be one of the idols of the modern age, is amazing indeed. I refrain from offering any detailed criticism, and will content myself with some remarks on the relationship of what Eliot calls ‘the supernatural order’ to literature.

Is the supernatural literally *super* natural, that is altogether beyond or behind nature, hidden by, rather than revealed in, nature? Is nature only a Hiranmay Patra (as the Kathopanisad puts it) or only a dirty rag *fas* Baudelaire might have liked to put it) on the face of the Supreme; and has to be torn asunder and cast away before we can in any way realize the Supreme? Eliot’s pronouncements seem to suggest that he had some such notion of the supernatural. He speaks of a ‘supernatural order’ as distinct from the natural world-order, and says that ‘the whole of modern literature . . . is simply unaware of, simply cannot understand the meaning of, the *primacy* of the supernatural over the natural life; of something which I assume to be our primary concern’. What Eliot means by ‘supernatural’ is not very different from what some French poets and painters meant by

surreal—to gain an insight into which senses had to be disordered, and reason dislodged.

If so, how do we have any awareness of the supernatural at all? Prophets have claimed special revelations; mystics living in solitary huts or mountain caves, by withdrawing from and becoming completely oblivious of the natural order, are supposed to have developed a third eye which gave them a vision of the supernatural. But the poet is neither a prophet in direct communication with a transcendent deity, nor a saint versed in Yogic practices. He is only a man with unusually keen senses, with fine and complex emotions, and of course possessing a mastery over the subtle nuances of his linguistic medium. How then shall he get *en rapport* with the supernatural? The French surrealists supposed that this could be done through the medium of the unconscious. This was a gratuitous supposal. The unconscious is a hypothetical mental state postulated by psycho-analysts to account for and help cure certain mental diseases. There is nothing in psycho-analytical theory or other branches of scientific psychology to lend support to the view that the unconscious can perform any revelatory function. And the little that I have read of surrealistic poetry reveals to me no supersensible reality but only the mundane fact that many of these poets were more or less mentally deranged. But I may have a blind spot.

Any way, Eliot does not bring in the unconscious. Unfortunately, he brings in something equally suspicious. He takes recourse to dogma. For that is the only path which leads him to the supernatural. Poet and critic, and presumably reader, must share a common dogma if there is to be any fruitful criticism or genuine appreciation of poetry. The very second sentence of his essay on 'Religion and Literature' runs as follows: 'In so far as in any age there is common agreement on ethical and theological matters, so far can criticism be substantive'.<sup>9</sup> Indian disciples of Eliot may please note this. It takes away the ground from under their enthusiasm over Eliot's poetry, for they and Eliot do not agree on theological matters.

Jacques Maritain was a much sounder philosopher of poetry than T. S. Eliot. In contrast to Eliot, he sharply distinguishes poetical experience which is concerned with the multiplicity of the natural world from mystical experience which from the beginning, seeks to find its way to some unknown and unknowable ultra-mundane unity. The natural world, however, is felt by the poet to be reverberating with meaning which he only incompletely grasps. 'If he captures those more things which are in heaven and earth than are dreamt

of in our philosophy, he does not do so by knowing all this in the ordinary sense of the word to know, but by perceiving all this in the obscure recesses of his passion. . . . The poet knows himself only on the condition that things resound in him.<sup>10</sup> This is as beautifully put as it is true.

After these general remarks one is surprised to find Maritain putting forth a curious defence for the impenetrable obscurity of much modern poetry—a defence which is out of joint with his general philosophy of poetry. Maritain believed that ‘classical poetry’ (by which he means all poetry before Baudelaire) too had a transcendental meaning. According to him, the language of pre-Baudelairean poetry bore two distinct meanings. Firstly, the words of the poem through their usual semantic references signified a definite set of objects and situations belonging to the natural or human world: secondly the poem through ‘its inner music’ signified ‘a mysterious flash of reality which had been grasped without concept’. What is important to note is that Maritain holds not only that the two meanings are distinct, but that the first meaning constitutes a sort of obstacle to the second meaning, and insists that in classical poetry, if it is good poetry, the music of the words is ‘strong enough to overcome the obstacle created by the intermediary significance, the definite set of things’. Maritain’s point, following logically from this, is that modern poets (like Mallarmé) have decided to remove the obstacle, and therefore to eliminate the first meaning (which is what we normally understand by meaning):

Modern poetry has undertaken completely to set free the poetic sense. In the double signification of the poem, it endeavours to extenuate, if possible to abolish the intermediary signification, this definite set of things whose presence is due to the sovereignty of the logical requirements of the social signs of language, and which is, as it were, a kind of wall of separation between the poetic intuition and the unconceptualizable flash of reality to which it points. The poem is intended to have not a double, but a single signification—only this flash of reality captured in things.<sup>11</sup>

It is not at all clear to me how Maritain came to believe that although the poet himself could not experience transcendence except in and through experiencing the objects of this world and by deciphering their mystery, he could nonetheless make transcendence available to his readers directly, dispensing with the intermediary which for the poet was indispensable. The “resonance of the things in his subjectivity”, which was so necessary for the *creative* intuition of the poet has suddenly become a disturbing clang which must

be silenced for the *appreciative* intuition of the reader. The flash of reality, the mystery of things, which the poet saw *in* the things, is to be revealed to the reader *apart* from the things. This spiritual leap is to be made possible by the inner music of the poem which is supposed to gain in power by not being encumbered with logical sense. But language (and therefore poetry) cannot survive the loss of logical sense any more than can the human body survive the loss of oxygen. By losing their normal sense the words of the poem do not acquire any transcendental sense; they simply lose their character and power as language.

The capturing of 'those more things which are in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our philosophy', the realisation that things reverberate with meaning beyond the meaning caught by commonsense or science, has been spoken of by Maritain as 'the poet's knowledge through emotion'; he maintains that there is 'a kind of knowledge that is immanent in and consubstantial with poetry'. What I have called the poet's personal religion is not very different from this 'knowledge through emotion'; and I agree with Maritain that this is one with the essence of poetry.

The question arises: In connection with Eliot's position that poetry must draw its sustenance from dogmatic and institutionalized religion, I have pointed out that this will create a gulf between, say, Christian poetry and Hindu or Muslim appreciation. Will not a similar difficulty arise in my position that all great poetry draws its sustenance from the personal religion or spiritual *Weltanschauung* of the poet? What would happen if the personal religion of the poet differed from the personal religion of the reader?

Personal religion is not a thing which we inherit as a finished product from our parents and which is further stereotyped by the community and institution into which we are born. It is for all of us and for the whole of our lives a 'religion in the making', to borrow a phrase from the caption of a book by Whitehead. Most of us are born to a traditional religion, to which we adhere in varying degrees in adult life, or to which we pay only lip service. Today, this religion hardly plays any role in the creation or appreciation of literature except through the supply of familiar myths; and in my opinion it is going to play a vanishingly thin role in the days to come. I hold with Sri Aurobindo that the religion which really matters is not the religion which we have accidentally inherited, but the religion which we have formed for ourselves through the emotional maturity acquired in the vicissitudes of life, in moral struggle and failure, in suffering

and despair, and in our occasional encounter with nothingness in situations in which we seemed to have lost everything which made life worth living. And yet something was gained. What was gained was religion through heartbreaking personal quest.

This is not a religion in which a whole community has reached an agreement through indoctrination and institutional discipline. It is a deeply personal involvement and is bound to differ from person to person. Will these differences matter in the appreciation of literature? Yes and no. They will matter if the reader finds the writer's religion as expressed in the bulk of his literary creation "immature and puerile". I use the words immature and puerile within quotes, since they are borrowed from Eliot's castigation of Shelley's poetry on the ground that the view of life expressed in it does not inspire respect or carry plausibility. I will again borrow Eliot's language to indicate the wide field where these differences will not matter: 'When the doctrine, theory, belief or view of life presented in a poem is one which the mind of the reader can accept as coherent, mature, and founded on the facts of experience, it interposes no obstacle to the reader's enjoyment whether it be one that he accept or deny, approve or deprecate'.<sup>12</sup> This is at variance with Eliot's bigotry as expressed in his 'Religion and Literature', but it is futile to look for consistency in his writings. I only demur at the use of the words 'deny' and 'deprecate' in the last line. For a total view of life (in my vocabulary, a 'personal religion') which we recognize to be endowed with such high qualities as Eliot mentions, viz., coherent, mature and founded on the facts of experience, cannot be deprecated by us; nor is it in any proper sense denied. We see its plausibility and respectability, even if we fail to identify ourselves with it wholly. What is needed for the full appreciation of literature is not complete identification with the writer, but a certain well-grounded esteem for the latter's Weltanschauung or religion. This esteem is a necessary part of our literary judgment; it completes appreciation from purely literary standards.

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K. A. FARUQI

## English Influence on Urdu Before 1857



### SOME PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS

THE story of the English impact on India and on Urdu in particular is one of the most fascinating chapters of history, which brought in a revolution in taste, and in literary creation. But unfortunately this story is overlaid with myths and misconceptions, which are not easy to dispel. It is, however, incorrect to think that the British influence in India grew like the proverbial mustard seed and quickly overshadowed the whole sub-continent. In fact, the impact on Urdu India had its infancy, and it passed through all the normal processes of resistance, rejection, return to earlier beliefs, renewal, selection, and acceptance. In other words, the story includes an ordered series of responses to a set of challenges.

Here an attempt is made to study the whole question against the historical background, the great dividing line being the Revolt of 1857. To map out the stages of this process, it is suggested that the earliest period of contact between English and Urdu was marked by sincere efforts at mutual understanding. Then followed a period of growing estrangement as the relationships of imperialism developed, leading to the open break of 1857. After a period of coolness over the next few years, a new adjustment and, in some cases a new synthesis,



was born, which still awaits fulfillment in the future.

It may be pointed out at the very outset that the entry of Western civilization into India should not be identified with the British conquest alone, however far-reaching its effect might have been. India had experienced many invasions before but they did not touch the hard core of her civilization. This time it was the overwhelming influence of the capitalist economic system, backed by industrial technology and a new system of education that transformed the structure of her society and served to free India from the grip of an obdurate traditionalism, at the same time making her the slave of foreign domination. If this point is clear, it will be easier to comprehend the ambivalence in Urdu, the two parallel trends of hate and love, rejection and acceptance.

The Battle of Plassey in 1757 laid the foundations of British rule in India and the fabulous revenues of Bengal passed into the hands of the East India Company. The accumulation in England of the wealth of plunder obtained from Bengal and the Karnatic became the basis of capitalist enterprise in England, to the extent that, to quote Brooke Adams, 'Had Watt lived fifty years earlier, he and his invention must have perished together, for lack of sufficient capital to set them working'. Marx and Adams both agree that the Industrial Revolution in England would not have been possible without the plunder that followed Plassey. The Indian people, particularly artisans and craftsmen, became desperately poor and miserable. In the words of Lord William Bentinck: 'Their misery hardly finds a parallel in the history of commerce. The bones of the cotton weavers are bleaching the plains of India'.

Against this background we can appreciate the feelings of Raja Ram Narain 'Mauzun', governor of Azimabad in 1757. Says Mir Hasan in his *Tadhkira-i Shura-i-Urdu*: 'When the news of the martyrdom of Sirajuddaula (the, Nawab of Bengal) reached the city, he composed the following verse, wept in lamentation and enquired about him from those who knew the details:

O Gazelles, you know the story. Tell me in  
confidence about the death of Majnun.  
The love-lorn has died; how fares the wilderness now?

Mushafi (1750-1824), an essentially lyric poet, was moved to write about the economic exploitation of the British in quite non-lyric terms: 'All the wealth and splendour that India had, the infidel Englishmen have squeezed out by deceit.'



Urdu poetry before 1857 did not dilate only on the beloved's waving locks, the down on the cheek and the mole on the face. In spite of the fact that Urdu poetry at this stage of historical development was formalized and remained in some cases subservient to the turgid traditions of the Court, it embodied the psychological tensions, emotional experiences, economic distress and even the indignant whisperings of the people, expressed through the literary symbols which permeated their entire thought processes. Even Jurat, who is sometimes dubbed a degenerate *ghazal* writer, wrote, with indignant directness, about the Indian princes under the Subsidiary Alliance of Lord Wellesley:

'Do not call them amir nor wazir, they are prisoners in the cage of the British, they recite and repeat what their overlords bid them to. These eastern prisoners are no better than the *Maina of Bengal*.'

In Urdu the seeds of this kind of poetry first of all sprouted in sufistic literature. This had freshness and freedom, emanating from its mystic trends, and it was this mysticism that sustained men's hearts through insane devastations. Never a lackey of the Darbar and the Court, this literature is fiercely critical of the insincerities of life. According to it, a moth is concerned with sacrificing its life at the altar of light, it does not bother whether the lamp belongs to the temple or to the mosque. Sects are not significant; it is the burning faith underlying them which is significant. Urdu literature is secular, consistently anti-communal and provides a mechanism making possible the adjustment of society to its external and internal conditions of existence.

When in 1803 Lord Lake entered triumphantly into Delhi, it was even at that time the greatest city of Asia from Canton to Constantinople. The entry of Lord Lake meant the virtual extinction of Mughal rule: the Emperor was pensioned off, divested of his power and position. Peace was undoubtedly restored in Delhi but it was an uneasy peace. The religious divines were most sensitive to the change. Shah Abdul Aziz (1746-1823), the leading divine of Delhi and one of the pillars of the famous Wahhabi movement, while not forbidding the people to study English, strongly condemned the British rule and declared in 1803 that the land from Delhi to Calcutta was enemy territory, *dar-ul-harbi*, and that war against the British was incumbent and mandatory. These two streams of thought—resistance and receptivity—have remained influential throughout current history, and during the course of readjustment within the

Mughal culture, these innovational traits have been subjected to the cultural equivalent of natural selection and severe discussion.

Earlier, some revolutionary ideas were borrowed from the French Revolution of 1789. The Urdu literature produced under Tipu Sultan (d. 1799) showed traces of a new fire; even the themes of music and songs were fashioned to kindle a new enthusiasm against the British. A regular Jacobin Club was established, correspondence was carried on with the Directory in France, and a Tree of Liberty was planted at Seringapatam and 'one night the members, including Tipu, ceremoniously burnt all symbols of royalty and thereafter addressed one another as *citoyen*'.

From the earliest times the West had also tried to comprehend the genius and the underlying spirit of the East. Chaucer knew about Buddhist tales, Dryden had dramatized the period of Aurangzeb, Goethe knew about the Vedas and Tennyson about the ghazals. India, too, was not completely static or dormant. Shah Abdul Aziz (1746-1823) was aware of the Russian expansion in Central Asia. Danishmand Khan, who was governor of Delhi under Aurangzeb (d. 1707) knew about the philosophy of Descartes (1596-1650), Harvey's theory of the circulation of blood and the works of Gassendi. Bishop Heber visited Lucknow in 1824 in the reign of Ghaziuddin Haidar (1814-1827) and he has recorded in his *Narrative of a journey through the upper Provinces of India* the King's great interest in steam engines, mechanics and chemistry, and a new way of propelling ships by a spiral wheel at the bottom of the vessel. He was also acquainted with important English books which his aide-de-camp read to him in Hindoostanee. Nasiruddin Haidar (1827-1837), his son and successor, continued these scientific interests to the extent that he was accused of Europemania. He identified himself with new trends by wearing a European dress and a European hat. He established an Urdu press, built an observatory, which was placed under Colonel Wilcox, and had a German painter and musician in his entourage. The court of Avadh attracted European painters like Tilly Kettle, Zoffany, Osias Humphry, and Robert Home. Asafuddoula was a great patron of Indo-Gothic architecture and a keen collector of clocks, firearms and scientific instruments.

In the early stages of Indo-British contact, there was, with many, a sincere desire for understanding on both sides. As India possessed, even at that period of political decadence, a fairly good stratum of intellectuals, and as literacy was higher in India than in most European countries, the accounts of Indian travellers give a

clue to Indian thinking. The account left behind by Prince Azfari is interesting. He left the Moghul palace in 1789 and visited Calcutta, Madras and Bombay, the principal British towns in India. He praised the administration of the British, their sense of order and justice, their regard for their word, their honesty in small matters and dishonesty in big ones, their well-equipped armies and beautiful cities. Ghalib (d. 1869) also praised the sense of order and justice and wisdom of the British and considered the editing of *Ain-i-Akbari* by Sir Saiyid Ahmad Khan futile.

Mirza Abu Talib Khan (1752-1806) of Avadh and Bengal travelled in England, and in other parts of Europe, Asia and Africa in 1793-96, and recorded his impressions of England. These are shrewd and display his mature thinking and keen powers of observation.

Here is his assessment of the English ruling classes of his days: 'Respected and wealthy persons are intoxicated with the wine of indolence and haughtiness, and are not only satisfied with what they have, but regard omniscience as bounded by their own defective knowledge and as within their power. The generality of the people and the poor, because of insecurity and the difficulties of earning a livelihood, are so exhausted by the burden of obtaining their daily bread that they hardly have time to scratch their heads. How can they get anything through that desire to investigate and to acquire fresh experience which God has implanted in human nature and made into a source of distinction for man.' Abu Talib was not dazed by European society. He says, 'There is no deep religious faith, no concern for the after-life; there is an inclination, evident in the lower but likely to spread to the upper classes, to grasp as much as possible while remaining within the law'. He is eloquent about the benefits of the Industrial Revolution. He says about the British, 'They are naturally inclined towards the mechanical devices, towards simplification, towards the search for better means of doing things, they desire durability and stability'. He noted that the difference between the rich and the poor in England was much greater than in India and the possibility of a revolution in England as had occurred in France could not be ruled out. He was deeply impressed by the progress in mechanical inventions and the advantages of having a strong navy, as was discovered earlier by Haidar Ali who could not 'devour the seas'!

During this period of reciprocal diffusion of cultures the name of Yusuf Khan Kambalposh (The man in the Blanket) also stands out prominently. He recorded his travelogue in Urdu and left Calcutta

for England on the 30th of July, 1838. Maulawi Masihuddin and Saiyid Ahmad Khan visited England years after him. Yusuf Khan of Haiderabad knew English and was inspired by a desire to travel when he was in the service of Nasiruddin Haidar, King of Avadh. His account entitled *Ajaibat-i-Farang* was published in instalments in Professor Ram Chandra's *Muhibbi Hind* in 1847, and in 1873 and 1898' from Nawal Kishore Press, Lucknow. The attitude of Yusuf Khan, a man of vast common sense, was not one of total adulation. His analysis of Hindu polytheism before the critical Christian missionaries was both profound and wise. He had minutely observed places and persons seen during his journey. He also underlined the importance of travel for Indians. His observations compare favourably with those of Mirza Abu Talib Khan (1752-1806), the first Indian to see British culture with Mughal eyes (February 1799 to June 1806), and to realize, like Shah Waliyulla before him, the importance of economic factors in development and history.

In Mughal Delhi the English influence penetrated naturally very slowly, because the Indo-Muslim governing classes were too proud of their cultural past, and were too bitter against the British who had completely dispossessed them. Their negative selection of Western cultural items was due to their incompatibility with firmly established customs and religious tenets. The one solitary exception is Mirza Babur, second son of Akbar Shah II, who lived in a European type of bungalow, dressed himself as an Englishman and drove in a coach drawn by six horses.

It should also be noted that in the early nineteenth century, in spite of the political decadence that had set in, the cultural lag between the English and the Indians was much too narrow and, to quote Sleeman, there were few communities in the world among whom education was 'more generally diffused than among Muhammadans in India. He who holds an office worth twenty rupees a month commonly gives his sons an education equal to that of a Prime Minister'. Sleeman also says, 'The best of us Europeans feel our deficiencies in conversation with Muhammadans of high rank and education when we are called upon to talk subjects beyond the everyday occurrences of life. A Muhammadan gentleman of education is tolerably acquainted with astronomy, as it is taught by Ptolemy, with the logical ethics of Aristotle, with the works of Hippocrates and Galen, through those of Avicenna, or as they call him Sena; and he is very capable of talking upon all subjects of

philosophy, literature, science and arts, and very much inclined to do so and of understanding the nature of the improvements that have been made in them in modern times'. (Sleeman: *Rambles and Recollections*, p. 339).

Under these circumstances it was not easy for Indians to show great enthusiasm in accepting the new culture traits from the British. However, we can say on the authority of Bishop Heber that in the beginning of the century, there grew among Muslims 'a strong and growing disposition to learn the English language and to adopt, by degrees, very many of the English customs and fashions'. (Letter of Bishop Heber dated 13 July 1824, *Narrative of a journey through the Upper Provinces of Indian* 1849, vol. 2, pp. 207-8). But when the English language became a symbol of hate and estrangement, they refused to embrace it either in the conqueror's terms or in those of their religion or culture.

For the first fifty years of their rule, the British did not feel secure in India and scrupulously avoided all opposition. They respected Indian culture. Sir William Jones had shown that Indians and most Europeans sprang from the same origin, their languages were derived from a common source, and that the Hindus, Greeks and all pagans worshipped the same gods under different names. He indeed put Indian literature on the world map but soon the scales were turned. In 1813, the English assumed a civilizing role and in 1835 higher education was de-orientalized. By 1813 every Englishman in Calcutta had become 'outrageously a John Bull' and Wellesley had nothing but contempt for Indians. But before him the English and Indians were mutually eager to drink at the fountain of knowledge. It is odd but true that 'the days of the corrupt company officials, of ill gotten fortunes, of oppression of the ryots, of zenanas, and of illicit sexual connections' were also the days when enlightened Englishmen were genuinely interested in Indian culture. They dressed themselves like Indians, married among the natives and wrote Persian and Urdu verses. Apart from the monumental work of orientalist like Gilchrist, Garcin de Tassy, Fallon, Forbes and Platts, there was a formidable list of Europeans, Armenians, Indo-British, Indo-Portuguese, Indo-French, Indo-German, Indo-Italian poets of Urdu. The English 'foregathered' with Pandits, Maulavis and Nawabs on terms of social equality and personal friendship.

In the period of social equality and mutual understanding the Europeans prepared the earliest Urdu grammars and lexicons and

made valuable contributions to the development of Urdu studies.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries many Urdu words and expressions found their way into the English language, which are collected in Yule's *Hobson-Jobson*. The expansion of British power, and contact with English literature, also helped to bring many loan words into Urdu, as had happened in respect of the Portuguese and French languages earlier, thus making Urdu compendious and copious. Words like *almari* (wardrobe) *mez* (table), *pistaul* (pistol), *nilam* (auction), among a host of others, commemorate our contact with the Portuguese. Similarly, there are a large number of French words which form a part of Urdu: for example, *Chand marl* (champ de Mars), *edikang* (Aide de-Camp). Most of the world's classics found their way into Urdu through the efforts of Shamsul Umar Kabiri Sani. Translation of books on philosophy, political science, economics, education and science enriched Urdu so considerably that it came to occupy, in the words of Dr Garcin de Tassy, the same position in India as French had done in Europe.

The Urdu writers and poets also freely borrowed words of English extraction. Insha Allah Khan Insha (d. 1817), the first Indian grammarian of Urdu and author of *Rani ket ki Kahani*, in a panegyric, addressed to King George III of England, used the English word *buggy* meaning a two-wheeled gig with a hood.

بکھیاں نور کی تیار کرے بوئے سمن  
کہ ہوا کھانے کو نکلیں گے حرانان چمن

Further, he used the word *paltan* which is an Urduized spelling of platoon.

بتے ہل کے ہجاویں گے فرنگی طابیر \* لالہ لاوے کا سلامی کو بنا کر ہلٹن

In the same *gasida* he used the word *organ* meaning musical instrument:

کھینچ کر تار رگ ابر بہاری سے کئی \* خود نسیم کر آوے گی بجائے آرگن

Ghalib, who forms a bridge between the medieval and modern periods, had an admiration for Western sciences and had contacts with British officials. He has used a large number of English words in his Urdu and Persian writings, which can serve as an example of direct borrowing.



ٹیکٹ - گورمنٹ - ہنسن - کمشنری - کمپ - کلکٹری - انکم ٹیکس -  
 ہارسل - کمیٹی - ریل - رپورٹ - ہوسٹ ہیڈ - بینک - ہمفلٹ - پاکٹ -  
 اولڈنام - کوئٹہ - ڈگری -

Mushin Kakorwi, a poet who distinguished himself as a writer of poems in praise of the Holy Prophet, says in one of his poems,

ابر، پنجاب تلامم میں ہے اعلیٰ ناظم  
 برق، نسکالہ ظامت میں گورنر جہول  
 جس طرف دیکھے پیلے کی کھلی ہین کلیال  
 لوگ کہتے ہین کہ کرتے ہین فرنگی کو نسل

During this period Urdu literature was tradition-bound and the epistolary art was the centre of an elaborate ritual. When the ambassador of Nadir Shah came to Delhi before the latter actually invaded the country, the *munshis* or epistle writers of Muhammad Shah (1719-48) took three years to find a suitable salutation to start the letter. Rajab Ali Beg 'Surur' (1787-1868), author of the famous *Fasana-i-Ajaib*, apologized to his son for not writing in rhyming prose as his eye had been operated upon and he had severe pain. In Urdu, as in Sanskrit, the great prestige of poetry led to the discouragement of prose. Its history is replete with multitudes of versified dictionaries, poetic letters and rhyming textbooks on history, biography and morality. It is not surprising that our earliest prose writers wavered doubtfully between Urdu and Persian, the language of the court and that of culture. They played with serpentine metaphors and other stylistic devices, with high-flown phrases and sonorous cadences. They were artificial and ornate even in private letters. The letters of Wajid Ali Shah (1847-1856), written in exile to his wives in Lucknow, the pageant of a bleeding heart, were compact with all conventional forms of prose.

As a case of stimulus diffusion of the Western trait of simplicity or perhaps of parallel development or an instance of social dynamics, mention may be made of the Wahhabi plain, downright prose, written under historical compulsion by men spiritually stripped to the skin. These Wahhabi pamphlets reached the vast masses from Hoogly to Peshwar and were sometimes written by their Hindu disciples.

The College of Fort William at Calcutta also brought about a change in Urdu prose. This college has rightly been described as

the cradle of the Indian renaissance or the Oxford of the East. It was established for the benefit of British officials in 1800 by Lord Wellesley, as a permanent memorial to their triumph at Seringapatam and “to produce zealous up-holders of British power in the East”.

The College normal full face formally abolished in 1854 by Lord Dalhousie, but it succeeded in effecting a vital change. Attempts were made there to attain a style, familiar but not coarse, elegant but not ostentatious. As their writings were intended for the English officials, the *munshies* of the College wrote without frills of a language in as bare and unaffected a manner as they could devise. Mir Amman, a towering figure among them, was indeed the morning star of modern Urdu prose. His book *Bagh O-Bahar* (1801) (Garden and Spring) has gone into more than a hundred printings. But this was not considered civilized prose by the Lucknow school of Urdu literature, and the Fort William College venture remained an isolated attempt, a mere island in a vast ocean of artificiality, insincerity and pompous mannerism. A definite change for plain and practical prose came with the consolidation of British rule in India.

The first effective impact of the West showed itself in the Delhi Urdu Revival in the second quarter of the nineteenth century. The Delhi College, which was founded in 1825, brought about a sort of scientific renaissance there. In 1827 the study of English, geography, astronomy and mathematics according to European system was introduced both in Delhi College and Agra College. In 1844 a Vernacular Translation Society was established by Delhi College, which published books on scientific subjects in Urdu. The Engineering College at Roorkee also did the same. Professor Ram Chandra published two Urdu journals *Mufidum Nazirin* and *Muhibbi Hind* devoted entirely to the propagation of Western ideas and scientific values.

It is the institution of Delhi College and the pattern of its teaching which largely explain the entirely different nature of the renaissance of Urdu in Bengal and in Delhi. The Bengal Renaissance is primarily significant for its literary products: the Delhi Renaissance, while it was eventually to lead to a revolution in critical standards for Urdu literature, was scientific, pragmatic and practical in the direction of its impulses. Western science became a new gospel and its devotees like Maulawi Zakauallah showed religious enthusiasm for translating Western works into Urdu as was done by Shamsul Umar Kabiri Sani and his team of scholars earlier. Both movements in Bengal and Delhi



had in common the fact that the attention of the participants was directed towards the insincerities and illogicalities of the societies in which they lived. But through their increasing familiarity with Western learning they acquired new standards by which to judge and criticize their own literature and environment, and the desire for socio-literary reform was born.

The Old Delhi College facilitated the fusion of ideas and helped to broaden the minds of scholars, thus laying the basis of a new culture. Says Maulawi Nazir Ahmad (1836-1912), the famous novelist, about himself: 'Had I not been educated at the Delhi College I would have been a narrow-minded fanatic and a self-conceited *Maulawi*, ignorant of my own spiritual weakness, mad after finding the weakness of others; a partial judge of my own capabilities and a foolish friend of the Muslims: blind and deaf to the Voice of the Time.'

Master Ram Chandra (1821-1880) was one of the leading figures of the Delhi movement. More than any other, he was responsible for the propagation of the Western concept of nationalism and scientific ideas among the literary public of Delhi and the surrounding provinces. He edited two journals and was the author of 17 books mainly on science, history and geography. In his articles in his journals he criticized the literary diction and poetic standards of the Urdu language from a new point of view with rationalistic simplicity, in this anticipating Altaf Husain Hali (1837-1914) by nearly fifty years. He was perhaps the first in Urdu to talk in terms of an Indian nation, as he was also the first to emphasize the need to write in a simple and precise prose style. In many ways his writings anticipate those of Sir Saiyid Ahmad Khan (1817-1898) as well as those of the literary critic Hali.

The new ideas that came with contacts with the English were carried over by the printing press. At the end of the eighteenth century, printing was used in the college press at Fort William and all the works prepared by Gilchrist and his *munshies* were done there. The missionaries at Serampore had an Urdu press. A fire in 1812 destroyed it. In 1837, a lithographic press was set up in Delhi and it became a great factor in the increased publication' of books and journals. Ghaziuddin Haidar founded a typography at great expense at Lucknow and the first book to be printed was *Haft Qulzum*, a lexicon. Another notable book was a translation of Lord Brougham's treatise on the pleasures of science.

In 1832 the vernaculars were substituted for Persian as the official languages of the court. This gave great impetus to Urdu

in the North-west provinces and Bihar and enriched it with terms relating to administration and the sciences. As a result of British impact, newspapers were published in Urdu. The first Urdu newspaper was the *Fauji-i-Akbar* published under the auspices of Tipu Sultan. It was fiercely critical of the British and was intended for circulation only among the Mysore army. It came to an end after the fall of Seringapatam. In March, 1822, was published *Jam-i-Jahannuma* from Calcutta under the editorship of Lala Sada Sukh and W. E. Pearce. In 1835, Charles Metcalfe gave liberty to the vernacular press and in 1836, Urdu was declared the court language. These factors contributed vastly to the advancement of Urdu journalism. In 1836 Urdu *Akhbar* was published from Delhi by Agha Muhammad Baqir, to be followed in 1837 by *Saiyidul Akhbar*, published by Saiyid Muhammad, brother of Saiyid Ahmad Khan. In 1849, there were 23 Urdu presses and 28 Urdu newspapers operating in the north-western frontier provinces alone. These produced a climate of opinion and a germ of patriotism which help to explain the revolt of 1857.

In Delhi College, Tylor, Sprenger and their Indian team of teachers gave a strong stimulus to scientific learning. Here an enthusiastic group set themselves to reproduce in Urdu the science and learning of the West. The change, which they wrought, was not rapid or startling and was sometimes a synthesis as evidenced in Sprenger's Urdu Journal *Qiranus Saidain* or 'the auspicious conjunction'.

But in the revolt of 1857, the college became a source of seditious activities and an Urdu scholar and professor at this college. Maulana Imam Bakhsh Sahbai and his two sons, along with several others, were blown from the guns at Rajghat, and many pieces of their quivering flesh were caught in the talons of the kites before they could reach the ground. Says Azarda in a verse:

'At such an innocent killing as that of Sahbai  
it is appropriate if Azarda goes out  
mad in the wilderness.

Since the time of Cornwallis and Wellesley racial estrangement had developed between the whites and the 'odious blacks' with all their 'abominations of heathenism', an estrangement persistently reinforced by the evangelical missionaries. In 1827 the wheel had come full circle: it was considered extremely bad taste to dress in anything Indian or mix with them or copy their customs.

This estrangement led to the revolt of 1857, which was not an

accident of history. It was the result of accumulated discontent among the Indian people, who had suffered politically and culturally from the British conquest. As early as 1817 Sir Thomas Munro, after pointing out the advantage of British rule wrote to the Governor-general Lord Hastings, ‘but these advantages are dearly bought. They are purchased by the sacrifice of independence, of national character, and of whatever renders a people respectable—The consequences, therefore, of the conquest of India by the British arms would be, in place of raising, to debase a whole people. There is perhaps no example of any conquest in which the natives have been so completely excluded from all share of the government of their country as in British India.’ In the same minutes he wrote, ‘none has treated them (natives) with so much scorn as we; none has stigmatized the whole people as unworthy of trust, as incapable of honesty, and as fit to be employed only where we cannot do with put them. It seems to be not only ungenerous but impolitic, to debase the character of a people fallen under our dominion’.

The revolt of 1857 created feelings of intense hostility and bitterness against the British. Sir Saiyid Ahmad Khan undertook the difficult task of reconciling upper class Indian Muslims to the British rule and the European way of life. He succeeded with great difficulty but the reactions of the typical Indian Muslims to the whole philosophy of Sir Saiyid were expressed in the satirical verses of Akbar Allahabadi. He ridiculed those who had adopted English ways. He was convinced that the modern concepts of progress lacked spiritual content. He subjected to ridicule, ‘to scathing criticism or damning exposure, the social and political strategy of imperialism, this worthless system of education and Sir Saiyid’s policy of friendship and loyal cooperation with the government’.

In Urdu there has never been a period of total acceptance of Western ideologies. In fact, the story is one of constant conflict and ferment. Here had not been witnessed ‘a process of denationalization,’ to borrow a phrase of Sri Aurobindo, or a loss of identity as in the case of early nineteenth century Calcutta students. Here were not heard the lectures of noted Indians advocating European colonization of their country or condemning wholesale oriental studies “as best calculated to keep India in there darkness”. Nor was talk of beef and beer clubs as in Bengal nor of youths westernized in thought, mind and spirit as Macaulay wanted them to be. This militant and conservative response was continued even to my boyhood days. My imagination is horribly vivid about my uncle washing his hands

eleven times in atonement after shaking hands with Lord Irwin. His attitude can be compared to that of “Bunyan’s pilgrim who had put his fingers into his ears while hastening from the city of Destruction”.

The upheaval of 1857 was an event of vast significance, which not only changed the map of India but also her literary standards. The Mughal empire was finished and the British established themselves firmly in India. They brought the English educated closer to Western learning and gave them a new liberating consciousness, which, in turn, influenced all their social life and mental attitudes. After 1857 ‘Western iron’, to quote Toynbee, ‘had entered deeper into India’s soul’ and this encounter between Urdu and the West proved the most important event in the literary history of India. The greatest pioneers of the new movement, members of an urban middle class, who appeared on the stage of history after 1857, are Sir Saiyid Ahmad Khan (1817-1898), Hali (1837-1914), Azad (d. 1910), Ismail (1844-1917), Nazir Ahmad (1836-1912), Shibli and Zakullah (d. 1910) and, later, Iqbal (d. 1938), who corrected the balance in favour of the orient and remains to this day the best example of selective assimilation of cultures.

In spite of the earlier indignant attitude of Urdu writers towards Western culture, the great changes that came about as a result of stimulus diffusion and the English impact in the field of poetry, literary criticism, biography, history, novel, drama, journalism and essay, ushered in a revolution unparalleled in Urdu literature.

The English intellectual impact stimulated a great upsurge and creativity hitherto unknown in Urdu. Cultural change includes not only changes in methods and techniques but also changes in norms, values and beliefs. Curiously enough in Urdu there has never been a whole-hearted or uncritical acceptance of English values as *ipso facto* superior or preferable, perhaps due to ethnocentrism built in Urdu writers and poets, and also due to the fact that the English were not writing on clean slates in Mughal Delhi. Urdu literary forms have remained intact. The *ghazal* was to be killed in cold blood but it has triumphed. In the field of ideas a reasonable compromise has been effected between blind acceptance and total rejection. Western ideas like rationalism and objectivity have been accepted after giving them an oriental parentage. The Urdu response to English challenge has made a full circle from rejection and imitation to critical revaluation, selection and confident assertiveness.

A. N. KAUL

## R.K. Narayan and the East-West Theme



R. K. NARAYAN, I think, deserves both praise and appraisal in larger and more discerning terms than he seems to have received so far. If nothing else, he lives up superbly and almost invariably to the requirement that Henry James regarded as the only condition to which a reader could hold a novelist *in advance*—namely, the requirement that the novelist prove interesting enough to be read. One wonders if James himself, for all his real and supposed greatness, always fulfils this condition. Narayan does, at least for this one reader of his. And the fact becomes much more impressive when we remember how little Narayan has dealt in popular modes and eye-catching topical or extravagant themes, how much and how consistently he has insisted on matters of ordinary, everyday, and—yes— representative life. Thus it is not merely that his novels are seldom dull or boring or embarrassing. The sort of interest he offers us is in the last analysis the sort of interest that life itself can offer. He is a mirror of a certain kind and area of Indian life during the first half of this century. The area is, of course, limited, and so are his powers as a novelist. This last fact seems to have escaped no one, and no one seems ever tired of repeating it. Indeed, it is an obvious fact. Yet we need, I think, to stress equally the authentic quality of Narayan's fiction, its representative character within the chosen

limits, and, above all, its real distinction. Narayan has hardly any peers among the so-called Indo-Anglian writers.

All this is by no means to suggest that the ten novels that Narayan has written during 32 years—from *Swami and Friends* in 1935 to *The Vendor of Sweets* (unfortunate title to an unsentimental and moving novel) in 1967—are all either equally successful or equally good. On the contrary, among the ten, there is at least one that is insignificant (*The Dark Room*), another that seems pointless (*Waiting for the Mahatma*), and even some superb ones that are either superb only in parts (*The English Teacher*) or suffer from but are not materially damaged by momentary uncertainties of conception and execution (Chapter 8 of *The Vendor of Sweets*).

The present, however, is not the occasion to attempt to reason out systematically the above statements and judgements. Nor in the short space of this paper can I hope even to touch upon all the interests and qualities of Narayan's fiction. My purpose here is to discuss more concretely just one aspect of Narayan's work—what for want of a more suitable phrase I have had to call simply the East-West theme. This, one hardly need add, is something plainly recognizable as in one sense or the other an important theme of recent Indian history, society, and politics. And since Indo-Anglians are quite naturally only a recent brood, it is not surprising that this recent theme of Indian life should have figured so prominently in their work, sometimes to the exclusion of everything else, including ordinary good sense. More important, in their case, the logic of the language itself and of the classics in which that language is embodied, has had the effect of reinforcing their preoccupation with this theme, no matter whether it is given a central or peripheral place and whether it appears overtly or just indirectly and implicitly in their work.

Consider, for instance—if I may digress from Narayan for a moment—a novel which has nothing to do by and large with the East-West theme. It is not even set in modern times, but purports to be a tale of medieval India. It is also at one and the same time a picaresque romance, a *tour de force* of loud and energetic local humour, and a fable of traditional Avisdom quietly put across. I refer to Anantanarayanan's *The Silver Pilgrimage*, a novel, incidentally, nowhere nearly as well-known as it should be, being a strange though somewhat isolated masterpiece—the sort of book that some Indian Leavis might well describe as a 'sport.' Here, then, is a very Indian, a very local and traditional novel, and yet here is an author who not



only lives in today's India, but one who no doubt read Shakespeare and other English classics years before he thought of writing a book himself in their language. Hence, the memorable episode in which we find an apparently much-travelled sailor holding forth at a wayside inn, recounting his experience of a distant land and its most popular dramatist, both unnamed but quite obviously England and Shakespeare, respectively. This is as wildly improbable as most things in *The Silver Pilgrimage*, and equally acceptable in the general non-realistic mode of this novel. Given the purported period of the story, it is also delightfully anachronistic. But of course, the purpose behind the episode is plain—it is to make comedy out of the contrast between the reported mores of the unnamed Western country and indigenous customs and traditions, to hold up against each other two sets of social, philosophical, and even literary assumptions. When, for instance, the sailor reports how one play he had seen performed began with the appearance of three weird sisters—‘female astrologers,’ as he calls them—his audience wonders aloud and with disapproval that there should exist a society that educates its women and that too in the difficult and esoteric science of astrology. When he goes on to add that the hero of another play endlessly delays his revenge on one flimsy pretext or the other, at one point actually staying his hand for no better reason than that the villain happens to be at prayer and, if killed then, would be sure to go to heaven rather than the place he deserves, the listeners comment promptly that the dramatist as well as the philosophers of that land must entertain a poor opinion, indeed of Yamaraj's intelligence. The sailor's personal view is that the hero in question procrastinates only to give himself the chance to go on soliloquizing and thereby talking about himself, but to the learned among his audience it is the cue for starting a discussion on the theories of dramatic art.

The above may be taken as an example of the East-West theme as incidental comedy. Returning to Narayan, in his work, looked at from one point of view, it is not even that; it is non-existent, except in *The Vendor of Sweets* and briefly in the last scene of *The Guide* which introduces the bustling and innocently but nevertheless fatuously considerate and ‘understanding’ American television producer out to secure a rare scoop. *The Guide*, it may be noted in passing, was written in America, and *The Vendor of Sweets* several years after Narayan had returned from that trip and had time, one would suppose, to assimilate the experience more fully for literary purposes. (My *Dateless Diary*, the nonfictional product of that trip is interesting

enough but disappointingly though not unexpectedly superficial: so are Narayan's comments on the Indian scene collected in *Next Sunday*.) Whatever the reason, it can thus be said that in the bulk of Narayan's fiction there is only the East, and no East-West theme such as we find among the other Indo-Anglians, the increasing number of whose novels show us the notorious 'twain' meeting and falling apart and retreating and meeting again and so on, the two sides in each case being embodied in real live Indians and foreigners brought together in various seemingly complex and sophisticated situations. If this is what the theme means and the only way in which it can be 'done', Narayan certainly does not do it. I shall, in fact, myself take some time first to show how completely he is innocent of it.

But, on the other hand, I must also confess that this sort of East-West business strikes me as remote and unreal, totally fabricated except in the rare instance where there is strong personal emotion to back it. In any case, these are at best stories of personal chance or mischance, wanting in the sort of representative significance and authority that I find in Narayan and which it will be my effort to bring out in the main part of the following discussion. Here I would like to conclude this introductory section by suggesting that, so far from eschewing this important theme of recent Indian history, Narayan shows us far more truly what it means— that is, what it has meant not to this or that globe-trotting individual, but to a considerable section of Indian society striving to live its daily life in a definite historical situation. For his focus he takes the point that is really important in the equation—India—for the social and cultural impingement in the other direction has been negligible. Of this impingement, moreover, he shows the true extent as well as the absolute limitation, remembering again, of course, that it is not of a few intellectually or emotionally adventurous persons he is talking, but of a more sizable and static section of Indian society. And all this he does neither overtly nor stridently—with that conscious striving after a 'theme' that so often leads to falsity though also at times to immediate fame—but with the ease and apparent effortlessness that characterizes many born novelists and the quietness which is Narayan's own special gift and hallmark.

If, then, this paper has a purpose beyond the one mentioned earlier, it is to show how apparent simplicity can at times grasp some measure of subtlety more effectively than what passes for sophistication, and how a novelist who seems to have no obvious



schematic or rational concern with a theme may yet succeed in giving it an authentic embodiment.

Turning first to Narayan's failure to exploit some of the most popular aspects of the East-West theme, it is not merely that he tells no love or other stories of Indians coming into contact with Europeans. In *The Vendor of Sweets*, the possible exception as already noted, there is a young man who returns from the United States with a half-Korean half-American girl whom he gives out to be his wife. But on the whole it is a curious fact that the Malgudi novels, fairly bursting as they are with all sorts and conditions of men, should have found so little room for any Western, particularly English, characters. One can think only of the marginal Brown, the Principal of the local mission college, in two early novels and of the still more marginal company director in *Mr Sampath*, the man whom a character describes as 'that compound of beef and whisky'—as well he might for all the contact he or anyone else has with him. In Malgudi there are no "bridge parties", no attempt to meet across the gulf in mutual understanding. This is Narayan's fidelity to his subject and his focus. For in these novels, as in colonial India, Englishmen were to be heard of rather than seen, talked about rather than talked to, by the vast majority of Indians.

Likewise, in the more important matter of language and dialogue, Narayan seems to have thoughtlessly disregarded a ready-made comic possibility that has proved popular with so many other Indo-Anglians, that has, in fact, proved a main prop of their own popularity with readers both at home and abroad. I refer, of course, to 'Indian English' and the many Indian names, festivals, objects, such as other novelists scatter liberally through their pages in order presumably to furnish touches of local colour and also at times a glossary at the end. Narayan hardly needs a gloss of this obvious kind. Where he writes of specifically Indian customs or objects, as he does so often, no Western or for that matter non-South Indian reader need be nonplussed. Their literal significance or character is relatively unimportant while their human meaning, which is what interests Narayan as opposed to the local colourists, is invariably and grippingly manifest from the narrative and dramatic context. The dialogues in the novels are more striking still in that Narayan gives all his characters the same ordinary English to speak, his peasants and petty shopkeepers and illiterate persons no less than the main cast of his educated middle-class characters. No use is made of variations

in accent or wrong usage or the many Indianisms that Narayan as much as anyone else could have heard on all sides in every part of the country. What this means is that, unlike the case of some other East-West writers, for Narayan the English language is not in itself a subject but only a neutral instrument which, while useful, leaves all the work still to be done by the user. And, as with Shakespeare's use of blank verse, the significant fact is that while all characters speak English, Narayan manages to express through it not only the general Indian sensibility but a whole range of character, personality, and temperament within it. This is a pioneering achievement, and it is not as simple or easy as one may imagine. To unite the logic and rhythm of a new language and some essential facts and identities of an old life, using the one without any obvious gimmicks to articulate the other and that too in a manner that establishes it, in Graham Greene's words, as an authentic 'literary region'—for this we have to thank Narayan more than any other Indian writer of English that I know of.

If Narayan has made little use of Westerners as possible characters in his fiction and none of the comedy of the English language as spoken in colonial India, what about the possible assimilation of ideas? I use the word ideas here to cover a great deal, including political ideas as well as literary influences, theories, and techniques, both Eastern and Western. And again what meets the eye at first glance is Narayan's appalling innocence of anything that may properly be called an idea in any one of these senses. In this connection I would like to mention Henry James once more though this time not to bring up anything he said but something that was said about him. In a dubious sort of compliment T. S. Eliot once remarked that James had a mind so fine that no idea could ever violate it. This is quite apropos. For where in Narayan's work do we find any one of those modern philosophies and ideologies that have come to us, together with much else, from the West? Marxism, positivism, existentialism; theories of liberal democracy, revolution, fascism; of ethics, education, art? More, where is Gandhism as an enormous *political* fact and movement of twentieth-century India, the very period and area that I have claimed Narayan somehow mirrors in his novels?

Gandhism must of course, be made an exception of immediately, because Narayan has in fact not left it alone. Had he done so, it would seem to us only a little more inexcusable than his

disregarding socialism or trade-unionism or terrorism which too played a part, no matter less important by exactly how much, on India's political stage for the last half-century or so. But Narayan wrote a whole novel, *Waiting for the Mahatma*, in which Gandhi figures as a character of considerable importance. This happens to be the weakest of Narayan's novels, a pointless work as I have already said, neither a successful political novel (if it is meant to be that) nor good comedy. To the extent to which it is a political novel, I agree with Mr Narasimhaiah (who, incidentally, has said very perceptive things about Narayan) that it 'hasn't enlarged our awareness of Gandhi or his era one bit' and that Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* and Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* are incomparably superior 'Gandhi-Novels.' (C. D. Narasimhaiah, *The Writer's Gandhi* (Patiala, Panjabi University, 1967), p. 75. See also pp. 62-79 *passim*). Much more, however, needs to be said on the subject, more than I can say in this paper though I shall revert to it later. For not Gandhism as a political ideology or movement but the Mahatma theme—as something connected with Gandhi but not to be equaled with him, as a force fed from the same traditional sources that nourished Gandhi—has figured more than once in Narayan's imagination and has been treated by him in more than one way. The point to note here, however, is that Gandhism as a political idea has either meant nothing to Narayan or he has attempted to handle it indeed but only with the result that, in Eliot's phrase, he has violated both the idea itself and his own fine creative mind.

Turning to literary ideas, in theory and practice, while it is possible to draw parallels and comparisons between Narayan and Western writers, there is no question of his having been influenced by any or even of his having paid any heed whatsoever to their theory or example. He is not only an old-world but also an old-fashioned writer, unconcerned with the literary experiments and innovations of modern times, so that in the matter of technique, too, we find no meeting or assimilation of the East and the West, or of the old and the new, in his fiction. And even some of the comparisons with older English writers, though justifiable perhaps along certain lines, often turn out on examination to be rather wide of the mark, as, for instance, the often made comparison with Jane Austen. For though both Narayan and Jane Austen are undoubtedly comic writers, and though both are anchored somehow to the idea of domesticity, what recognizable likeness is there between the fabric of life in the

world of Malgudi on the one hand, and in that of Highbury and Longbourn on the other? Or for that matter, how much common ground is there between Narayan's domestic idea or norm, and that of Jane Austen with its emphasis on love, courtship, individuality, and other values of bourgeois culture? I would myself rather cite *The Dark Room*, a novel of Narayan's which can be called anti-domestic in the sense that in it Narayan seems to be questioning, however weakly, the value of fidelity on the part of woman to hearth and husband when these are unsupported by any consideration, love, and fidelity on the other side. Narayan's heroine is, of course, driven back because she needs, more than love or independence, the emotional and economic refuge that she discovers only an earning (though erring) husband and the drudgery of domestic routine can furnish. This is an instructive novel for my purpose here because behind it, actually motivating its story-line, we can hear echoes, if not of *The Dolls House*, certainly of that same modern intellectual and social movement which inspired Ibsen's play and made its famous bang of the door resound over much of the world. The point here, however, is not that, unlike Ibsen's heroine, Narayan's does not bang the door but has it banged on her and that in the end, her dream of feminine independence and dignity over, she returns submissively to the house never again to stray from it in thought or deed. The point is that, like *The Mahatma*, *The Dark Room* happens to be a weak and insignificant novel, and it is obvious that Ibsenism or the feminist idea can inspire Narayan's imagination as little as the political idea of Gandhism.

I come finally in this section to what may be called Narayan's avoidance of tragedy. The question of genres, and more so of attempting to fit Narayan into one or the other of them, is a question not to be answered lightly. But with this I am not immediately concerned. I would rather consider the more limited question of avoidance of tragedy as in a sense implicating Eastern and Western philosophical, even metaphysical positions. For if, as we are often told, tragedy is a Western, a Graeco-Judaic-Christian idea, does Narayan provide a deliberate answer to it, and if so, how exactly? Here I should like to point to the one novel of Narayan, *The English Teacher*, which does indeed provide a sort of overt 'Eastern' answer. This is a work which for the first half conducts itself as a characteristic Narayan novel, and with all his usual strength and fineness, but in the middle of which the heroine, the English teacher's wife, dies, and which from that point is dominated by the impulse 'to bridge the

gulf between life and after-life'. This is accomplished concretely in the novel by having a band of spirits, including the newly dead wife, communicate with the hero via a fortuitous medium, and climaxed by a final scene in which the hero is at last able to communicate directly with his wife. As the spirits go on after announcing their mission of bridging 'the gulf between life and after-life', their work is meant to 'revolutionize human ideas . . . This is an attempt to turn the other side of the medal of existence, which is called Death.'

A similar idea, it is worth noting, appears in the later *Financial Expert* but as deliberate nonsense in a deliberately farcical episode—the episode that introduces the wealthy deranged old gentleman who writes numerous postcards everyday, to addresses ranging from Roosevelt, Stalin, and Churchill at the one end to ordinary householders of Malgudi and Madras at the other, each communication dedicated to the mission of convincing the world that death has no meaning. This is a part of the undeniable lunatic fringe of Indian life, and Narayan not only recognizes it as such, but presents this aspect of it as superbly here as he does other aspects elsewhere. But the case is different with *The English Teacher* where he is in deadly earnest both about the message and the added dimension of mystical experience. No wonder, as we learn from *My Dateless Diary*, one eminent editor of an American publishing house insisted that *The English Teacher* was the best novel Narayan had ever written or could ever hope to write, and another American, a young lady, begged Narayan to help her in achieving such experience for herself. Is this to be the spokesman of the East to the West? It is rather, as Narasimhaiah remarks, 'to put too much reliance on the occult as a means of sustaining life and art.' (C. D. Narasimhaiah, *The Swan and the Eagle* (Simla, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1969), p. 147). To this I would add that, as done in the novel, the bridging of the gulf between life and after-life proves in human and dramatic terms a constant source of embarrassment. For while the dead wife mentions meditation, the Divine Light, and the freedom from "the encumbrance of the physical body" as the ecstatic attributes of astral existence, what dominates her communications much more is preoccupation with precisely the physical body and this worldly interests, the ordinary human emotions and senses, the garments she is invisibly wearing, the jewels and the scent she has donned. And these same matters dominate the narrative and the drama much more than even her communications. The effect is perhaps less grotesque but certainly more embarrassing than in the case of

Milton's angel expounding the anatomy of angelic bodies and bodily functions. And by the time, in that final passage of the novel, the cock crows and the dead wife has to rise from her husband's bed and go, we wonder if this is the beloved heroine so tenderly presented in the novel's first half or by now something like Hamlet's father's ghost—neither Eastern spiritualism nor Western superstition, but again something one wishes Narayan had forbidden himself from attempting, no matter how strong the personal urgency behind the attempt. For, if this is life after life, it is not worth living, and if this is the avoidance of tragedy, tragedy is much better left unavoids.

The weakest work of Narayan—*The Dark Room*, the second half of *The English Teacher*, *Waiting for the Mahatma*—thus happens to be precisely that in which he has attempted an overt handling of some of the most loudly proclaimed 'East-West' themes and ideas. This is no accident. Narayan is simply not the man to teach the West any Eastern mysticism or the East any social and political ideas that have originated in the West.

But it is time to turn to his successes, to that part of his work where there is no overt Eastern 'message' or Western influence but, instead, a remarkable East-West comedy and, underneath, the still more remarkable fact of a static traditional Indian life which the West touches at all points but without real penetration anywhere. And here it is best to begin with not this or that individual novel but with something that is common to all of them—the great, corporate literary creation called Malgudi. But what is Malgudi? Narayan's readers love to go over the topographical details of this region—some of them also insist on a visit to Mysore as the only possible critical approach to this novelist—and, indeed, it would be just as interesting an occupation to draw a physical map of Malgudi as it is to draw one of Wessex or Yoknapatawpha or any other territory made famous by fiction. But it is, I think, more important to ask what Malgudi represents and why it should be Malgudi rather than Madras or Bombay. To begin with, then, just as Wessex is the microcosm of the declining English agricultural community, and Yoknapatawpha Country that of the declining and decadent southern 'aristocracy' of the United States—each involving a sense of tragedy on the part of their respective authors—malgudi is an Indian small town, and stands at a nicely calculated or at least calculatable comic distance between the East and the West. For the Indian villages, speaking socially and culturally, were hardly touched by the impact of the



English, while the large metropolitan centres tended too much to be replicas in this same sense, being too confusingly if not too thoroughly westernized. Just as the true tragedy of colonialism lay in the culturally untouched but economically ravaged Indian countryside, the true comedy of this same historical fact was to be observed in the Indian small town.

The Indian small town, one can thus say, is the perfect comic product or by-product of the colonial situation—in everything, that is, except the essentials. To the essentials, or rather what Narayan regards as the essentials, we will come in a moment. But first look at the surface of life in Malgudi, the surface being the usual operating ground of comedy—though, as I have argued in another context elsewhere (*The Action of English Comedy*, {June, 1970}, Yale University Press, New Haven & London), only of superficial comedy naturally, and not of *all* comedy by any means. Here, then, is the small town of Malgudi which, in its mixture of the East and the West, is both a concrete individual place and at the same time representative of a general social condition. While being itself faithfully, it is also, for those who have known this part of the country, *any* Indian small town. On the one hand, the cramped older quarters of the town, and adjacent to them on the other hand, the Lawley and New extensions—what elsewhere may be the civil Lines or the Model Town—with their bungalows and garden homes and imitated Western standards if not style of living. Equally familiar is the statue—*the* statue, as one might say, of the otherwise forgotten British district administrator responsible for having developed a territory associated also, though still more dimly, with the passage or some epic deed of Rama or another legendary and equally distant hero. Here in the streets is the Select Picture House and the Regal Haircutting Saloon. Here is the co-operative society or bank meant to benefit the very peasantry that distrusts it most; and the town municipality that punctually surveys the town gutter at election time and as punctually after the election is over abandons it to its time-honoured ways, And here above all is cricket, and not only cricket, but M.C.C., standing both for the Malgudi and the Marylebone clubs, associated in the minds of the schoolboys who are its members with the far-off glamour of English and Australian stars, and in their practice with street corners, broken panes, and improvised stumps and boundary lines.

The mention of schoolboys should remind us how much the emphasis in Narayan falls on education—which, after all, was the chief means and point of contact of western impingement on

traditional Indian life. Thus we have, in the early novels, a central place given to the mission school and the mission college, with their curricula of English and Indian history, scripture classes and Milton and *Othello* and Charles Lamb. And more, the emphasis on the crucial importance of examinations, their doomsday character and the preparation of the students accordingly, and this because education is seen only as a means to the acquisition of a degree, never as an adventure or anything of value in itself. (The only characters in Narayan who can be called in any sense intellectually or even economically inquisitive and adventurous, such as Raju of *The Guide* and the hero of *The Financial Expert*, respectively, are either illiterate or at best self-taught but certainly degree-less. They have had no 'education', a fact underlined in each novel.) The degree in its turn is important marginally because it gives status but mainly because it opens the way to a job or profession—two connected facts, anyway. There is seldom any sense of vocation. The word used is not even work but 'earning money' or most often simply 'earning'. What this means is first, obviously, that the Malgudi novels are concerned with the middle-class, not just the 'middle-town', section of recent Indian society. Although they incorporate occasional figures from other classes, even as their stories sometimes stray into surrounding rural areas or distant metropolitan centres like Madras and Delhi, they celebrate only one sort of hero, the hero whom Narayan in an essay in *Next Sunday* ('On Humour') designates as 'the modern unknown warrior, who is the middle-class common man.'

In this Narayan's novels are not different from other novels, at least those that constitute the main body of English fiction, and he is being no more than ordinarily faithful to the original bourgeois inspiration and the subsequent history of the English novel. For novels since Fielding's time have traditionally concerned themselves with the middle-class hero, often becoming in the process what may be called epics of the commonplace. So, if Narayan is unique, or at least different, the difference does not lie in his concern with the middle-class but rather in the unique cultural character of that class—the Indian middle-class of the last century or so, which would certainly not have come to possess its peculiar identity without the influence of British presence and polity, above all the influence of British educational policy. The mission school boys, the Bachelor of Arts, the English Teacher, the printers and editors of English weeklies, the railway stall-holder and guide, the poet who composes an epic on Lord Krishna's life in strict monosyllabic English verse ('Girls with



girls did dance in trance'), even a comic Gandhian satyagrahi such as the ageing hero of *The Vendor of Sweets* not to mention the vast army of English-knowing clerks in the background—these would simply not have come into existence, in these peculiar forms at any rate, except for the impact of the British. As in the case of Malgudi's urban topography, these are types thrown up by the mad, comic mixing of the East and the West; and the comedy lies in the mixture.

Looked at biographically, Malgudi is, of course, where Narayan lived, and these are activities in which he himself engaged or witnessed his neighbours engaging themselves. Yet in all this we see something that, while being personal, while having the force of first-hand experience behind it, is at the same time made, not impersonal, but public—raised, in fact, to the status of a social theme. It provides an example of the power of literature when literature is able to fuse personal emotion with representative significance. For Malgudi is where much of the Indian middle-class has lived. Its education has been our education. Its professions, its aspirations and frustrations, its ironies and comedies, these, too, have been ours. This is the East-West comedy as it has affected real, day-to-day living in India.

But having said this much, we must go further and give Narayan credit for never mistaking this comedy for the whole reality of even just this recent Indian social life. His comedy—his *essential* comedy—rests on other foundations. Here I would like to discuss first, briefly, a second example of Narayan's avoidance of tragedy. The novel in question this time is *The Man-Eater of Malgudi*, his last but one so far. While concerned with depicting yet another segment of the unhurried life of Malgudi, *The Men-Eater* seeks to convey also what is for Narayan an unusual and urgent sense of menace threatening the peace not only of the hero, Nataraj the owner of Truth Printing Works, but of the whole Malgudi community as well. The sense of menace is perhaps more insisted upon by the author than communicated by the facts of the novel—or rather the single dominating fact called Vasu, the ex-wrestler turned taxidermist, who appears on Nataraj's doorstep abruptly from nowhere and immediately proceeds to muscle his way into Nataraj's life and, eventually, into the life of Malgudi. To us there seems a touch of unreality about the dimensions and depth of malevolence attributed to this man. But there can be little doubt that in Narayan, and in the quiet world of his novels, Vasu is the closest we ever get to the pure principle of evil. I will revert to him later. Here let me say that he is seen not only as a violent trouble-maker but a potential tragedy-maker. 'He is a man

with a gun'. As taxidermist, death is his trade, and he not merely destroys wildlife but is prepared to destroy civilized and peaceable life too. But when everything is set for the climax, during the night of the traditional temple procession (the occasion being also made to coincide with the first offering to the gods and the public of the monosyllabic epic, completed and printed at last), the tragedy, of course, does not take place. It is aborted, and that by a most unusual turn of the screw. The strong man, literally in trapping and killing a mosquito by a blow on his own forehead, kills himself. Whatever we may think of such a denouement as an artistic accomplishment, I am here interested in the idea behind, the moral of the fable, as it were. (And, indeed, there is more than a touch of the fabulous about *The Man-Eater*.)

Commenting on the hero of *Hamlet*, Dr Johnson complained: 'Hamlet is, through the whole play, rather an instrument than an agent. After he has, by the stratagem of the play, convicted the King, he makes no attempt to punish him, and his death is at last effected by an incident which Hamlet has no part in producing.' The same can be said of Nataraj, for in the destruction of Vasu, he is as little an agent as any other individual in Malgudi. He is not even as much of an instrument as Hamlet. And there is nothing fortuitous about this fact, no matter how fortuitous the incident leading to Vasu's death may seem. Evil in this novel, as in ancient Indian thought and at least some older Indian literary works, is essentially self-destroying (when, that is, it is not totally illusory). And this traditional affiliation of his tale or fable Narayan underlines constantly, a little too heavily to my mind, by means of the intertwined *rakshasa* or demon idea, right up to the final identification of Vasu with the legendary Bhasmasura on the novel's last page.

'Every demon appears in the world with a special boom of indestructibility. Yet the universe has survived all the *rakshasas* that were ever born. . . . Every demon carries within him, unknown to himself, a tiny seed of self-destruction, and goes up in thin air at the most unexpected moment. Otherwise what is to happen to humanity?' He narrated again for my benefit the story of Bhasmasura the unconquerable . . .

All of this is perhaps very well for the fabulous aspect of *The Man-Eater*. But the novel is also far more effectively a comic work, and at bottom it avoids any approach to the tragic by other means than reference to ancient philosophy and legend. For in a sense Vasu does not have a chance, and that not so much because he is a self-destroying *rakshasa* but simply because he is in Malgudi. It is not

only that he is an outsider, an intruder, and at the appropriate time everyone becomes morally opposed to, and outraged by, him—the printer, the typesetter, the journalist, the veterinarian, the lawyer, the shopkeeper, and even the temple dancer who is his mistress. Their active opposition is obviously of no avail. The truth is rather that, in the midst of this solid reality, Vasu becomes not impotent but unreal. In keeping with the traditional idea of evil, this, too, may well be Narayan's point. But it points far more insistently in the other direction. It reveals in fact, one of the foundations upon which rests Narayan's deeper comic view of life. For what dominates the novel in the last analysis is not the presence of the outsider but the strength and cohesion of the Malgudi community. And a powerful sense of community is the foundation of Narayan's comedy. The agricultural community of Wessex and the aristocracy of Yoknapatawpha are tragic and helpless not because they are invaded by strong and ruthless outsiders, which they are. With remarkable historical insight—more remarkable though less obvious in the case of Thomas Hardy—both Hardy and Faulkner show these societies as internally weak, historically obsolete, ready like Tess, to succumb before the first onslaught. But not so the community that Narayan depicts. He sees in it the strength and tenacity of life itself.

The centre of life, as in the case of other comic writers, is, of course, domestic life. And how severely Narayan maintains this position and at the same time how neutral and emotionally almost denuded his idea of domesticity! Romantic or passionate love has no place in it. Any deviation from it—any impulse or act that denies its centrality—is a prime aberration in Narayan. This is especially true of women, since men have perforce to engage in professional or outside duties as a means of livelihood. But even so, material or spiritual ambition, the larger world outside of Malgudi, revolt, art and love—these remain temptations. When surrendered to, they threaten to destroy not only domestic life, but life itself. All those escapes which regularly punctuate the whole body of Narayan's work are in this respect highly illustrative, if only because of their varied motivation. Swami runs away from school and responsibility; the hero of *The Bachelor of Arts* from memories of frustrated love; the heroine of *The Dark Room*, as we have seen, in order to assert the idea of woman's dignity and economic independence; the spoilt son of the financial expert in protest against what he regards as paternal tyranny. Yet, no matter where their escape takes them in a literal sense, they all end up, like the very first hero, Swami, in a dark wood that leads

nowhere. Not only do they all return, each one is made to recognize his temporary motivation or impulse as either silly, or fraudulent, or illusory. If I may quote just one short passage, here is the advice given to the hero of *The Guide* by another character: 'No, no, Raju listen to my advice. Send her away and try to get back to ordinary, real life. Don't talk of all this art business. It's not for us.' Both art and love are given more weight in *The Guide* than anywhere else in Narayan. But even here perhaps the 'ordinary'—the 'real'—life counts for more in the end. This accords with Narayan's characterization of his hero as 'the middle-class common man,' so that the idea of life in the Malgudi novels is reduced not just to this man's life but, further, his *ordinary* life, which alone seems to constitute reality, all the rest being illusion or aberration.

This is undoubtedly too narrow a view of even middle-class life, and Narayan seems to recognize as much in his concept of what he facetiously calls the 'Wellsian Frog'—a term that does not refer to H. G. Wells, but only to the commonplace phrase 'frog in the well' which is the title of this essay in *Next Sunday*. The state of such a creature is not to Narayan altogether unenviable, for, as he argues, what is the value of that modern idea of progress that consists entirely of speedy travel and mass media of communication—the means modern technology has devised for the purpose of taking the frog out of his narrow horizons and introducing him to the universe at large? What is the social benefit and human content of mere technological advancement? 'I should like to know how many hours in a week a man of one profession, say an auditor, spends watching or listening to the problems of a mechanic in a workshop. Yet that is the only way in which one may escape the frog state. One must also learn to take an interest in other people's affairs: the undischarged debts of a neighbour or the partition deeds of two quarrelling brothers, or the 'in-law' misdeeds in some other house must be viewed with the intensity of a personal problem. This tendency in some measure, perhaps only for its gossip value, is evident in villages and small-town societies rather than in big cities.'

I have made this rather lengthy citation because it expresses, in discursive prose, the true creed of the Malgudi novelist. It expresses for that matter the creed, stated or unstated, of any novelist, for without such interest and capability as Narayan speaks of, no novelist will have anything to write about. But above all it shows what the idea of community means when it is not confined to the domestic circle. It means communication, human communication

in matters of quotidian living, and not the sort of communication associated with such mass media as Narayan mentions earlier in the essay. And what we should note is that it represents a value and a condition not just of Narayan's existence as a novelist, but of the existence of almost all Malgudi characters and their collective life. This is perhaps one reason or at least justification for Narayan's use of ordinary undifferentiated prose in dialogue, his avoidance of idiosyncratic speech and verbal misunderstanding. Think here of the many modern western novelists and playwrights who use deliberate disjunction of language and whose characters seem trapped inescapably in states of isolation so acute that between them mutually there is possibility neither of communication nor of understanding. In contrast, Malgudi stands out as a place of open communication, often enough for 'its gossip value' only, but certainly cutting across professional and class lines and embracing the community as a whole.

Herein, too, we see the deeper reason for Narayan's choice of a 'small-town' society, for the superficial influence of Western or simply modern forces on such a society notwithstanding, it still retains and displays this characteristic of an older, a more human way of life. Thus it is not surprising that Madras should strike Chandran, the hero of *The Bachelor of Arts*, as an 'impersonal place' and that, freshly arrived from Malgudi, he should find himself 'wishing that the people of Madras were more human; they were so mechanical and impersonal; the porter at the station had behaved as if he were blind, deaf, and mute; now this hotel man would not even look at his guest; these fellows simply did not care what happened to you after they had received your money.' How different things are in Malgudi one need hardly illustrate by examples, since every single page of these novels proclaims this difference. I shall, however, cite one or two in order to show that the value of community and communication is not always to be considered an unmixed blessing. The first occurs in Chapter 4 of *The English Teacher* in a short scene at the bus-stand where the recently widowed Krishnan accompanied by his daughter has come to see off his mother.

The bus conductor blew his whistle. The driver sat on his seat. An old village woman, with a basket, on her knee, sitting next to my mother asked, 'Where are you going?'

'Kamalpuram . . . My son is employed here. There you see him with his child. . . .' She whispered, 'A motherless child and so I come here often.' At which the village woman clapped her hands and wailed, 'Oh, the poor child! Oh, the

poor child!’ She insisted upon having the child lifted up and shown to her. She touched the child’s cheeks and cracked her fingers on her temples as an antidote for Evil Eye. She cried: ‘What a beauty! And a girl!’ She sighed deeply, and my mother was once again affected. I wished the bus would move. But the conductor would not allow it to go, he was deeply involved in controversy with another villager who refused to pay the regular fare but wanted some concession. . . . The village woman “now said: ‘When is he marrying again?’ . . . My mother was agitated, and desperately tried to suppress her. . . . ‘Oh, don’t speak of all that now.’ The old woman could not be suppressed so easily. She said: ‘Why not? He is so young! How can he manage the child?’

‘That is what I also say,’ my mother echoed indiscreetly.

‘Men are spoilt if they are without a wife at home,’ added the old woman. I looked desperately at the conductor who showed no sign of relenting. I said: ‘Conductor, ins’t it time to start?’

‘Yes’ sir, look at this man . . .’

‘He wants four annas for . . .’ began the controversialist.

The old woman was saying: ‘A man must marry within fifteen days of losing his wife. Otherwise he will be ruined. I was the fourth wife to my husband and he always married within three weeks. All the fourteen children are happy.’

Equally illustrative would be that early scene in *The Financial Expert* where Margayya’s spoilt son throws his father’s account book into the street gutter and immediately causes an inquisitive and none too reticent crowd to collect around him, wondering what had been lost, hazarding all manner of guesses, and without in the least understanding the true situation of the two principals, father and son, philosophizing at random, taking sides, bullying poor Margayya for his heartless behaviour toward a small child, garrulously sympathizing with the child himself until Margayya is forced to retreat from the scene, reflecting how inexorably ‘Society was pressing in upon him from all sides—the latest in the shape of this woman who had on her back a bundle of unwashed linen. Vegetable sellers, oil-mongers, passersby, cart-men students—everyone seemed to have a right to talk to him as they pleased. Society seemed to overwhelm him on all sides.’ Even Vasu in *The Man-Eater*, to give one final instance, seems to express this same no-man-is-an-island creed: ‘We are not lone dwellers in the Sahara to live self-centred lives. We are members of a society, and there is no point in living like a recluse, shutting oneself away from all the people around.’

Vasu, of course, stands for something like the polar opposite of the social idea, society being for him something that he can exploit, necessary only in proportion as it provides satisfaction for his self-centred will. While I shall elaborate on this theme in a moment, I



would first like to conclude the present discussion by pointing to another fact connected with the idea of community in Narayan's world—namely, the fact of continuity. And I shall again cite a rather peculiar example, the example of the Malgudi gutter already mentioned, and which appears in more than one novel, in *The Financial Expert* becoming the recipient and the conveyor to oblivion of two important documents, the son's school record book as well as the father's financial ledger, precipitating thus the novel's two main crises, one professional and the other domestic.

The gutter was wide as a channel. Once in a while, especially before the elections, the Municipal officials came down and walked along the edge peering into its dark current and saying something among themselves as to its being a problem and so on. But there they left it until the next election. . . . At other times the gutter continued its existence unhampered, providing the cloud of mosquitoes and the stench that characterized existence in Vinayak Mudali Street.

Men and men's affairs may come and go, but the Malgudi gutter, like Tennyson's famous brook, goes on for ever! While we can applaud Narayan's realism in this matter, our sluggish world being what it is and what it has been, some of us may also think it unfortunate that Narayan should seem to take such a dim, even cynical, ultimate view of politics and the possibilities of political effort and change.

I have, however, deliberately chosen this example for another reason, for in one sense it is like the other example cited above. They mistake matters somewhat, I think, who regard 'personal relations' as Narayan's theme. Of course, it can be called that, but not in the sense in which it is meant, as something to be striven for in a world that denies them on all sides. That is a recent Western theme inspired by the human situation in Western society. Narayan is an Indian or old-fashioned writer in the sense that he writes of an older world. In this world communication and relations are in no way a problem; so far from one's having to strive to achieve them, the problem, as the examples cited show, may well be to avoid them. But in reality the matter is simply not seen as a problem. Social and personal relations are rather something that surround us like the atmosphere, not wholly pure, sometimes quite polluted, but given, necessary, inescapable, and on the whole as natural, as useful as life itself—something that is the condition of one's existence but about which one thinks as little as about the air that one breathes. Likewise, though Narayan is far from sentimentalizing the idea of continuity, it too constitutes

a value of his comedy. Malgudi is thus a continuous social fabric, in space and time, testifying to the continuity of social life rather than the sort of personal survival by which Narayan sought to answer the problem of tragedy in *The English Teacher*. And it is because Narayan sees these facts—community, communication, and continuity—at the base of social life that he can still write recognizable (if old-fashioned) comedy rather than the sort of comedy—tragi-comedy, grim comedy, comedy of the absurd, or whatever the name—written by modern Western novelists and playwrights who see in life only isolation, incommunication, and disjunction.

I would like finally and briefly to touch upon Narayan's three latest novels up to date: *The Guide*, *The Man-Eater of Malgudi* and *The Vendor of Sweets*. There is no room here to analyse these novels individually and in detail, though they certainly call for such analysis. My purpose will be to examine just one strand that runs through all of them and has to do with the question of ideas. I have already pointed out how little or how disastrous a part ideas treated as ideas play in Narayan's work, and, indeed when I speak of ideas again here, I mean them less as ideas and more as ideas that have passed into life and conduct—ideas that are visible only as attitudes and motivations. However, if we want a discursive statement of this one idea that I have in mind, we can turn to yet another of Narayan's own essays in *Next Sunday* called 'Upstartism.' Upstartism is a force that 'expresses itself through a human being' (naturally enough for a novelist, we may add) and an upstart, according to Narayan, is a man 'who generally feels, "All the world owes me a living." The world outside has no meaning for him except as a storehouse of opportunities.' Such a man is apt often enough to conceal his attitude under the guise of service to the world. But if you ask him 'After the world has given you your living according to what you expect of it, how will you treat it?' His answer will be: 'With indifference.' 'His attitude cannot be defined as arrogance. It is more self-assurance, an abnormal amount of it.'

Narayan says in the essay that he even finds the type admirable, and we can see from the novels that he is certainly fascinated by it, which is, of course not the same thing. The novels also tell us far more accurately and impressively what the type represents. . . . Its most prominent though by no means the subtlest embodiment is the already mentioned Vasu. There are comparable figures even in the earlier novels, such, for instance, as Ramani, the husband in *The Dark Room*,—the 'self-made' man who is not only ruthless but



justifies his self-assurance (“an abnormal amount of it”) as well as his indifference to others on the ground that, as he argues, if one was ‘entirely self-made’ it ‘proved one was right.’ In Vasu the moral and social violence always implicit in such an attitude is accompanied also by a great deal of physical violence. He is an extreme representative of a new egoism as well as a new will and a new energy that we can call western or modern, associated as these are inevitably in our minds with post-renaissance Europe. Vasu may be seen, indeed, as a sort of Marlowian overreacher thrust upon the cramped, the very ordinary, stage of quotidian Malgudi. And the way Malgudi and Narayan, deals with the phenomenon in this novel we have already seen.

Let us now turn to *The Vendor of Sweets*—to Mali, first, who represents one of the two sides of the personal drama in this novel, the other being his father, Jagan, the elderly hero of the story. It may be noted in passing that as compared with Narayan’s early novels, the later ones tend to focus more on individuals and their personal stories. In them, while Malgudi remains the corporate social reality behind, and continues to play its part in that capacity, the emphasis falls more markedly than before on the exceptional hero—one who is still of his scene though at the same time distinguishable from it. And, of course, the story of father and son in *The Vendor* is by its very nature a highly personal story. Again the theme may be seen anticipated in the story of Margayya and his son in *The Financial Expert*. In each case, for instance, the most poignant aspect of the problem is revealed through a more or less total breakdown of communication between the generations. But the father-son story is only one of the many strands in the earlier novel. In *The Vendor* it becomes central. More important, while Margayya’s son is an incommunicative and inarticulate moron, developing into some-thing of an ‘upstart’ only towards the novel’s close, Mali is true to type from the very outset—to be exact, from the moment of his mother’s death in his early boyhood, a moment, incidentally, recapitulated in the novel with great truth and power, and though brief, as moving as lagan’s much longer reminiscence later of his marriage and the first years of married life. (A separate essay may in fact be written on Narayan’s remembrance and recapitulation of the past.) In this matter Mali’s visit to the United States and his sojourn in that country are not as decisive as they may seem. For in truth he brings back only what he has carried there in the first place, his ‘Upstartism,’ now confirmed and exaggerated to grotesque proportions. Where he thought of writing a novel before— *he*, the perfect antithesis of the man who,

in Narayan's words quoted earlier, views others' problems with 'the intensity of a personal problem'—he is now bent on manufacturing and marketing a novel-writing machine. While he was always self-assured, he becomes brazen as well. Where he exploited only his father before going to America, on his return he exploits both his father and his American wife or rather mistress. He perhaps means to marry her, but the moment he discovers her lack of utility in the novel-writing machine enterprise, he loses interest, and it is actually the father who has to find the fare for her return passage.

Mali's situation is perhaps not just his but also, as Narayan presents it in this novel, that of a whole new generation of scooter-riding, alcohol smuggling boys, all of whom want to get rich quickly by whatever means possible, including not only crack-brained but dubious and even shady means. Such, indeed, are the boys, the children of a newly rich and rising class of people, with whom Mali associates. The crux of the story, however, remains the problem of a father, who is intensely attached to his son, on whom he in fact dotes against all reason, and the total indifference of that son. And the solution Jagan arrives at finally, after much pain, humiliation, and self-searching, is not only personal but peculiarly Indian and traditional. One might even say that the solution is nothing less than renunciation of the world—something that Narayan had himself excoriated earlier as either a fraud or a delusion. And even in this novel Jagan, and his spiritualism and idealism, are constant targets of Narayan's comedy and irony through much of the novel. As we first see him, Jagan is a man of mixed motives and ridiculous obscurantism to boot. He is primarily a self-proclaimed 'Gandhian'—that is, the sort of person who has for so long passed muster as the Mahatma's follower in our country, and not only in small-town societies, though with more impunity and self-importance there than anywhere else. In his shop Jagan by turn reads the *Bhagvad Gita* and keeps a sharp lookout for the cash receipts which he will count and stack away in the loft at home, the 'free cash', as he calls it, which will appear neither on his ledger nor the Income Tax return. He has written a work on 'Nature Cure and Natural Met' and considers the margosa tree a natural source of the most perfect toothbrushes possible, a cure as well as preventive for typhoid, cholera, and all other ordinary and extraordinary diseases, and its leaves, fried in ghee, a natural ambrosia. He wears only 'non-violent footwear' and eats salt-free and sugar-free diet, though he at the same time prepares and sells more sweets than anyone else in India.

This sort of cultural obscurantism was no doubt associated with Gandhi, if not inspired by him, among obscurantists who chose to see nothing else in Gandhi's example. Nevertheless, if through it all we find Jagan still a sympathetic character, as I think we do, the reason is that somewhere at the back of his confused personality and his mixed motivation, we sense from the outset a good deal of emotional sensitivity and genuine spiritual aspiration. He is, moreover, an intensely lonely man, though his innate shyness prevents him from so much as acknowledging it to himself, much less to his neighbours. So that in the end, when he triumphs over himself by coming to terms with his ineradicable loneliness, we are not at all surprised at the feat. And if this is a spiritual feat, its reference is entirely to this life and its problems, and we are grateful that Narayan recognizes the fact that spirituality is not altogether a matter for the life to come. Jagan, we may say, at last even becomes a mahatma in the sense of a true and truly self-possessed self. The achievement involves neither superhuman powers nor wilful renunciation. Its purpose is to live one's life in this world with some measure of tranquillity by shaking off emotion when it is recognized as false in substance and fettering in its effect. This is to conquer self, not in the pseudo-spiritual sense in which Jagan announces it in the novel's opening sentence: 'Conquer taste, and you will have conquered the self'. If this means conquering the need for salt and sugar and so on in one's diet, as it does at this stage, then the rejoinder of the cousin (a great creation, incidentally, of true comic observation) becomes unanswerable: 'Why conquer the self?' The novel in the end gives a perfect reason why. It shows what it is that needs conquering and in what situation. It tells the story of a lonely man for whom to conquer the self has become the only way of truly possessing it.

Traditional Indian attitudes and resources on the one hand, and the modern ideas and aspirations on the other—the conflict between these appears with considerable subtlety in *The Guide*. I have left this novel to the end because, while not as faultless as some readers seem to think it, it is a strange masterpiece, in some ways unique among Narayan's works. The unusual emphasis in it on art and sexual love has already been mentioned. Of all Narayan's novels, it also comes closest to the tragic. By this I do not refer primarily to Raju's death at the end, which is in no way crucial. The fact of death does not by itself make for literary tragedy. Narayan himself, as we learn from *My Dateless Diary*, had been 'hesitating whether to leave my hero alive

or dead at the end of the story' until Graham Greene, on hearing the story in London, said definitely that 'he should die' and thus settled the issue. (I think though that the novel still leaves it a little uncertain.)

It is commonplace to note that traditional Indian literature has produced no tragedy, and the explanation most often given is that Hindu thought, particularly the law of *karma*, rules out the concept of tragedy through its insistence on the sort of ultimate poetic justice implicit in this law. This is perhaps right, and in any case I have no wish to enter into contro-versy on subjects about which I know next to nothing. Nevertheless, seeing that a certain kind of ultimate justice is equally implicit in other systems of metaphysical thought—at least for those who believe in them—I would venture to suggest that, more than the law itself, the decisive factor has been its total acceptance, and not only of the law of *karma* but equally of the other laws that flow from it but operate in more wordly realms. There has been, in other words, an exclusion of serious conflict, an official elimination of any challenge to accepted laws, to traditional spiritual, social, and political authority—the sort of challenge that leads to tragedy in such diverse works as *Antigone* on the one hand and *Anna Karenina* on the other.

At least something like this is true of Narayan's novels. For if, as a rule, there are tragedies in the world of Malgudi but no tragedy, the reason is that there are conflicts in this world but no irreconcilable conflict or cleavage. Only in *The Guide*, or at least most fully in this novel, do we have a conflict that is not easily resolvable. It is a conflict between two sets of values or aspirations, two modes of living, even perhaps two kinds of human beings. Domestic life versus passionate love or professionalism, scholar versus sadhu, to be a housewife or an artist, a house-holder or a lover, a scholar or a husband, an easy warm sociality versus a cold but correct individualism—no matter how we phrase the various paradoxes and conflicts of attitude and motivation in the novel, the important fact is that one side in the issue is no longer treated as chimerical or illusory while the other as real. Narayan recognizes the strength and reality of each.

Look at the three main characters: Raju, the tourist guide who becomes an impresario and later a mahatma; the dancer Rosie who becomes Raju's mistress; and her husband, the scholar Marco. All three have broken away from what one of the minor characters in the novel, as already noted, calls the 'ordinary, real life'. Their mutual entangle-ments as well as the dilemmas of the personal situation of

each stem directly from this break. Yet none can or wants to return to the sort of life symbolized by Malgudi. Raju may observe wistfully that he 'could hardly afford a private life now. . . .eat like an ordinary human being, shout and sleep like a normal man'. But this is passing nostalgia. He speaks more truly of his motivations and drives when he says: 'I felt bored and terrified by the boredom of normal life, so much had I got used to a glamorous, romantic existence'.

The existence, the aims and pursuits, of these characters, romantic or glamorous by ordinary Malgudi standards, are in reality neither romantic in the sense of being illusory or impossible, nor just glamorous. Marco's case is the simplest in this as in other respects. He may be seen in fact as a highly simplified version of Casaubon—the famous character in George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (subtitled 'A Study of Provincial Life'). Like that character, Marco is an independently wealthy researcher, a 'ruin-collecting' scholar, a man who marries with great deliberation and care and yet fails to become what Rosie calls a 'real, live husband.' 'Dead and decaying things seemed to unloosen his tongue and fire his imagination, rather than things that lived and moved and swung their limbs.' Even the book he is writing, *The Cultural History of South India*, is comparable to Casaubon's *Key to All the Mythologies*. Yet, though less grand, the book does get completed and published, unlike the endless *Key*. Indeed, there is not the slightest trace of deception and self-deception involved in Marco's intellectual enterprise, and it is this that makes him both more successful as a scholar and more simple as a fictional creation than George Eliot's character. His book is not only finished and published, it does change accepted ideas, as he had claimed it would. The success is achieved at great human and domestic cost, but Marco himself is conscious neither of the cost nor of the conflict involved. His is a one-track personality.

Not so Rosie's and Raju's. Both are eventually as or even more successful than Marco, in their respective or destined fields and different ways. Nor is it at all surprising that the one common accompaniment of this success in all three cases should be a n isolation that in Rosie's and Raju's case is perhaps even more real than in the case of Marco, and at no time so real and palpable as when they are the cynosure of applauding or reverential crowds—which are, of course, the very moments of their greatest success. Such a paradox is implicit in the very act of breaking out of the ordinary domestic and communal world of Malgudi in obedience to what the novel shows as an unappeasable force and striving within the individual

personality. Rosie and Raju are different from Marco, not because they suppress this force any more than Marco, but only because they are conscious of the conflict within themselves. In Rosie's case, for instance, as we are told: 'Her art and her husband could not find a place in her thought at the same time; one drove the other out.' However, the more she surrenders to her urge to dance, the more she agonizes over Marco and her duty to him. The respectable middle-class wife and the traditional temple dancer (first taken out of her class and then in a sense reverted to it under conditions of modern professionalism)—Rosie is never unconscious of either of these two sides of her situation. Deeper down, however, as Raju observes with insight: "Neither Marco nor I had any place in her life, which had its own sustaining vitality and which she herself had underestimated all along.'

Raju, although conscious likewise of paradox and conflict, is still more irresistibly in the grip of his striving—which, however, unlike the striving of the other two, has no single focus. He is a man of restless energy, of nameless ambition, but above all a showman and a role player. He imagines himself at the pinnacle of success and self-fulfilment when, as Rosie's business manager, he ridiculously arrogates all credit and importance to himself. Yet this is not the ultimate role he is destined to play. That role is the role of the mahatma that he plays at the end and that brings him more fame, reverence, and newspaper coverage than Marco and even Rosie ever secure. Of course, all this comes fortuitously to him, as had other things earlier in his career. Moreover, he remains through it anonymous behind his great role, and this too is befitting. Above all, it is a moment of greatness and achievement which is essentially momentary—a performance that can be neither repeated nor sustained. In this again it is the appropriate moment for the man. For Raju's restless energy has always precluded a sustained effort and a determined will. In this he is a perfect contrast to Marco. Indeed, he is a free and easy man. For all his role-playing egoism, he is at bottom a lazy man, a man of great and eventually disastrous moral laziness. And this is why he falls into the situation that lands him in jail and prepares the way for his final role. As Rosie tells him at the time of his arrest: 'I felt all along you were not doing right things.' And this is made to contrast strongly with Marco's 'correct disposal of his affairs,' his 'machine-like rectitude'. As Raju himself reflects sleepily, Marco 'was the sort of fellow to keep even a worth-less packet at the bank, because that was the right thing-to-do—the r-r-ight thing . . .'



And yet in the end Raju does something which, for all his uncertainties and the fortuitous quality of the situation itself, is far more right than anything Marco has done. Indeed, rectitude in the ordinary sense hardly enters into the act, and certainly not business-like or machine-like rectitude. The role of the Mahatma is the one truly great role that Raju can play. It is, of course, full of possibilities for fraudulent, and though Raju slips into it almost involuntarily and with his characteristic ease and laziness, he is by no means averse to exploiting these possibilities. He even wants to run away when the going is not so good. But all the same this very lazy scoundrel is also able to rise to the occasion, to play a role genuinely at last, accepting all its responsibilities and even coming to believe in the saving possibilities that the Mahatma seems to hold for the entire community according to its ancient faith. Here, in fact, the novel reaches beyond Gandhi, the immediate inspiration behind the Mahatma role, and makes contact with that in Indian culture which inspired Gandhi himself and sustained Gandhism among the vast and nameless majority of his followers. It makes contact with the idea of the great soul embedded in traditional Indian thought and sensibility.

In conclusion I would like to make two points, One is really a hortatory and even presumptuous sentiment. We in this country are, I think, too easily impressed by thunder-and-lightning effects, and do not always realize that high drama may sometimes be only melodrama, the poetry of life sometimes merely false emotionalism, obvious commitment just noise and loudness, and even high seriousness simply pretentiousness. If this tendency does in fact exist among us, the work of Narayan can certainly prove a corrective. But I would insist only on the other point, it being something I have attempted to demonstrate at some length in this paper. In his Introduction to *The Bachelor of Arts*, Graham Greene observes that in the Malgudi novels and behind their numerous characters “we are aware not of an individual author, with views on politics or social reform, or with a personal mysticism to express, but of a whole national condition.” The “whole” of the national condition is an exaggeration. But certainly a significant part of it.

DHIRENDRA SHARMA

## Humanism in Contemporary Indian Literature



INDIA is understood and interpreted on the basis of certain stereotype attitudes. Usually Indian society is analysed by 'specialists' in terms of caste system, deep rooted faith in the ancient *dharmā*, and her pagentry of temples, gods and goddesses. Those Indian writers who publish in English do so primarily for the Western market and therefore continue writing on the age-old themes. Such works cannot and should not be construed as representative of the contemporary Indian literature. Here, I shall attempt to present a brief study of contemporary Hindi writers. In providing English rendering, I have tried to remain faithful to both the spirit and letter of the original passages.

Patriotism was the main theme of almost every popular writer before Independence (1947). In a sporadic manner it has re-emerged following India's border skirmishes with China (1962) and Pakistan (1965). However, nationalism is no longer the main aspiration of the Indian writer. Anti-caste, equality of women, civil rights for untouchables, non-violent freedom struggle (*satyagraha*) were predominant features of the 30's and 40's. Since Independence these sociopolitical goals seem to have been achieved at least legally. The writer's concern is now poverty and suffering. He is venturing into



the new world of the 60's and 70's. He has thrown off old values, old faiths, old symbols and old sympathies.

He no longer writes about rajas, gods, and high caste priests. In today's fiction the hero is more likely to be a farmer, labourer, or a factory worker; the man who is cheated by a rich money lender or businessman, and who has to offer graft to reap the harvest of freedom and economic development. Indian fiction depicts the emotional problems of youth who invent unique devices to defy the social sanctions against their free romance. Stories of struggle in everyday life of a low-income householder, a father of five children, who subsists on meagre earnings and yet has to keep up with the rising cost of living. His unending strife to keep up with the standards of a corrupt and rich bureaucrat neighbour is frequently treated in fiction. The man tries to remain honest. But eventually, the all-pervading system forces him to learn to survive in 'the dirty pond'. The conflict is over, he too becomes a 'well-adjusted' member of 'the high society.' His children too now get good clothes and candy more often. He is now a respectable citizen, a prospective candidate for the Lok Sabha.

## II

India is neither France, nor Russia of today. There is even less affinity with the arrogant posture of wealth and strength of the United States. There are neither *underground* writers nor *underground* press in India. The Indian writer is an upholder of the banner of radical respectability and change. He is not a 'court poet' but the leader of the masses. Under the British Raj it was a normal happening to imprison a writer for 'spreading disaffection', but since Independence no writer has been charged for writing anti-government and non-conformist themes.

Notwithstanding the basic oneness of man's creative arts, India's development and her problems are the results of her own peculiar history. Her extremely rich literary tradition is confronted with her recent colonial experience and current 'underdevelopment'.

If compared with other countries, India falls rather with most Asian, African and the Latin American nations with whom she shares human misery and social injustice. She too shares victimization by the economically developed nations. Like them India is the scene of socio-political turmoils. Nevertheless, India has chosen a democratic path to her progress and within the last two decades multitudes of

her people have experimented with the process of a free political system. And since the power rests in the political structure, politics has become a kind of 'everyone's business'. Even in the gossip of beggars political controversies erupt; women's kitchen-chats are spiced with political jargon. Corruption of the bureaucrats, political deals, rise and fall of immoral politicians, border and language conflicts, and the issues of war and peace are the popular themes of contemporary fiction. Some of the recent titles are: *The False-Truth*; *The Uprooted People*; *The Ocean Waves, and Man*; *The Dark Closed Rooms*; *The Soul of the Empty Chair*; *The God of Sin*, etc. These novels represent realism at its best in the background of India's contemporary socio-political experience.

### III

*The Dark Closed Rooms* is directed against the traditional view of 'women's place in the kitchen'. In the fiction of the 30's and 40's like Premchand's *Godan*, the woman was treated as the 'mother of the household.' She was still an object of proper respect and courtesy. She was rather a 'righteous wife'. But in the contemporary fiction the woman is challenging the old standards demanding to be *companion*, *comrade*, and *partner* of the man. She demands her right to free-love which was traditionally monopolized by man; she desires the right to choose or dismiss her life-partner. She refuses to be locked up as a 'married woman with the kids'. She now aspires to be an attractive, romantic and loving female.

New Delhi is the capital of India. It is also a cross-road of national and international cultures. It is also an epitome of moral and immoral strife. It is the centre of upheavals, corruption and power struggle. Yet it is also the symbol of the greatest frustration of multitudes where one finds *unhappy* citizens, rich and poor alike. To be successful, as the common saying goes in New Delhi, 'you do not have to be hardworking, capable, and honest. These traditional qualities are not important. What is required of a man today, is to have *tact* and *contact*.' Such is the theme of Lakshmikant Verma's novel *The Soul of the Empty Chair*.

In another novel, *How Long Shall I Cry*, by Dr Rangeya Raghav, the writer deals with the life of the lowest of the lowly outcasted *karnat* people who move like unsettled gypsies from place to place and remain unaffected by the socio-economic changes. The *karnats* sell their young girls, and live off their women's prostitution. *How Long Shall I Cry* is the first Hindi novel of its kind which courageously

draw our attention to the sociological and psychological phenomena of such outcaste people.

## IV

During the last two decades, India has made great strides in her industrial progress. This has also created problems of developing *urbane* culture. Urbanites have lost their traditional simplicity and innocence. One of the contemporary great figures in Hindi literature Vatsyasyana ‘Agyeya’\* expresses his concern in a poem entitled

*The Serpent*

Oh Serpent!

You never become civilized  
Even could never adjust to city dwelling.

Will you answer me!

How did you learn to sting?  
Where did you find venom?

Like any other country India too has started to build her own so-called defence ordinance. Those dreams of pre-independence days of a great moral society seem to have been lost in the world of conflicting realities:

A young poet deploras:

What would be the civilization?  
The New Great Society?  
Every foundation of which—  
Is being laid in the trenches of War!

(*Nai Kavita*, Vol. 3, p. 72.)

## V

The Freedom Movement (1942-45) was to the Indian writer what the Resistance of the World War II was to the French. The inspiration of the movement produced an urge to unity and a sense of purpose for the common cause—freedom. However this movement, essentially nationalistic, was gradually to be transformed into an aspiratorial universal humanistic freedom of man. This transformation took place under the liberal leadership of Gandhi and Nehru. During the 50's the development of international humanism in Indian literature was still free from class conflict, and the bitterness of the cold-war thinking was still unknown to the writer. It was hoped by

\* A Hindi writer usually has a *pen* name which appears within ‘...’.

the follower of the Gandhian movement that at the end of that long twisted road to freedom (and at the end of the war), the world would move away from disorder to an order, hopefully led by the design of the Western democratic nations. Ramdhari Singh 'Dinkar', once a prisoner of the British Raj, and now a member of the Lok Sabha composed:

Free India! I salute thee.

.....

India, that speaks the language of Peace and Love,  
India, that makes the confluence of World cultures  
India, that is free from hatred, mistrust, and vengeance. . . .

But by the end of the 50's, Indians, frustrated in their expectations, perplexed by the international realities, moved somewhat hesitatingly towards the Marxian type of humanism. Where the literature of the last decade was inclined to accommodate the past, writings of the 60's reflect a radical change in content and message. The writer now appears in an uncompromising mood. He no longer seems willing to forgive the social injustice. He now sees a world divided by the class struggle, a phenomenon which was completely alien to the writer of the freedom movement. Then, every Indian rich and poor, aristocrat Gandhi and Nehru and the proletariat of the nation had stood together in the struggle for freedom. Now the rich were getting richer and the poor poorer. The gulf between the classes was widening. The writer could not remain uncommitted. Instead of uniting he took sides; his compassionate heart cried out for the wretched of this earth. He abandoned the tradition of seeking the world hereafter or nirvana.

Hailed as the poet of the nation (Rashtrakavi), Maithilisharan Gupta proclaimed:

Come I here not as a messenger of Heaven.  
Come I to turn this Earth into Heaven,

Another leading figure of the freedom movement was Hariaudhji. He was an avowed follower of Gandhi. In the compassionate spirit of Gandhi he composed poems 'The Cry of the Humble', 'The Flame in my Heart', and in "The Powerful and the Meek," he said,

The Hut of the Meek is destroyed  
Palace is built for the powerful.  
Candle is blown out of the poor's  
To brighten the chandelier

By destroying innocents  
The powerful celebrate the booty.

## VI

When rebellion began it was first aimed against the British Raj. But since the removal of the British the rebellious writer has turned to the social issues. He now leads the youth to free love. During the freedom movement, the writer was apt to appeal to asceticism. Individual emotions were sacrificed at the altar of freedom. But now he leads the society to indulgence. He glorifies the tender mien of slender beauty. According to tradition *desire* of the flesh was an hindrance in nirvana. Now love becomes desirable, for it is a noble and human element in creation and 'only he who loves one can love all; he who gives love can make sacrifices for mankind.' 'Niraj' Shivamurti Mishra, Udayabhanu 'Hansa' and Kuldip are some of the representative contemporary poets of the new existentialist humanistic movement.

'Niraj' declares:

'Metaphysics and religion are meant for saints, sages and priests.  
If you want to live in this world, then, learn to love it.'

Mishra interprets the metaphysical truth:

God wills continuation of humanity. That is the only atomic form worthy of personification of the impersonal Reality. That is Female, She sustains Creation. That is why, He wants me to love Her.

Kuldip, observing this change of attitude in the writer, says:

My songs are changing  
Bringing a new age into my emotions

...

Now love is not pain. . .

Today, inadvertently sprang up  
Songs of sighs of the Earth in my throat.

And the Indian no longer seeks the *summum bonum* which is attained without a vice. The preacher of freelove pleads for his right to remain a man; passion becomes desirable;

I've restrained myself too long  
I am about to attain divinity!  
Lest I turn into Divine  
Let me commit the sin of passion.

.....

This is my first sin  
 Let me commit the virgin sin. . . ('Hans')

## VII

There are a number of *specialists* who have been reassuring the world that the Indian masses are extremely loyal to their traditions; that the caste system is entrenched to an unfathomable depth in the society. No matter what you do, you cannot make them adapt to new methods of socio-economic change. Such predictions were also made by the specialists of the Chinese scene, and were proved false following the Red Revolution. If popular literature is any barometer of change in social attitudes of man, the current Indian literature indicates that the people of that nation have repudiated their traditional standards. That they are emotionally and conscientiously getting ready for another historical happening, perhaps a South Asian Revolution. The storm has grown too strong to subside, for in the words of 'Niraj'; "Revolution is that Typhoon that generates its own storms and typhoons." Nevertheless, it is to be remembered that the appeal to the typhoon is *not* just sadistic. It is the flame of humanism consistently fed on by the naked dehumanization generated by the affluence of poverty and suffering of man.

Transcendentalism which used to be the predominant feature of Indian thinking seems to have disappeared from current literature. And this radical change is expressed by the young poet Gajanan Madhav 'Muktibodh':

There is another Reality  
 Beyond the world of refrigerators  
 Vitamin pills, radiograms  
 Starving child Munia  
 Subsisting on Nothingness  
 Pain of wants in the intestines  
 Of her empty stomach  
 Squalor wounds in the hollows of my breasts,  
 Suffering, Omnipresent Nothing, Zero—  
 Ultimate Truth,  
 False, Unreal everything else.  
 Everlasting Reality—  
 Suffering *ad infinitum!*

But the poet also expresses his existentialist determination. He has faith in Man, in his living. He is not a defeatist:

Nyet, Nyet,  
 I would die yet nyet.  
 What would Life say:  
 'How infidel he was!'

(‘The Broken Man,’ by Siddhanath Kumar)

In his determination he invokes the undaunted spirit of a revolutionary and disavows weakness of emotional attachment:

But, the last wish is—

Be the Soldier of the Revolution.

So long oppression enslaves any part of this earth,  
 Shame to life of love and leisure.

Demonic man-eater sucks our blood and roars aloud;  
 No peace and comforts  
 Till the evil is destroyed. (‘Rajen’)

The Indian writer challenges the authority of heaven and questions the *karmic* determinism which permits social inequalities:

Earth is dying,

Heaven is silent! Why? Why?

Destiny rests with the divinity of the gods,  
 Manliness dwells within us.

Man hasn't lost his vitality  
 Every breath, every moment  
 We shall prevail (without gods).

(Janakivallabha Shastri)

Another young poet Virendra Mishra shares the universal sentiment at the sight of napaalming of a poor man's hut:

Remember! your vow of fidelity to reality (of suffering)!

...

Don't get lost in the pleasings of the boat--

Remember! the rising Typhoon too,

For how long you (would)

Not revolt?

Witnessing the burning of the hut

Of an innocent man?

Upendranath ‘Ashka’ is a representative writer of the progressive movement. He is a bestseller, rich, and yet rebellious. Without qualms he strikes at the roots of traditional society:

Since long, caste-order withered away  
 Today exist but two castes  
 On this planet.

One of those who possess all the means of exploitation

.....

Called 'the protector of the world.'  
The other of those who must wage—  
The War of Revolution.

Like a traditional ascetic the poet disassociates himself from indulgence but moves toward a different goal. He provides a new meaning to the old symbols:

You want love!  
What relation I to love?  
You! Epitome of Happiness!  
I, Creator of Unhappiness—  
Morrow, at early dawn,  
I'll move on—  
Renouncing the world.  
    In every stone of my path  
    I'll find my (unhappy) companions.

(Shyambihari Shukla 'Tarla.')

In the cycle of unrestrained wheel of history he sees the inevitable law of the fall of the powerful. And his compassion leads him to the side of the meek:

.....

I've seen palaces rising  
Rising high to the limits of the sky;  
The dust particles (beggars) on the roadsides  
Hiding their own history,  
I've seen.  
I've seen those who shower fires—  
And those who bow heads in humility.

    I have seen—  
The greatpowers turned into meekness  
I've seen—  
Iron wheel (of history) rambling undaunted.

(Shyambihari Shukla "Tarla.")

The Indian writer is willing to venture into an unknown new direction. He is aware of its unresolved difficulties; he is familiar with the universal hesitation with the new. Yet the poet is prepared to extol the New Path:

Oh man!  
Accept the New Path  
Don't let songs of grief



Depress your interior.

.....

You are the great, oh man!  
You are the vital force, unvanquished!  
Be afraid not  
Trifles are your obstacles,  
March on with confidence  
Onward to the New Path.

(Jitendra Kumar)

None desires to shed the blood of other men but when violence and suffering become institutionalized the poet becomes helpless:

When the heart's reached the last limit of anguish  
Even Patience defeated, picks up the sword

(Nilakantha Tiwari)

### VIII

The very sanctity of *dharma* and gods harbouring social injustice is being challenged;

Listen, O contractors of God! Listen!  
The monopolists of Heaven and soul, Listen!  
Offering in your temples and cathedrals  
Smearred with blood of the multitude of innocent souls:  
Wet with tears  
Of millions maimed, disabled, widowed, and orphaned.

(Virendra Kumar Jain)

The traditional holy river has become a symbol of people's sufferings:

Floods in the Ganga of innocent blood

.....

Can empty stomach eat an Atom bomb?  
Be aware! Take note the owners of the crowns of empires!  
Hungry earth is now marching on  
To destroy Hunger!

(‘Niraj’)

The traditional Hindu goddess Kali, the Black One, resembles the image of revolution invoked by Brajkishore Narain:

.....

Her lungs pumping cry of blood  
Whole creation trembles  
The world of affluence shaken

The youth impatient  
 The establishment of exploiters is crumbling  
 Exploited has risen in anger  
 Torches expel the darkness  
 Dreadening drums of Revolution echoing  
 In all directions,

The ancient Vedic anthropomorphic goddess Dawn *ushas* (Rigveda 38. iv. 52) appears in the current poetry as the forerunner of a new age:

Welcome Ushas, the Maiden Dawn!  
 A fresh arrival of Awakening!  
 A new morning of a New Age!  
 Let open the doors  
 Everyone step forward  
 Raise the banner of Freedom  
 Let the early flower smile  
 Hearts be filled with joy.  
 Lo, this is the new arrival of the Maiden Ushas,  
 Bringing a fresh Awakening.

(Shaila Rastogi)

Shri Manjulaji is a young Jaina nun. A collection of her fifty-four poems has been published under the title *The Half-Opened Eye-lids*. (Calcutta: Sughan Sahitya Sadan). Though there are many compositions which reflect the conflict of a young female ascetic's inner-self, she echoes the universal call of revolution:

In the age of the Peoples' Government  
 Who dares to be our Emperor?  
 . . . . .  
 When the nation is Free, feudalism and oligarchy must go.  
 Peoples' revolutions have given a new turn to the world  
 Removal of power-authority  
 The Philosophy of Communism. . . .

There is also new sarcasm and humour in the poetry. Kishansinghji of Haryana in his *Jatṭakavya* collection comments on the student unrest:

Our aim is *not* just to absorb knowledge  
 We come to college to acquire all kinds of tricks and treachery  
 We learn to pass by cheating, and beating the teachers  
 We, the young Indian students, so says the poet Kishansingh "Jatṭa",  
 Are not afraid of fighting. . . .

. . . . .

We create mountain of big strikes  
Out of the trifle instance. . . .

## IX

Indian literature has discussed and encouraged free-love but it has not yet found a taste for complex psychological problems associated with love-variation and perversion. Also, it is free from glorification of violence, and crime and detection themes are still repugnant to the writer.

The Indian literary tradition, in this respect, remains preoccupied with the sociopolitical scenes to such an extent that often it appears to be didactic or simply propagandist.

Sohonlal Dwivedi was a leading poet of the freedom movement. He was hailed as the poet of the nation, especially for his adherence to Gandhi and subsequent imprisonment in 1942. However, without affecting his allegiance to Gandhi and his patriotism he wrote:

Let the Red Star be our guiding Star!  
Let the enemy tremble!

The Red Flag of the workers  
The Red Flag of the helpless  
The Red Flag of the courageous  
No imperialist can destroy it. . . .

. . . .  
Let our Red Flag unfurl  
Let your Red Flag unfurl

. . . .  
Let injustice be destroyed  
May justice win today.

In another poem, the poet of the nation, Mr Dwivedi proclaims his devotion to Karl Marx :

Thee! New Saviour of the peoples of this earth!  
Thee! The Bard of Fire Song of the great Revolution!  
Thee! The Call of Compassion of the meek!  
Thee! The Thunder of Judgment against poverty!  
Thee! The Victory Song of Equality!

Dr Rangeya Raghav, a critic and himself an established writer rightly observes: 'Dwivedi was recognized the Poet of the Nation. Yet probably even a staunch communist could not have composed a better homage to Karl Marx. The significant point is the commitment to the social justice and well-fare of the people. And that remains the

supermost concern of our literature.’ (*Criticism: Content and Style of Contemporary Hindi Poetry* (in Hindi) Delhi: Rajpal & Sons, p. 82).

Humanism is truly the greatest emotional commitment of the Indian writer. Slogans of the coldwar are insignificant to him. He does not hesitate to use traditional Hindu legends and the Christian symbols of suffering to express his anguish:

Once, the innocent and the poor man (Dadhichi)  
Tortured by the wounds inflicted by the demonic power,  
Made the world fearless  
He offered the Thunderbolt of his bones  
‘Go ye, man, stampede the forces of war and destruction.’

Once, the personified good-will hanging on the Cross prayed:  
‘Oh Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.’

(Prayagnarain Tripathi)

And in the commitment, the poet seems to be irrevocable:

Surely, the poet is for sale but you cannot buy him with gold.  
The moon-stars (poets) are not scaled with grain of sand (gold).  
Only he who has the pearls of tear can purchase the poet.

(Gangaprasad Srivastava)

The suffering of man inspires him to write:

Every suffering in itself is a new composition.  
Poetry springs from sighs.  
Smiles of youth  
Offer a new definition to life.

(Rajendra Saksena)

## X

In conclusion, it must be reaffirmed that the humanism of contemporary Indian literature remains very much Indian. There is a patriot who pays generous adoration to Karl Marx, a Hindu poet who condemns the traditional gods, temples, and caste-system. A Hindu legendary sage and Crucifix both symbolize struggle and the suffering of man. Here, the poets extol the goddess of revolution, and yet none becomes ‘un-Indian’ or ‘un-patriotic’. The humanism of contemporary Indian literature evolves from that tradition in which Gandhi proclaimed:

‘I do not want a kingdom, salvation, or heaven; what I want is to remove the troubles of the oppressed and the poor. I do not want my house to be walled

in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all lands to be blown about my house, as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any. I refuse to live in other people's houses as an interloper, a begger or a slave.'

MARGARET CHATTERJEE

## Social and Political Ideas in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Bengali Literature



A WORD of introduction is necessary in order to delimit the scope of this paper for no one working paper could possibly do justice to its theme. I am assuming that although in some countries the eighteenth century was perhaps the century of the greatest intellectual ferment, say in France, this was not the case in India, nor indeed in Britain. Then, although the twentieth century has witnessed the growth of several<sup>1</sup> alternative ideologies, the nineteenth century still shows greater fertility of intellectual life. I believe that the reasons for this are not the same in India and in the West and that the analysis of these reasons is a very necessary exercise if we are to understand our present situation as far as the Indian literary scene is concerned. Nineteenth century Bengal has a special importance in respect of the history of the national movement, this will perhaps be readily conceded. Now a discussion of social and political ideas in nineteenth century Bengal is in large part concerned with the early history of the national awakening, so that the literature of this period in Bengali may be truly said to have had an impact which went beyond regional boundaries. If our theme overlaps with the general history of the national struggle it also overlaps with the other topics which will

be discussed in this seminar, namely that of Western influence on Indian Literature and that of the influence of religion on literature. I shall touch on these matters in passing but try not to be unduly diverted thereby from my central concern.

Can anything general be said about the relation of the writer to his social and political milieu? The main task of an artist is with his craft and not with social reform. Anything else might smack of didacticism and so come in for criticism. We do not expect the lyric poet to offer caustic commentary on his times. But, on the other hand the writing of an epic poem or a drama about the distant past may provide subtle comment on present discontents. The novelist would apparently be in a position of more direct involvement with social and political ideas. His is the task of relating the inner landscape of the mind to the outer landscape of event and situation. But here I think we might run into the possible mistake of confusing the depiction of social conditions with the promotion of certain ideas. Social realism in fiction *need* not be mounted on ideology. We have only to look at Dickens or at Sarat Chandra Chatterjee to be convinced of this. But it does so happen that some of the most powerful writing in the nineteenth century (and this probably goes for other parts of India as well as for Bengal) *was* concerned with social reform.

This brings out another aspect of the many-sided relation of the author and his world. The writer not only *reflects* the ideas of his day but, if his pen be powerful enough and the time be not entirely out of joint, he may succeed in *imposing* his ideas on society. He may not have the power to set it right on his own but he has it in him to be not only the mouthpiece of a movement but its very conscience. Such a view, it seems to me, is at least one alternative to the rearguard or vanguard roles sometimes attributed to the writer. The nineteenth century was a century of movements and no movement can get under way without the written and the spoken word. So we find that nineteenth century Bengal was a time and place of pamphleteering, of oratory. The men involved constituted an elite, and with the towering exception of Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar, belonged to the upper middle class. The base for all their activities may have been small for the national movement was not yet on a mass scale, but among those who took part there was an extraordinary concentration and quality of passion which might well be the envy of more democratic times.

The ideational element to be found in the early part of the

century was socio-religious and not political. Its three sources were the revival of oriental learning, the growth of the Bengali language and the desire to have English education. The Atmiya Sabha, founded by Raja Ram Mohan Roy in 1815 typifies the period. The Sabha discussed the main issues of the day, the futility of image worship, the evils of caste, the practice of *sati* and polygamy, the desirability of widow-remarriage. Here were tractarians of a very different order from the British variety. The tracts may not have been of a high literary quality but they were potent ways of propagating ideas, for they were written in a language free from rhetoric, such that the general public could understand. Raja Ram Mohan Roy is the central personality in this period of literary activity. Journals like the *Tattwabodhini Patrika* and a host of others were a highly effective means of disseminating information about science, history and social affairs. The publication of scientific articles had the important effect of fostering a regard for truth and a habit of objective scrutiny which could be expected to combat bigotry and superstition. Historical research provided themes for writers and fostered pride in the national heritage. A large number of writers of the day were connected with the Brahmo Samaj. The Samaj found the lever of social betterment in an objective awareness of the evils which beset society, in worship of one god, and in a certain puritanism of ethic which roused a great desire to set one's own house in order. Years later the society of which they themselves were representatives was depicted in the novels of Rabindranath Tagore.

The iconoclastic approach of the Derozians was entirely different. The Brahmos were Unitarian but not secularist. The Derozians, however, inspired by Bacon, Hume, Tom Paine, the French revolutionaries and the English radicals, were secularist to a fault. Their approach was what a later generation would call 'doctrinaire'. Some historians have maintained that their real weakness was their failure to build up a sustained movement or a consistent ideology. Such comment is probably wide of the mark. Derozio was himself a poet. His admiration of the French revolution links him more with some of the English romantic poets than with political philosophers as such. This romantic strain is to be seen even in Raja Ram, Mohan Roy, and years later Surendranath Banerjee held up Mazzini, Garibaldi and the Irish and Russian revolutionaries as models for their Indian counterparts. The Derozians in their own way succeeded in making a dent in Hindu orthodoxy and their appeal was to an age group which was perhaps little affected by the staid



journals patronized by their elders. They did not stop at admiring the rationalism and the passion for freedom of the countries of the West but turned the search-light of criticism on the institutions of their own society, choosing the method of protest and revolt rather than the way of patient reconstruction followed by a man like Vidyasagar and, decades later, Mahatma Gandhi.

A further word is necessary about romanticism and why I have used this term. The *distant* in time and place, whether it be India's past history, or the revolutionary happenings in other countries, seems to have captured the imagination of creative writers more than events taking place in their immediate environs, and such is at least one mark of the romantic. There were a number of peasant uprisings in the post-Plassey period which broke out for economic reasons but none of these caught the attention of writers or were recorded in their novels. Raja Ram Mohan Roy, writing in his paper *Sambad Kaumudi*, showed his concern with the rights of the educated classes and said about the peasants, 'The peasantry and the villagers in the interior are quite ignorant and indifferent about either the former or present government.' And yet in his evidence before the Parliamentary Committee in 1832 he suggested a permanent settlement with the ryots so that the zamindars could not raise the rent of land and harass the poor peasants. Akshoy Kumar Datta also lent the peasants the support of his pen in the pages of *Tattwabodhini Patrika*. Creative writers, however, failed to find in any of the uprisings a theme for literary treatment. Whether this is a matter of ignorance as to what was going on, of fear of the rulers or of overconcern for distant happenings in other countries is a matter of speculation.

Persian and Sanskrit no doubt had a considerable secular literature but it was the nineteenth century which undoubtedly saw a major shift from moralizing themes to secular ones in Bengali literature. Romesh Chunder Dutt wrote in 1877<sup>1</sup>

'From the stories of gods and goddesses, kings and queens, princes and princesses, we have learned to descend to the humble walks of life, to sympathize with a common citizen, or even a common peasant. From an admiration of a symmetrical uniformity we have descended to an appreciation of the strength and freedom of individuality. From admiring the glory and grandeur of the great, we now willingly turn to appreciate the liberty and resistance in the lowly.' The allegiance of the upper middle classes to the political status quo in so far as it could maintain their rights was perhaps responsible for the lack of response of the Bengali bhadrolok to the Mutiny. The indigo

agitation however, was a different matter altogether. The suffering of the cultivators reached their climax in the middle of the century and agitation broke out in Jessore, Nadia, Pabna and Faridpur. This, however, was an agitation which did find support among the intellectuals. The *Hindu Patriot* espoused the cause, and novels, plays and folksongs spread the story of the peasant's sufferings. The most notable example of this literary response was Dinabandhu Mitra's drama *Neel Darpan*, translated into English anonymously by Michael Madhusudan Dutt and published in the name of the Reverend James Long, a deed for which the latter had to suffer imprisonment. The whole incident, coming in the wake of the Mutiny as it did, is of interest on many accounts, for the way it united town and village on a matter not of political rights but of economic rights, and for its involvement of intellectuals (including Englishmen) in the practical implementation of ideals such as freedom and justice.

The second half of the nineteenth century saw a growing increase of patriotic feeling in literature in the form of historical narratives and heroic poems. Combined interests in Pauranic themes and the concepts of Utilitarianism and Positivism can be seen in the work of Nabinchandra Sen, Another combined allegiance, this time to Kalidasa and to the Italian humanists, is shown in Michael Madhusudan Dutt In his *Meghnad-Badh Kavya* he uncovers a bold and new symbolism in the classic epic, the Ramayana. In the *Biranganakavya* the spirit which inspired Vidyasagar's movement for the emancipation of women is portrayed in a novel fashion. About the same time Pearychand Mitra, known for his Derozian sympathies wrote *Alaler Gharer Dulal*, a picaresque work which exposes the pretensions of conventional society. Another of the Hindu College alumni, Bhudev Mukherji, deserves mention here for his pioneering historical romances and his influence on Bankim. In Bankim himself we find a union of patriotism and humanism of an order that was to come again decades later, in Tagore. In matters of social theory he was influenced by the early socialists such as Robert Owen, St. Simon and Proudhon. In *Bangadesher Krishak* he speaks for the poor peasants. Of this work a comment is on record by Kazi Abdul Wadud which runs as follows<sup>2</sup> :—

‘...he diagnosed the sorry plight of the peasants admirably but failed hopelessly in respect of suggesting any remedy because he did not want to disturb the national economy.’ Such a comment, to my mind, misunderstands the role of a creative artist who is a reformer, a constructive worker, through his pen. The rest is well-known.

The famous song *Vandemataram* included in *Anandamath* became a national song. His *Bangadarshan*, started in 1872, ushered in an age where writers were concerned with 'men and women as they are, and life as it is.' With Bankim the social and political currents of the previous decades reached the open sea—the idea of nationalism.

I have avoided using the word 'synthesis' in making reference to Bankim's debt to his own heritage and that of the West and I shall do likewise in the case of Tagore. Roots which go deep enough find the common streams which feed all cultures. This is why I find inappropriate the language of synthesis with its overtones of contradictions and their overcoming in a third term which sublates them. It is better for us to take pride in having struck deep enough to reach the living streams which enrich all humanity than to boast of having produced a rare and exotic hybrid flower. Tagore's humanism was nourished as much by rural sources as by the Upanishads or by Western liberalism. He is the crowning example of the writer I mentioned in the beginning, who not only reflects his day and generation but imposes his own ideas on his time. The distilled essence of these ideas he expressed as follows:—'I have believed that the truth of man is in the Greater Man who is linked in the hearts of the great masses.' This we can interpret as a fuller elaboration of the well-known saying of Chandidas. For all his nationalism he had a poor opinion of mere political thinking. In a letter to a Gujarati poet he wrote :—'The political civilization which has sprung up from the soil of Europe and is overcoming the whole world like some prolific weed, is based upon exclusiveness'. In spite of his differences with Gandhi in certain respects their common rejection of chauvinism, of narrow frontiers whether of the country or of the mind, unites both men. The short stories expose the curses of kulinism, caste restrictions and untouchability, their noble procession of women characters speaking eloquently for the cause of womankind which men like Vidyasagar had championed. In *Gora*, written at the time of the Partition of Bengal, he is a sensitive critic of the class to which he himself belonged, showing up the mental reservations of the enlightened, the need for political reform, and the human implications of the Hindu-Brahmo controversy. *Ghore-Baire* shows him no less critical of a movement which had to a large extent captured the imagination of Bengal, the revolutionary movement. He has no sympathy for the spirit of intolerance and social hatred no matter how desirable the end may be. This theme is continued in *Char Adhyay* where Tagore pinpoints the dangerous potential

of associating violence with the Hindu religious spirit. But he had written in one of his letters 'like every other moral principle, Ahimsa has to spring from the depth of mind, and it must not be forced upon men from some outside appeal of urgent need.'

Rabindranath, it could be said, took an independent line of his own, whether it be towards the Swadeshi movement, the non-cooperation movement or the revolutionary days which followed it. He shares with other nationalists like Bankim, Vivekananda and Aurobindo the association of patriotism with the spirit of renunciation. For Aurobindo and some of the other revolutionaries Durga and Kali became the mother-goddesses of an emancipated India. For example Aurobindo writes:—'Liberty is the fruit we seek from the sacrifice and the Motherland the goddess to whom we offer it'. His *Bhavani Mandir* had been inspired by Sister Nivedita's *Kali the Mother* and glorified the worship of Bhavani, a manifestation of Sakti. Such symbolism had a great appeal to the Bengali mind. Whether this supports the Ranadean thesis that in India reform always comes in the guise of religion is a matter for debate. Tagore, however, never saw in such symbolism any warrant for the sanction of violence. The transition from revolutionary activities to mysticism was the path chosen by men like Aurobindo. In later years some of the revolutionaries found themselves knights without a cause and some became sadhus in the Ramakrishna Mission. Not all of these possible ways of life found voice in literature. On the whole it was the revolutionary and in many ways romantic activities of the secret societies that found an echo in the hearts of literary men and the non-cooperation movement with its call to constructive work in villages seems less colourful in comparison. At least this is the impression one has of the situation in Bengal. In Uttar Pradesh or in Gujarat the position may have been very different.

The relation between Tagore and Gandhi needs fuller treatment at this stage. The Gandhian message came to a Bengal familiar not only with the spirit of self-help fostered by the annual sessions of the *Hindu Mela*, an endeavour sponsored by the Tagore family, but with revolutionary organizations of which men like Aurobindo Ghosh and his brother Barin, Hemchandra Kanungo and Satyen Bose were the leaders. Scores of young men had gone to the gallows and their deeds had been commemorated in the fiery poems of Kazi Nazrul Islam and others. The Swadeshi movement had no doubt roused the conscience of Bengal but it had had its limitations, most

notably it had neglected rural uplift and made no impact on Hindu-Muslim relations. In the words of Jawaharlal Nehru the nationalist movement in Bengal from 1906 onwards had for the first time shaken up the upper classes and ‘infused a new life into the Bengali lower middle class and to a small extent even the masses’.<sup>4</sup> No claim, however, could be made that the rural sector had been affected and it was precisely to this neglected sector that Gandhi addressed himself.

It was in 1921 that the famous correspondence between Gandhi and Tagore took place. Tagore, writing from abroad, cried out, ‘Let India stand for the cooperation of all the peoples. . . . It hurts me deeply when the cry of rejection against the West rings loud in my country with the clamour that Western education can only injure us. That cannot be true.’ Gandhi replied in *Young India* trying to show that the poet’s anxiety was unfounded. This was followed by the poet’s answer ‘The call of truth’ in the *Modern Review* and Gandhi’s reply entitled ‘The Great Sentinel’ in *Young India*. The last of these ends with these famous words:—‘I have found it impossible to soothe suffering patients with a song from Kabir. The hungry millions ask for one poem—invigorating food. They cannot be given it. They must earn it. And they can earn it only by the sweat of their brow.’ This spelt out the difference between the poet whose task it was to bring down the light of the stars to light the ways of men and the earth and the other who collected the dust of India’s villages on his feet as he walked the length and breadth of the land.

Writing of the influence of Gandhi on Bengali literature Bhabani Bhattacharyya writes, ‘The non-cooperation movement did not dig deep into the awareness of Bengali writers. One reason is clear; all creative effort in Bengali was tethered to Tagore’s immense influence and he had openly expressed his disapproval of the Gandhi strategy of action. I would hazard measure of disagreement with this assessment on three grounds. Firstly, that the popular Bengali mind had already become familiar with an activism of a different kind from the Gandhian, namely the militant kind, and so it was not in a position to appreciate the non-violent armoury for which Gandhi stood. Secondly, the urban-based character of all the social and political movements which had taken place in Bengal had cut off the intelligentsia from their rural roots so that the intellectuals scarcely understood Gandhi’s message which was directed to the ‘masses’, i.e., the rural population, and not to the ‘classes’. Finally, Tagore’s reaction to Gandhi was more complex and many-structured than

one of 'disapproval of the Gandhian strategy of action'. His poet's soul no doubt revolted against the destructiveness which flamed in the bonfires of foreign cloth which he witnessed from his ancestral home in Jorasanko. But Tagore in his own way was something of a rural reformer, in the Tolstoyan manner, and he and Gandhi were both universalists, impatient for the struggle to terminate in peace and for human allegiance to expand sufficiently to transcend national boundaries. Apart from an affinity of outlook in many respects a number of Tagore's works can be cited which show very definite and positive signs of Gandhi's influence; among poems the following, 'Sishu Tirtha' from *Punascha*, 'Agradoot', 'Pari' from *Balaka*, and 'Shanto' from *Parishesh*; among the plays, "Paritran" and 'Muktadhara'. Mention of the novels has already been made earlier.

In the post-Tagore period there were many Bengali writers who were directly influenced by Gandhian thought. The following poems may be mentioned, 'Charkhar Arati', 'Shudra' 'Methar' and 'Fariyad', by Satyendranath Dutt. 'Satya Mantra', 'Charkhar Gaan' and 'Pralayollash' by Kazi Nazrul Islam, 'Muktipathe' by Prabhat Mohan Banerjee. Tarashankar Bandopadhyay took part in the freedom movement and Gandhian influence is to be seen in 'Dhatri Devata', 'Ganadevata' and 'Panchagram'. Satinath Bhaduri's first novel, 'Jagari' was written in 1944, the year Gandhi was released from prison, and is based on the Quit India struggle. Annada Sankar Ray's 'Satyasatya' deals with the Gandhian ideology. The following can also be mentioned :—Upendranath Gangopadhyay's 'Raajpath', Manmatha Roy's 'Natun Dheu', Banaphul's 'Saptarshi', Mainak's 'Banhi Balay' and 'Suvarna Rekhar Tire', and Narayan Gangopadhyay's 'Swarna Sita'. Among plays, the following should be included, Banaphul's 'Akash Neel', Manoj Bose's 'Natun Prabhat' and Manmatha Roy's 'Mahabharati and Karagaar'. For the rest Gandhian influence has become absorbed in other trends which make it difficult to identify. But the influence is there in a writer's choice of simple and forthright language, in concern for the present rather than the past or the future, in a certain debunking of urban values, in showing up the hollowness of a religion which disregards the welfare of men. Gandhian humanism has been woven into the homespun brand of humanism which can be traced through centuries of India's thought. The kind of heart-searching practised by the experimenter with truth brought a quickening of moral sensibility that the intellectuals, along with the rest of society, were in need of. The half-heartedness of revolutionary activities in



recent decades has been attributed deprecatingly by some leftists to the Gandhian legacy. Others have hailed this not as something unfortunate, but as a positive benefit of the mood of non-violence left behind by the Gandhian movement.

The terms idealist and realist are often employed outside philosophical writing, in particular in the language of literary criticism, and often with confusing results. And yet the terminology cannot be avoided. There are two major novelists who defy such categorization—Sarat Chandra Chatterjee and Bibhuti Bhusan Bandopadhyaya. In the works of both we have the life of every man depicted in a manner more reminiscent of the poignancy of Dickens than of the realism of Balzac or the idealism of Tagore. *Palli Samaj*, published in 1916, did a lot to acquaint the urban reading public with village life. In *Pother Dabi*, published in 1926, he wrote of the revolutionary movement from Bengal operating in Burma and the Far East. In his other works he reveals the same sympathy for women and their difficulties in Indian social conditions that Tagore had already shown, the difference being that Sarat Chandra chose his characters from classes of society that had not been dealt with in Bengali fiction before. If one of the signs of powerful writing be the ability of the author to widen the reader's sympathies then Sarat Chandra ranks as a powerful writer indeed. His main interest were in the drama of domestic life rather than in the political scene and this is also true of Bibhuti Bhusan. In spite of the detailed descriptions in which the latter's novels abound there is a lyrical quality about his prose and he makes us vividly aware of the consequences of the crumbling of the old order in Bengal's countryside so that the reader can see the town with the eyes of the villager rather than in the opposite perspective.

Post-Tagorean literature has been blown hither and thither by new winds from across the seas. In some ways the boat is not as golden as it was before. Freud and Marx have taken the place of Mill and Bentham and the revolutionaries of a century ago. The new influences have been felt not so much through direct acquaintance with the writings of the new gurus but through the writings of others who *had* read them. In nineteenth century Bengal there were many intellectuals who had read Comte and Spencer. The devotees of Freud and Marx often worship from afar and perhaps not every Marxist has himself opened the pages of *Das Kapital*. The new influences have linked the work of Indian writers to world trends in social and political thinking and brought in a mood of

healthy experiment. The methods of psycho-analysis and dialectical materialism are both tools for uncovering what was otherwise *adrsta*, respectively, the inner workings of individual minds and the inner dynamism of social processes. The nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw the growth of what could be called, without too much distortion, an Indian ideology. The formative figures were Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Debendranath Tagore, Vidyasagar, Bankim, Gokhale, Tilak, Gandhi and Tagore. In spite of the differences between them, in spite of western influences, they share an Indianness which is unmistakable, a national affiliation which is big enough to span regional boundaries. And these men were not only nationalists but humanists as well. They devoted the power of their pens to combat the evils of casteism and parochialism and they had a horror of narrow domestic walls whether these be of region or nation state. Leadership was vested in a succession of men like Vidyasagar, Ramakrishna, Vivekananda and Aurobindo whose eminence was attained outside the political field. Intellectuals were in the centre of national life. Some reflection is needed to discover why this is not the case, today.

The writer tends to veer between his sense of belonging to a world community, a common humanity whose spokesman he is, and a more specific awareness of his own rootedness among the people he knows best and of when he writes. The current themes which occupy the world community of writers I would briefly characterize as follows. Economic inequalities, illiberal political regimes and the impact of technology have between them lent support to the theme of alienation. The increasing secularization of society has discredited 'spirituality' in the older sense and led to the quest for new values. Added to this is the quest for new symbolism. The search for a new symbolism has become an urgent one in view of the modern attempt to demythologize thought. Humanism has become detached from religion. The world of fact, thanks in part to science, obtrudes, and no spinner of tales can ignore it. There is a cry for commitment on the part of the writer and at the same time a recognition that one can be committed in various ways.

The Indian writer who is aware of all this is at the same time aware of much that is very different in his own situation. In a developing society it is only a minority, the intelligentsia, that are alienated. The writer may wish to lay his pen by the side of the tractor at the end of the day but the tractor operator may not feel equally enthusiastic about this. Here society is by no means secular, and the



novelist for example, finds himself at work in a terrain where secular values have yet to be born. Whereas in the West the writer has to go in deliberate quest of a mythology we have not yet lost our roots in our own mythology. We are uprooted but the soil clings to our roots. The symbols which lie at hand are coins minted over centuries and the writer is fortunate that they have not yet lost their value in the market-place. Humanism is still embedded in religion provided we have the courage to distinguish religion from cramping superstition and prejudice. Where commitment is concerned, however, we fare less well. We tend to think of commitment in terms of political commitment only, for too many of us political exercise have replaced devotions.

Reference was made earlier to the upper middle class origin of most of the social and political thinking of the last century. To what extent has this continued into this century? The forties saw the transfer of political power, but the social revolution which Gandhi had hoped for did not come about. This is why ideologies of foreign origin tempt some, and why others remain in bitter disillusionment. But it is more important to have roots than to have an ideology. To remind ourselves of the small percentage of literacy among our people is to remind ourselves of the smallness of the reading public for whom the Indian writer writes. The middle class writer is still writing for a middle class public. This is itself a fact which binds together the writer in Bengali, Tamil, Gujarati, Panjabi and the rest. We cannot anticipate the Indian literature of the future, of the man who working in the coal-mine sees in his mind's eye the green corn waving like a flag in the world above, the literature of the newly literate man, Jude-wise, looking in the direction of the towers of learning in the nearest town. The Indian writer of today, rooted in his own region as he inevitably is, however, perhaps far more than the politician, can make that day come nearer.

#### NOTES

1. *Cultural Heritage of Bengal*.
2. *Contemporary Indian Literature*, Sahitya Akademi p. 21.
3. *Bankim Rachanabli*, Vol. I. Intro., p. XXXIII.
4. *An Autobiography*, p. 29.

H. GOHAIN

## Ideological Obstacles to Secularism



THE SUBJECT of this paper bears only a tangential relation to the broader general topic formulated by the sponsors of the seminar. I venture to present it only because I believe that the subject is of crucial importance to any comprehensive review of Indian literature from the point of view of ideas.

I propose to study here certain literary works written in different periods of modern Indian history with a view to understanding the ideology of religious communalism. Modern Indian literature has so far failed to make a forceful plea on behalf of a secular social outlook or of communal harmony. Indian politics and thought still continue to have an under-current of religious communal passion. Whatever the achievements of secular culture in the past, a healthy democratic society cannot grow out of the remnants of a past bedevilled by communal passion. Hence it is essential to track down literary evidence that throws some light on the origins of the communal ideology.

Methodologically, I had better make it clear that I am unable to accept the theory of the superior independence of literature from the social process. Literature is here considered as a form of ideology, even though I may not have succeeded in documenting fully the social context of the particular ideology in question. While it is not denied that literature contributes valuable insights into

social and human reality, it is also considered liable to distorted and false consciousness. The record of modern Indian literature does not encourage the belief that the fundamental problems of Indian democracy and nationalism have really been grasped, far less solved, by our writers.<sup>1</sup>

It is curious that though we are prone to connect the frequent and sanguinary communal clashes with a religious conflict, dogmas and doctrines of the contending groups scarcely become the subject of intellectual debate between them. The most militant sixteenth-century Protestant in Europe, by contrast, would usually raise objections to definite doctrines and religious practices of the Roman Catholic Church. On the other hand, it is a simplification to say that the riots have been always inspired by sordid mercenary motives wearing a religious cloak.

Another paradox is that religious communal violence has thrived in a period when religion as such is suffering widespread erosion. Such tensions were virtually unknown in the days when religion was a dominant force in the life of the people of India. Our medieval and pre-British literature does not seem to propagate communal fanaticism and animus, though, of course, superior references to the rites and beliefs of the 'Kafers' and the 'Mlecchas' are common. But the subject rarely rouses authors to gloating passionate eloquence. On the other hand, medieval Indian literature, like other departments of Indian culture of that epoch, provides numerous compelling instances of continuous mutual assimilation and adaptation.

The growth of Urdu as a literary language is often cited in this connection. Certain Muslim authors handled Hindu themes without embarrassment. Some of the Nawabs of Bengal did not hesitate to extend royal patronage to translations of Hindu classics from Sanskrit. The political domination of the Moslems also led to the cultivation of Persian among the Hindus, many of whom became accomplished masters of that language. Raja Ram Mohun Roy wrote one of his early tracts in Persian, obviously hoping for a large audience.<sup>2</sup> Even the vocabulary of common speech in metropolitan areas, down to the early days of the British rule, as exemplified by the rich and racy language of *Hutom Pechar Noksa*, show a surprising proportion of words of Arabic and Persian origin.<sup>3</sup>

The most striking instances of this unconscious process of assimilation on the social as well as the literary plane may perhaps be found in the annals of the Bhakti movement. It has been said that the democratic message of Islam filtered down to act as a solvent on

the rigid hierarchy and other social attitudes of Hindu orthodoxy through the Bhakti movement. It is possible to find in the rich tradition of folk poetry and music of Eastern Bengal relics of this trend.<sup>4</sup>

This unconscious assimilation does not seem to have come about through propaganda or conversion, but through mutual admiration for and reciprocation of forms, ceremonies, ideas and attitudes. The process is not that of one way of life swallowing up the other, but of a parallel progress to convergence of some sort through imitation and adaptation. Eighteenth century Assam provides an interesting example. The Assamese Mohammedans are justly proud of their *Jikirs*, a form of congregational singing. These songs are marked by both excellent melody and high literary quality. Now the *Jikirs* borrow quite obviously from the Assamese Vaishnava style of Nam-kirtan, congregational singing of devotional songs to the beat of clapping hands, and from the melody and vocabulary of the *Huchori*, a popular form of group-singing. But the distinctive character of the *Jikir* with its dominant note of pathos and resignation can scarcely be missed. Thus the *Jikir* is at once profoundly rooted in the soil of Assam and deeply nourished by Islamic currents.<sup>5</sup>

Not that the adaptation was smooth or without an opposing current of alienation. Shah Waliyulla's call for revival of Islam in the eighteenth century was prompted by the same symptoms—Muslims playing Holi or performing the Dusserah. At that moment, the base of the Moghul empire had really become broad, and Waliyulla was alarmed at the prospect of political power of the Muslims getting diluted. The rise of the Marhatta power, which adopted Hindu slogans as much for political as for religious reasons, may also have helped this particular eddy. Yet over the larger part of India there was hardly any organized expression of religious communalism. No wonder literary evidence also points to a process of adjustment rather than antagonism.

But this process of cross-fertilization and mutual adaptation seems to have come to a halt with the coming of the British. The dominant culture since then has failed to renew this process. It rather seems to have contributed, if unwittingly, to the drifting apart of the two communities.

Certain well-known facts about the background of new Indian nationalism will bear repetition at this point. The British forcibly grafted on the prostrate body of traditional Indian society a new economic system, social legislation, and modern communications

and education, all with a view to facilitating colonial exploitation, as the very first generation of nationalists, headed by Dadabhai Naoroji, came to see. What was less clear then was that even the class of landlords under the 'permanent settlement' and the new educated classes were virtually created in order to prop up the colonial system. However, the contradictions of the system soon threatened to tear it apart. The loyal zaminders did not become capitalist 'Improvers', but, on the contrary, subjected the peasants to ruthless feudal exploitation<sup>6</sup>. Ultimately the colonial authorities themselves had to intervene as champions of the poor, as feudal rack-renting threatened to exhaust the source of colonial revenue. Similarly, the educated classes not only fulfilled Macaulay's hopes, but proceeded to proliferate and seethe with discontent at the lack of employment and the discrimination against native bureaucrats and civil servants, whether in the form of an inferior pay-scale or subordinate positions. (The problem had already become acute in the last decades of the nineteenth century, when R. C. Dutt sounded a note of warning.<sup>7</sup> G. K. Gokhale reminded the British rulers in a speech at the Bombay session of 1889 that as far back as 1833 they had promised to make no distinction between Englishmen and Indians in the matter of appointments and preferments).<sup>8</sup>

At this phase of the struggle for freedom, the leadership professed loyalty to the empire and support to the progressive measures of the British government. In their speeches the leaders habitually quoted and 'referred to the great liberal writers of England, and the methods of struggle were also 'constitutional'. But the authorities saw further beyond the range of these leaders. Barely three years after the founding of the Indian National Congress, Lord Dufferin's attitude to it changed from mellow friendliness to bitter hostility.<sup>9</sup> And R. C. Dutt quotes from John Stuart Mill an eloquent plea for freedom in the very article where he protests that the educated Indians do not want a termination of British rule.<sup>10</sup> At the 1892 Congress Surendranath Banerjee underlined the tragic dilemma of the Anglophile leadership : 'We are the citizens of a great and free empire and we live under the protecting shadow of one of the noblest constitutions this world has ever seen. The rights of Englishmen are ours, their privileges are ours, their constitution is ours. But we are excluded from them.'<sup>11</sup>

The farthest they could see was the outlines of a self-governing colony, as Gokhale did, for instance.<sup>12</sup> The next phase sees the emergence and partial triumph of a radical wing of the Congress,

bitterly disillusioned with England. The demand and agitation for complete independence were inaugurated by the trio, Lal-Bal-Pal. The methods of struggle also underwent a change. Instead of making speeches addressed to the authorities, they now appealed to the masses for their direct involvement in the struggle. At this point religion becomes a rallying-cry of the people against imperialism.<sup>13</sup> The nascent nationalist spirit at this point becomes committed to a fatal error. Tilak's interest in cow-protection and Lala Lajpat Rai's link with the origins of the Hindu Mahasabha inevitably aroused Muslim fears. Shri Aurobindo's vision, connecting 'Sanatana Dharma' with the resurgence of India, revealed the same narrowness.<sup>14</sup> The frustrated lower-middle class gravitated in larger and larger numbers to this banner of religious nationalism. Extremism in political aims and methods got tragically mixed up with an emotional endorsement of orthodox Hinduism. And it is this period that made active hostility between the two communities a regular feature of the Indian social and political scene.

No doubt this was partly fostered by the British. The Muslim League came into existence in response to a tantalizing viceregal suggestion around 1906.<sup>15</sup> It was obviously to be a counter-weight to the threat of mass-agitation on the basis of Hindu religious sentiments. Between the wars, and even earlier, constitutional reforms offered by the authorities were designed to drive a wedge between the two communities, especially through the device of separate electorates.<sup>16</sup>

The fact remains, however, that the predominantly Hindu leadership failed to give the problem the serious attention it deserved, thereby neatly confirming the Muslim communalist theory of inexorable alienation. The British conquest of India and preference for Hindu employees and supporters had already driven the Muslims into resentful isolation. When Sir Syed Ahmad Khan (1817-1898), scarcely a fanatical devotee of Islamic orthodoxy, began to play among the Muslim Indians the role Raja Ram Mohan played earlier among the Hindus, he felt that the Muslims had lost heavily because of their historical delay in entering the new world of social and political relations. He also thought that the Indian National Congress was unaware of the real challenge posed by the situation in India. The democratic self-government they demanded would inevitably lead to the domination of the majority community, for Indians by and large were still very far from a secular social outlook.<sup>17</sup> He seems to have been right. For the leadership of the Congress,

following the pattern of thinking they had acquired through English education, were oblivious of the actual conditions within the country, especially among the broad masses. In 1878 we find Surendranath Banerjee dealing with the problem in terms of pious platitudes.<sup>18</sup> Gokhale refers in 1909 to the dangerous 'tradition of antagonism' between the two communities, and in spite of his goodwill, has nothing more helpful to offer than counsel for restraint and moderation.<sup>19</sup> As early as 1912 Maulana Mohammed Ali in a forth-right and trenchant article warns against the dangers of a Hindu-oriented sense of history, and tries to disturb the complacent faith in the possibility of integration. His attitude is that of the realist who dislikes both the varieties of communalism, and yet underlines the hollowness of the glib eloquence on unity.<sup>20</sup> Iqbal in the late thirties already sees communalism as a peculiarly Indian form of nationalism. He hails communalism as the only Safeguard against tyranny of the majority and predicts that communalism will lead inevitably to the demand of full-grown nationalism: a separate home-land. With him there is no doubt or vacillation, communal harmony within one cultural and political unit is ruled out.<sup>21</sup>

Meanwhile religion also specifically had entered the political life of Indian Muslims with the *Khilafat*, which mobilized the Muslim masses and left a permanent stamp upon the character of Muslim politics. It is significant that at the height of the fraternizing between the two communities during the *Khilafat* movement clashes between them were not unknown. In the thirties the mass character of the Muslim League at that time was proved by the keenness with which the younger radical leaders took up the Cause of the exploited peasants.<sup>22</sup>

Thus religion came to play a decisive role in the expansion of the base of the national movement for liberation though it also distorted the solidarity within narrow communal frames. The liberal solution, which was not backed up by proper analysis and investigation, got discarded as simply irrelevant. The growing resentment and frustration at the condition of a subject people, dominated and exploited under a colonial regime, now began to feed fratricidal violence.

One might speculate how far the lower-middle class leadership of the mass-movements, at once militant and short-sighted, was responsible for the communalist deformation of popular nationalism. Were the lower-middle class cadres unwilling to lead the aspirations of the people towards their natural consummation?



The implied threat of a change in the property-structure might have made them uneasy. The lower-middle class, driven by accumulating deprivations and frustrations, probably found an outlet for their fury in communal violence, for a total social revolution would have endangered the bourgeoisie itself.<sup>23</sup>

In literature too we encounter the same errors, the same blind alleys. The growth of regional literatures during the British rule crystallized the incipient nationality-feelings all over India. The typical Assamese or Bengali writer or reader became conscious of an identity oriented both to the provincial and the national territory and culture. Even the Muslim League had to carry on its propaganda in regional languages. As a matter of fact, the regional languages and literatures silently went on refuting the notion of religious nationalism. While not harking far back to the past, each regional literature showed the way to the creation of a new integrated personality and culture. But here too there was a deepening shadow of failure. Though Bengali Hindu playwrights wrote stirring plays about Tipu Sultan, the Hindu version of Indian history gained prominence, and there was a half-conscious effort to purge the literary language of words of Persian origin. Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya's achievements as novelist, journalist and thinker mark him out as one of the most powerful influences upon the mind of new Bengal. The political leaders of the freedom movement sometimes acknowledge their debt to him, but even when they do not, his profound influence on them cannot be denied. Bankim Chandra introduced the educated Bengali to new heights of philosophic thinking and to new reactions of sensibility (as made clear, for instance, by R. C. Dutt's remarks on *Durgesh Nandini*)<sup>2</sup> through his fiction and journalism and philosophic works. His interest in Western science and rationalism was profound. He even made fun of Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar's attempt to prove widow-marriages valid through an appeal to the scriptures: Bankim bluntly says it is a beneficial *new* custom.<sup>25</sup> His admiration for the blessings of the British occupation is well-known, in fact much better-known than his adverse reactions. He was angered by the impudence of Christian missionaries.<sup>26</sup> He raged against the corrupting and demoralizing side-effects of modern manners and morals. In order to affirm the dignity of the Indian, he scanned tradition and past history for examples of Indian greatness and glory. And it is here that he must share the blame for fashioning the ideology of Hindu nationalism.



The idea of a Hindu Renaissance is not entirely original. When Ram Mohun Roy and his friends petitioned the British government, they made routine reference to the theory that the British rule delivered India from the clutches of the barbarians ('Yavana') who had plunged the country in the gloom of ignorance and superstition. It was an imitation of the European myths of the 'Dark Ages' and the 'Renaissance'. In Shibnath Shastri's *Atmocharit* this idea recurs frequently. But the past has little attraction for them. What they are interested in are the opportunities for fresh creation and enlightenment. Bankim, however, is passionately interested in the past glory of the Hindus.

The political character of the new history is revealed by the military pre-occupations of the novels, *Rajsingha*, *Sitaram* and *Anondo Math*, where Hindu resistance to Muslim rule is evoked with infectious fervour. It is not simply a question of justice and resisting oppression, but a projection of the martial qualities of the Hindus *as a national group*. While he presents us now and then with a Muslim character of striking heroism and nobility, he is more concerned to establish imaginatively the vision of Hindus fighting with grit, intelligence and valour. This casting of all past resistance to Muslim rule in the mould of nationalism became a powerful component in later communal ideology.

The religion of the Hindus does not interest him much in these historical novels. Even the priests and mendicants are militant activists. The novels depict not so much the war of the religions as the fight for freedom of the Hindus as a national group. He rejects the offensive European notion of the physical debility of the Hindu, and even his memorable heroines are marked out by heroic and war-like qualities. He is so repelled by the notion of passive meditation, supposed to be the inherent character trait of the Hindu, that he does not shrink from descriptions where Hindus indulge, as a form of reprisal, in mass arson, massacre and pillage among the Muslims.<sup>27</sup> Muslim potentates and dignitaries are subjected to indignities that can only be described as some sort of a vicarious revenge.<sup>28</sup>

This nationalism exalts a new character-type over against the traditional image of the Hindu. Bankim Chandra hated the European propaganda about the meek, other-worldly and characterless Hindu.<sup>29</sup> He made it a point to exalt the man of action, even when he indulged in excesses. His novels show purposeful, independent and vigorous Hindus in action. Not that he accepted the superiority of the English either. *Anondo Math* burns with a righteous, scornful wrath

against the English soldier-traders, and gloats upon every reverse or defeat they suffer.<sup>30</sup> Imaginatively, he rejected the domination that in real life he had to accept.

Here we encounter a curious hesitation, a dilemma. The concluding chapter of *Anndo Math* proclaims the ultimate victory of the English, and dwells on the future benefits of the conquest. Satyananda's anti-British, fury is calmed with the consolation that the conquest was both inevitable and providential. The final embrace between the impatient man of action and the 'Physician', seer and man of meditation, at this point acts out the compromise into which Bankim himself was forced.<sup>31</sup>

Yet another prophetic aspect of this Hindu nationalism is the concern for the masses. Bankim Chandra wrote a long and detailed exposure of the horrors of zamindari exploitation. He felt the need for closer links with the masses, and denounced the caste-system for reducing millions of Hindus to impotence and wretched servitude. The novels also suggest the duty of protecting the Hindu poor, and of awakening them.<sup>32</sup>

Before 'Inquilab Zindabad', 'Bande Mataram' was the most popular slogan of the national movement. The slogan arose in an atmosphere of perfervid Hindu nationalism. This fact dramatizes the dilemma of the freedom movement.

What Bankim Chandra admired and hailed makes Tagore uneasy. By his time, of course, Hindu-Muslim tension had already become fairly familiar. On the other hand, the Western liberal outlook seemed to be in some confusion among its exponents in India. Deeply attached though he was, to a predominantly Hindu tradition, he did not echo Bankim's militant if not militaristic version of Hinduism. His ideal was harmony among the nations, and he could not declare with Bankim's confidence that the triumph of one nation meant tragedy for another. He found the spirit of the sectarian Neo-Hinduism too straight, and in need of correction. In *Gora* the Hindu fanaticism of the hero is eventually tempered by the liberal Brahmo influence of the woman he loves. Indeed, he discovers with some discomfiture that he is a European by birth. In the rigid Yogic exercises and attitudes of his adoptive father Tagore exposes the futility of ritualistic life-denying orthodoxy, And yet the "Hindu fanatic" is shown endowed with indomitable energy, passionate independence and patriotism, dynamism and strength of character which completely overshadow the passive serenity and caution of his friend Binoy. Yet there is surely a hint of irony in the revelation

of Gora's identity. Is Tagore suggesting that the enthusiasm and strength of the Neo-Hindu have nothing traditionally Hindu about them?

The critical attitude to Neo-Hindu fervour is carried one step farther in *Ghore Baire*. Sandeep, apart from his other admirable and charming qualities, happens also to be a champion of the peculiar ideology of religious communalism, at once obscurantist and violent. But Tagore has in this case a presentiment, not of abortive good, but of stark evil. Sandeep's communal spirit is not undeveloped or stunted patriotism, but a projection of his lust for power. Basically responsible to none, his cult of the Mother and his terroristic activities are, like his demagoguery, symptoms of a diseased soul. The final touch to the exposure comes in his pact with the reactionary and oppressive zaminder, Harish Babu. Likewise, his brand of Swadeshi is shown as having a dire effect on the lives of the poverty-stricken Muslim peasants depriving them at one stroke of imported cheap clothes. Further, the frustrated and resentful lower-middle class leader is here shown manipulating rather than leading the masses. The bloody riots and carnage in the end underline the evil of Sandeep's militant but hollow patriotism. Over against it stands the detachment, rational clarity, and genuine love of Nikhilesh for the people. Nikhilesh combines a deep rootedness in tradition with receptivity and admiration for Western ideas and attitudes.

Even in Tagore, the communal problem is rather peripheral, a kind of side-effect of wider social forces. The problem as such is faced squarely in Manohar Malgonkar's English novel, *A Bend in the Ganges*. It covers the period of mounting communal tension culminating in the partition and the mass killings. E. M. Forster has praised the powerful characterization and the gripping story of this novel. The horrors are certainly not shunned, and there is a determined rejection of all sentimental, thoughtless clichés. But it does not seem to me that the author has probed the sources of the conflict with any penetration. The communal violence becomes something like a vast war, in which everyone participates without understanding. It reveals the latent brutalities in people, and it provides a backdrop for heroism, cowardice, love and sacrifice and treachery.

Of course the author rightly sees the communal tension as part of India's painful march to freedom. But the attempt to relate the two does not succeed. Again and again we hear that Gandhiji's Utopian ideas about non-violence have merely diverted the people's mind from violence, but have not overcome it. These ideas are focussed

on as a tragically noble experiment, as folly, as foggy idealism. But nowhere is there any evidence that the author has understood and represented the roots of the violence that triumphed. He shows Hindus and Muslims coming together for a moment in the shadow of the massacre at Jallianwala bagh for a joint struggle against imperialism, but then drifting apart and finally plunging at each other's throat. But we are not shown how this comes about. The Muslim leaders in the story 'know' and 'feel' the treachery of the Hindus, in the way everyone in the novel seems to misunderstand everyone else. The composition of the ministries in the provinces seems to be an excuse.

The final holocaust is forehadowed in the activities of the terrorist group. The people who believe in violent solutions like Shafi or Basu, are in the end dragged into the communal violence, and indeed, they become its agents. There is a hint, just a hint that the elitist distance of the terrorists from the masses is dangerous, but it is not worked upon, Their ritual attempts at integration seem grotesque and a magical symptom of a lack of realistic thinking. One especially remembers the ritual eating of the pork-and-beef curry. But the author has no insight into the folly or futility of terrorism.

There is a pretty thorough-going disillusionment here with all the phases and expressions of the freedom movement. The exponents of violence cannot control the course of events, nor can the exponents of non-violence. The heedless inconsistency and shallowness of Gian, the selfish fanaticism of Shafi, the barbarousness of the Japanese liberators, the irresponsibility and treachery of the British imperial guardians leading to the hideous deaths on the Burma trail are passed in review as impossible choices. Debi-Dayal, one man who speaks with some authority in the book as a dedicated, detached character, a man with guts and understanding, himself gets side-tracked into private vendetta. By the time we come to the end, all social and national ideals fade in chaos, and only private virtues and values survive, Gian's blundering but steady feeling for Sundari, and the toughness and enterprise he has acquired for the purpose. They both come under the symbolic patronage of the tough and short-sighted manliness of Mulligan, the Irish servant of imperialism. The British seem to fare rather better than Indians under Malgonkar's scrutiny. The sacrifice and stirring heroism of our common people during the August rebellion of 1942 find no place in this chronicle. There is a fatalistic acceptance in the novel of the inevitability of the conflagration, and of the alienness of the communities and

their antagonism. It is simply another no-nonsense anatomy of man's irrational passions. The corrosive scepticism of the author touches every platitude but this. The riots are thus a grim joke of destiny. The haunting sense of *Maya* comes out quite powerfully in that episode where Tek Chand stands before his private collection of Hindu icons and idols on the eve of the riots and realizes that he had had a satisfying life and could now renounce it without regret. The bursting vitality of the stone idols represents the rhythm of creation and destruction, and the riots do not ultimately make much difference. It is this attitude that probably prevents Malgonkar from having a more critical and analytical look at the communal situation. It is, therefore, in the last analysis a disappointing book.

It thus seems that our creative writers have failed to grasp the communal situation with any depth, of understanding. They have been passive tools of history, not alert observers. They have failed utterly to provide us with insights into our society and culture that illuminate the tension and antagonism. All of them fail to observe Muslim reactions from within. They turn Muslim characters into objects, into caricature. The breadth of sympathy and understanding that proper understanding pre-supposes seems to be absent. No wonder the Muslim agitation becomes in their novels a metaphysical evil, not a social reality profoundly apprehended. Only Tagore, with his rejection of Neo-Hindu ideology and his brilliant mixture of social and psychological insights into that phenomenon, is something of an exception, though even he gives us a partial view of our society. It may even be said, whatever the qualifications, that our creative writers have created and perpetuated ways of thinking that seriously hinder the process of integration of the two great communities.

#### NOTES

1. The idea of this kind of autonomy of literature has been propounded by F. R. Leavis with tireless energy over the years. See, for instance, his *The Common Pursuit* (London, 1958).
2. See Sophia Dobson Collet, *The Life of Raja Ram Mohun Roy* (new edition, Calcutta, 1962), p. 19, for an extract from this work, rendered into English.
3. *Hutom Pechar Noksa* (Bengali, Calcutta, 1363 B.S., Bangiya Sahitya Parishat).
4. Dinesh Sen's collection of Mymensingh folk writings is justly famous.
5. Syed Abdul Malik (ed.) *Jikir Aru Jari* (Assamese, Asom Sahitya Sabha).
6. Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya, *Bibidha Prabandha* (Bengali, Calcutta, 1370 Bengali year), ed. Brajendranath Bandyopadhyaya & Sajani Kanta Das, p. 209, p. 219, p. 367.
7. R. C. Dutt, *Prabandha Sankalan* (Bengali, Calcutta, 1959), ed. Nikhil Sen, p. 63.

8. G. K. Gokhale, *Speeches & Writings* (Asia Publishing House, 1966), ed. D. G. Karve & D. V. Ambekar, Vol. II, p. 147.
9. R. P. Dutt, *India Today* (Bombay, 1949), p. 301.
10. R. C. Dutt, op. cit., p. 61.
11. R. P. Dutt, op. cit., p. 301 quotes the passage.
12. See for example Gokhale, op. cit., p. 201, 350.
13. See *Sources of the Indian Tradition* (Columbia University Press, reprinted by Motilal Banarsi Das, Delhi, 1963), ed. by De Bary, Hay, Wesler and Yarrow, pp. 705 ff.
14. *Sources of the Indian Tradition* (to be referred to later as *Sources*), p. 732.
15. R. P. Dutt, p. 426.
16. This is already foreseen by Gokhale in 1901. Speaking on sectional representation in municipalities he said : "My next objection to this provision is that it tends to defeat the most important object of local self-government. We value local self-government not only for the fact that it teaches men of different castes and creeds, who have long been kept more or less apart, to work together for a common purpose." Op. cit., p. 124.
17. *Sources*, p. 746.
18. *Sources*, p. 676.
19. *Sources*, pp. 307 ff.
20. *Sources*, pp. 775-778.
21. *Sources*, pp. 762, 767.
22. R. P. Dutt, op. cit., p. 434.
23. cf. R. P. Dutt, p. 426.
24. R. C. Dutt, op. cit., p. 8.
25. Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, op. cit., pp. 262-269.
26. Bankim Chandra, op. cit., p. 168, condemns vehemently the Christian view of God.
27. See for example Bankim Chandra, op. cit., p. 367. See *Bankim Rachanabali* Vol. I (Bengali, Sahitya Sangsad, Calcutta, 1372 Bengali year), p. 757, 776.
28. *Bankim Rachanaboli*, pp. 705-706, pp. 692-693.
29. *Bibidha Prabandha*, pp. 127 ff
30. *Bibidha Prabandha*, p. 362
31. See for example *Rachanabali* I, p. 722, p. 771.
32. *Bibidha Prabandha*, p. 209, p. 219. See also Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya, *Samya* (Bengali year 1345), pp. 17 ff.

ATTAR SINGH

## Secularization and Modern Panjabi Literature



FOR OUR present purpose I would be satisfied with that meaning of the term secular offered by Bernard Eugene Meland in his Calcutta University lectures on the secularization of Modern Cultures. According to him, 'simply stated, and in its barest terms, secularization is the movement away from traditionally accepted norms and sensibilities in the life interests and habits of a people—a departure from an historical order of life that presupposes religious sanctions'.

In India we have been introduced to the ideas of secularism through political ideology. India, asserts the Constitution, is a secular democratic republic. This political sanction of the idea has led to a certain popularization, and, shall I say, also added some respectability to the idea. It is not very unusual today to present Lord Buddha or Guru Nanak as secular religious masters or to project Asoka, Akbar, Shivaji or Ranjit Singh as secular rulers. In its political overtones the term secularism has nowhere, not even in the United States, taken a position opposed to or moving away from religion. At best it has defined the role of the State in a pluralistic religious society, as the arbiter in disputes between different religious groups in the interests of justice, peace and common well-being. In this aspect the term at its best means multi-religionism. Anti-communalism



could be construed as the negative extension of this meaning in the particular content of India today.

Before attempting a juxtaposition of the idea of secularism and modern Panjabi literature let me make a point or two about Panjabi literary tradition which I think are relevant to our subject. First, in spite of the specific identity provided to Panjabi literature by its being written in Panjabi language it has failed to evolve into a unified integrated tradition, with at least two strands, those of Sikh and Islamic origin, achieving some sort of mutual exclusiveness. That in spite of all the lip service paid by one to the other, these two streams have remained apart, and are achieving consummation in what might be called Indian Panjabi literature and Pakistani Panjabi literature though being invoked as the respective cultural and literary heritage of each is only too obvious. Not to speak of the patently religious, historical and mythological Panjabi poetry of Islam, but even the lyrical Sufi poetry in Panjabi has also remained shut out from the total awareness of the poets of Sikh tradition except for and during the latter half of the nineteenth century. Similarly, the poetry of Sikh tradition did not inform either the creative inspiration or the poetic achievement of those in the other tradition. This mutual rejection led to the communalization of the religious impulse in Panjabi poetry to which I shall refer a bit later.

The second interesting fact is the enfeeblement of Panjab's cultural links with the classical Hindu tradition, with Sanskrit language and its literature firstly and primarily because of the intervention of Islam and its role of knocking out the local traditions and secondly because of the emergence of Sikhism. It is a fact that Sikhism arose as a protestant movement within Hinduism and that its point of departure was a reaction against it with a view to renewing it. But, perhaps because of its too rigid institutionalization it came to be identified as a heretical faith which had to abandon the role of rejuvenating Hinduism and came to be satisfied with its own preservation and survival. This later realization coincided with the fall of Sikh sovereignty in Panjab and has ever since been expressing itself in a search for Sikh identity, mostly in a separatism projecting itself as an autonomous tradition in its own right.

It is in view of these two foregoing features that whenever a Panjabi writer refers to tradition he has in his mind, most of the time either the Sikh or Islamic or both but never the classical Sanskrit tradition. And it is in this context that we can appreciate the fact that when Bhai Vir Singh appeared on the scene in the wake of Singh



Sabha movement as the progenitor of the modern phase of Panjabi literature he sought ideologically to build upon the legacy of Sikh literary tradition of Braj Bhasha which flourished in Panjab during the late seventeenth through to the early decades of the nineteenth centuries and snapped consciously and deliberately all relationship with his immediate predecessor and contemporary Panjabi poets of the traditional school of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. During the late nineteenth century in spite of their adherence to conventional and traditional modes, both the Sikh and Islamic poetic traditions of Panjabi had started converging upon a nascent Panjabi tradition and had even started responding to Hindu religious and cultural as well as folk motifs. In the works of Kalidas, Mohammad Bakhsh, Kishan Singh Arif, Sadhu Daya Ram, etc., more and more points of contacts had started becoming apparent and harmonization of the discordant voices was quite in sight. But with this literary activity Bhai Vir Singh just would not have anything to do, And the weight of his personality was so great and the intensity and seriousness he brought to bear upon his work was of such a high order that the earlier activity came gradually to suffer from failure to attract new creative talents and ultimately withered away. And with its withering away Hindi and Urdu started flourishing in Panjab as the focal points of cultural regeneration of Hinduism and Islam leaving for Panjabi a similar role in respect of Sikhism.

Here I would like to correlate another aspect of Panjabi literary tradition with the situation we are trying to comprehend. Sikh poetic tradition is strong only in devotionism and ethical speculation. Metaphysics and mysticism are the two features which did not develop into viable characteristics of this poetry. So when in the hands of Bhai Vir Singh modern Panjabi poetry began shaping its responses to the religious view of life it lacked both depth and breadth so necessary for any successful manoeuvring. This lack it made up through revivalist passion and evangelical spirit.

With Bhai Vir Singh Sikhism became the dominant impulse behind modern Panjabi literature. Under many subterfuges it has managed to remain so in the Indian Panjabi literature and makes both for its uniqueness and isolation. Basic concern with him and through him with modern Panjabi literature has been the search for a Sikh identity. And it is only in our analysis of the varying responses to this search that we have to determine the role of secularism in Panjabi literature.

First of all let us face the fact that communalization and thus

narrowing delimitation of the broader religious impulses is itself some sort of secularization, although of a negative unhealthy variety. A community identifying itself through one amongst many religions within a nationality and then pursuing its none too other worldly interests through such identity is definitely pursuing secular that is nonreligious, profane, non-sacred goals with the greater ferocity for its religious cloak. Obviously it should be difficult for people belonging to other religions to participate unreservedly in such a search and pursuit. This uneasiness, this sense of alienation is distinctly audible in Lala Dhani Ram Chatrik and Lala Kirpa Sagar, two contemporaries of Bhai Vir Singh who, for the first time after Shah Mahammad who intoned the requirement for a Sikh kingdom, evoke the idea of regional nationalism as against communal nationalism projected by Bhai Vir Singh. Lala Dhani Ram Chatrik tried to broaden the emotional base of Panjabi poetry by hearkening to the visions of a composite Panjabi culture while Lala Kirpa Sagar in his long narrative poem and *Lakshmi Devi* and his plays *Ranjit Singh* and *Deeds Jamwal*, tried to recreate the Sikh era of the history of Panjab as the Panjabi era. In Puran Singh both the impulses of communal nationalism and regional nationalism met to be transformed into Sikhism being identified with the image of Panjabi and vice-versa. Later, historical events leading to the partition of Panjab and later on linguistic reorganization of the Indian Panjab on communal lines are only logical working out of this vision which was never again challenged within Panjabi literature or outside it on the basis of a composite Panjabi nationalism. The challenges came only in the form of communal reactions and these only fortified the original position.

In this perspective it should be fairly easy to imagine that howsoever inadequately and deviously Sikhism as an impulse and drive had assumed for Panjabi literature a central position with Sikh political aspirations conflicting with national political aspirations, with Sikh history assuming greater significance and reality than the history of India, and that, too, not as a part of the latter but as; an independent self-sufficient unit and Sikh tradition becoming the tradition. Acquiring these extra-religious dimensions the idea of Sikhism did undergo a certain secularization but as against other secularizing ideas such as humanism, science and rationalism, Marxism, etc., this idea and reality of Sikhism took up a position of unrelenting opposition. On the basis of my reading of the situation of Panjabi literature I have come to the conclusion that secular ideas

and ideals could flourish much better and much more freely in and against a broader religious impulse than a communal outlook.

Although this formulation has to be verified with reference to some other disciplines as well as literature, it helps me at least to understand why the secularizing ideas in their literary expression in modern Panjabi literature have failed to acquire a local content vibrating with immediacy of life as it is actually lived by men and women and have remained abstract adjuncts to most of the writings. In this respect I should dwell upon two examples. One is that of Gurbakhsh Singh who is an agnostic and a humanist in his belief but has scrupulously avoided to impinge upon Sikh sensibility in any way and has contented himself with misty generalizations. Similarly, no Panjabi writer can today be accused of any predilection for communalism but yet none of them has dared to confront the reality of communal tensions and strifes which have remained central to corporate Panjabi life during the last seven decades. We have had our own brand of reformists, free-thinkers, humanists, progressives, Marxists, Freudians, revolutionaries all of them, but they have successfully managed to remain pale reflections of non-Panjabi models without any relevance to or impact upon the dominant thought. In a sense communalist brand of secularization has proved to be more intolerant of secular ideas than religion in its higher sense which is concerned with a spiritual direction of the human endeavour.

Strange though it may appear, my hope for secular ideas shifting the basis of validity for human aspiration and activity from religion to man and reason in Panjabi literature lies with the emerging trend of revivalism in Panjab. 1966 was the tercentenary year of the birth of Guru Gobind as well as the year in which the present State of Panjab was carved in fulfilment of a demand for linguistic reorganization on communal lines. Thus the ending of the Sikh search for identity combined with happy occasion of the tercentenary celebrations of the birth of the founder of the Khalsa has given a great fillip to literary activity in Panjabi which had been languishing for a long time for want of any worthwhile subject of attention except nothingness and boredom. This movement gathered further momentum with 1969 being the quincentenary year of Guru Nanak the founder of Sikh religion. The life and works of the Sikh Guru as well as the ideas and teachings of Sikhism have attracted a much wider and more intensive attention than here-to-fore. Epics, long narratives, poems, novels, plays, films and paintings have tried to keep pace with the

mounting demand for reading material which was also sought to be met with biographies, expositions, annotations, and critiques. This twofold creative and critical activity has drawn in the best of the talent available in the language as well as some from other areas. This second revival is too near us to be properly appreciated and yet two of its features have to be noted. One is that this revivalism proceeds from a certain self-confidence as against a sense of anxiety informing its earlier precursor. And secondly a Sikh Panjab has somehow managed to emerge relieving the communal nationalism of Panjabi from strifes and prompting it to mellow down into liberalism and may be, later on admitting certain radiation while in the creative activity some sort of super-imposition of motives is already visible. Much shall however depend upon intellectualization of the movement getting into stride. Previously secularization was taken to constitute a threat to the very existence of the community assailed by a sense of persecution. Now it does have a chance of being accepted as a means for its transformation into a modern society,

The very fact that it is possible today to differentiate between the persons of the Gurus as divine masters and historical figures and also the circumstance that Guru Nanak has appeared for the first time in some creative compositions as a hero as against the focal point of faith in his biographies are only broad indications. As a meaningful movement, secularization has to proceed from providing depth and breadth to this impulse.

R.K. DASGUPTA

## Indian Literature and its Western Reader



REVEREND. G. U. POPE who translated the *Sacred Kural* into English in 1886 composed a poem on its author in which he addressed him as ‘the bard of universal man’. In his preface to this translation he compares the refined and intricate metre of this great Tamil classic to ‘something of the same kind in Greek epigrams, in Martial and the Latin elegiac verse’ and adds that ‘there is a beauty in the periodic character of the Tamil construction in many of these verses which reminds the reader of the happiest efforts of Propertius’. It is indeed an excellent example of a European appreciation of an Indian work in terms of European standards of excellence in style and metre. Still it is important to keep in mind the fact that Reverend Pope’s interest in this great Tamil work was essentially the interest of a Christian missionary who thought, as he says in his preface, that ‘it was the one Oriental book, much of whose teaching is an echo of the Sermon on the Mount’. He loved to picture its author pacing along the sea-shore with the Christian teachers, and imbibing Christian ideas, tinged with the peculiarities of the Alexandrian School, and day by day working them into his own wonderful *Kural* while a Christian reader of the *Sacred Kural* must be allowed to discover a Christian meaning in the poem his missionary approach to it may have one disadvantage from a purely literary point of view. It

diminishes the worth of the poem as a work of art by stressing its doctrinal and moral value, And most of the translators of the *Kural* including Father Beschi who rendered parts of it into Latin in 1730 were Christian missionaries.

But even when the European admirer of an Indian classic is free from Christian missionary zeal his interest in it is, on the whole, more philosophical than literary. In the last two centuries the Western man has looked upon the entire literary inheritance of this country as a part of the world's store of wisdom literature, a vast collection of sacred books from the East. Introducing Charles Wilkins's English translation of the *Bhagavatgita* Warren Hastings, the first Governor-General of Bengal, said that he would not hesitate to pronounce (it) a performance of great originality; of a sublimity of conception, reasoning, and diction, almost unequalled Hastings, however, warned the Western reader of this first translation of any Indian work in any European composition. This was said in 1785 and said by a soldier and a colonial statesman with little reputation for learning and taste. But it is, nevertheless, a very significant expression of Western response to Indian literature. First, the estimate is made from a translation. Secondly, it exalts the work as great but takes care to insulate it from Western literary standards. Thirdly, it is concerned more with the wisdom of the work than with its literary workmanship. The whole approach is primarily philosophical and in the case of a work like the *Bhagavadgita* it could not be otherwise.

But how different was Europe's response to another oriental literature which too was mainly a philosophical and religious literature. In the early middle ages Saint Jerome found in Hebrew literature not only profound piety but also great poetry. He spoke eloquently of the dignity of *The Song of Solomon*, the technical perfection of the *Book of Job* and the melodiousness of the *Book of Psalms*, and viewed Hebrew poetry in terms of the highest standards of classical literature. At the Renaissance Sir Philip Sidney put David, Solomon, Moses and the writer of the *Book of Job* at the top of his roll of poets and in the seventeenth century Milton called the *Book of the Revelation*: 'a high and stately tragedy'. In the eighteenth century Professor Lowth said about Hebrew poetry that 'in sublimity it was superior to the most finished productions of the Greeks'. Shelley put the choruses of Aeschylus, and the *Book of Job*, and Dante's *Paradise* in the same class as examples of the highest poetry. On the whole the higher intelligence of Europe could make Hebrew literature a part of the entire literary inheritance of the West and the tension between

the Hebraic and the Hellenic became a tension within the soul of a single civilization.

Obviously this integration of the Graeco-Roman mind with the oriental mind of the Hebrews is an aspect of the religious history of Christian Europe. But the reflection of that synthesis in the critical perspectives of the two literatures involved, the classical and the Hebraic, is important for an enquirer into the Western response to Indian literature. He ought to remember that the Christian apologist of pagan literature sought to legitimize Plato by affirming his debt to Moses and gave artistic dignity to the *Old Testament* by showing its literary excellence in terms of classical standards. And one of the major conclusions of this specious argument was that the source of all art was the wisdom of God which could equally inspire the classical and the Hebrew poets. Here was at least a theological basis for an idea of a universal literature. When Sir William Jones translated *Shakuntala* or the Schlegel brothers were promoting Sanskrit studies in Germany, the task of producing an idea of a universal literature and of rinding a place for that literature in it was a purely critical task. It is a task which is yet to be accomplished.

As late as the middle of the last century the task was not as much as understood. For even a fervent apologist of Indian literature like Max Mueller did not think there was a common spiritual ground between the Hellenic and the Hindu mind. 'Greece and India', he says in his *History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature*, 'are indeed the two opposite poles in the historical development of the Aryan man. To the Greek, existence is full of life and reality; to the Hindu it is a dream, an illusion.' Whether such polarity exists may be debated but that it existed for the most enlightened of European scholars of the century is a fact of literary history. So when Max Mueller asked the English undergraduates to read Sanskrit literature he did not miss to add that this literature was certainly not as good as the literature of ancient Greece. Max Mueller once told an audience of undergraduates at Cambridge that if he were to 'ask himself from what literature we here in Europe, we who have been nurtured almost exclusively on the thoughts of Greeks and Romans, and one Semitic race, the Jewish, may draw that corrective which is most wanted in order to make our inner life more perfect, more comprehensive, more universal, in fact more truly human, a life for not this life only, but a transfigured and eternal life—again I should point to India'. But one does not read a poem or a play for salvation. To expect the average western reader to discover some deficiency in his Graeco-



Roman-Judaic-Christian culture and to search for the spiritual means of removing that deficiency is to put upon him an intellectual responsibility which he may not even understand.

But the western response to Indian literature is largely determined by this responsibility of discovering in the East values which the Western man must make his own for a richer and fuller life. It is, therefore, a spiritual response rather than a literary response. The literary appetite of the common reader is ordinarily satisfied by a literary fare; it is seldom accompanied by a spiritual thirst. Yet when the Western intellectual speaks of Indian literature he speaks of its spiritual quality; he seldom comments on it in the manner of a literary critic. Michelet had a genuine love for Indian wisdom and valued it because Western wisdom was not sufficient for him. But it is extremely unlikely that his historic words on Indian thought would create an enthusiasm for Indian poetry in the reading public of the West. 'Man must rest,' he said, 'get his breath, refresh himself at the great living wells, which keep the freshness of the eternal. Where are they to be found, if not in the cradle, of our race, on the sacred heights whence flow on the Indus and the Ganges, on the other, the torrents of Persia, the rivers of Paradise. The West is too narrow. Greece is small: I stifle there. Judea is dry: I pant there. Let me look towards Asia and the profound East for a little while.' We must value these words as a moving and for many of us a heartcheering western tribute to our culture. But it has little relevance to the business of bringing the western reader to the Indian Muse. He is not normally stifled by his own civilization, at least he will not go to his bookseller for an easier spiritual respiration.

This interest in Indian literature as a search for the higher life has been a major hindrance to the growth of a useful critical opinion of our poetry in the West. Obviously, this spiritual view of Indian poetry was due to the essentially spiritual character of ancient Indian writings. The Vedas and the Upanishads presented to the European man the world of the spirit and gave little scope to their reader for a purely literary approach. If the ancient Greeks had left us only the fragments of Heraclitus and the dialogues of Plato and none of the tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles and the comedies of Aristophanes, the literary criticism of the European Renaissance would have been similarly preoccupied with the spiritual side of literature.

Still it was possible to present the hymns of the *Rigveda* and the philosophical poetry of the Upanishads as literature and to discover their inner links with the literature of the West. That this critical



endeavour was not made was due to certain circumstances of the intellectual development of the West since the Renaissance.

First, except for a few the literature of Europe was a sufficient literature for the European and that literature was vast and was in several major languages, ancient and modern. To comprehend this literature of ancient and medieval Europe as one and to make it a part of one's mental life was itself an intellectual task of the greatest magnitude. Little energy was left for extending attention to the literature of the East.

Secondly, Indian literature has been more or less the concern of the specialist and the fruits of his scholarly labours seldom reach the common reader. A lover of our literature in the West is almost necessarily an uncommon reader.

Thirdly, the Western image of India is largely the creation of the colonial politician and the missionary whose perspectives were often distorted by their interests. There were more readers in the West for Miss Mayo's *Mother India* than for Max Mueller's *What India Can Teach Us* or Woodroffe's *Is India Civilized?*

Fourthly, the apologists of Indian literature in the West are mostly Sanskritists and their interests seldom go beyond our ancient poetry. Some have been interested in our medieval poetry but few have shown enthusiasm for our modern literature. A considerable number of European scholars have done excellent philological work on our modern languages but there is no comprehensive survey of our modern literature comparable in magnitude with a work like Grierson's *Linguistic Survey of India*.

In a confused situation like this the Western man's response to our literature could not but be both ambiguous and unsteady. Of this ambiguity and unsteadiness the most significant example is Goethe's estimate of Sanskrit poetry. When he read Forster's German version of *Shakuntala* made from Sir William Jones's English translation of the drama, published in 1789, he was so ecstatic that he could record his deep impression only in verse and its few lines are as important a document in the history of Western response to Indian literature as W. B. Yeats's introduction to Tagore's *Gitanjali*. There are few readers of Kalidasa's *Shakuntala* who would not know Goethe's lines on it, at least in Eastwick's English translation:

Wouldst thou the young years' blossoms and the fruits  
of its decline  
And all by which the soul is charmed, enraptured,  
feasted, fed,

Wouldst thou the earth and heaven itself in one name  
 combine?  
 I name thee, O Shakuntala, and all at once is said.

About a year and a half before his death Goethe read the drama again in Chezy's French translation and said in a letter to the translator: 'The poet appears in it in his loftiest aspect, as representative of the simplest state, the finest way of life, the purest moral endeavour, the noblest majesty and the sincerest religious feeling'. The superlatives are certainly meant but they seem to be critically inconsequential. It is, however, possible that it is this appreciation of oriental poetry which prompted Goethe to build up a theory of world literature.

When Goethe thought of a world literature there was a chance of oriental poetry being included in a general scheme of European literary criticism. And the comprehensive mind of Goethe was particularly capable of accomplishing this task. For he believed, as he said in 1811 about the Vedas, that if they could be adapted in a language of Europe 'an altogether new world is bound to be born where we can live in greater plenitude and where the peculiarities of our mind will be fortified and will be refreshed for new activity'. I think when Goethe said this he did not realize its critical consequence and when he said something very different fifteen years after he did not seem to notice the ambiguity of his position.

Writing to his friend Humboldt in 1826 Goethe said: 'I have by no means an aversion to things Indian, but I am afraid of them, for they draw my imagination into the formless and the diffuse, against which I have to guard myself more than ever before Let me confess that we who read Homer as our breviary and who dedicated ourselves heart and soul to Greek culture as the most perfect incarnation of God on earth, that we, I say, enter with a kind of uneasy fear those limitless spaces where monsters obtrude themselves upon us and deformed shapes soar away and disappear.' This was an obvious critical apostasy and it was inevitable.

It was the Hellenic mind naturally recoiling from something foreign to its nature, the spiritual homecoming of a son of Apollo who had unmindfully strayed into a land where strange people worshipped strange gods, the European man's coming back to sanity after a brief interlude of oriental aberration. We cannot question the sincerity of Goethe's admiration of Indian poetry and at the same time we cannot question the critical honesty of his apology for the

clarity and formal perfection of Greek art. When Goethe fell into this ambiguity there was no critical apparatus to save him from it.

At this hour of Goethe's critical tergiversation the first Chair of Sanskrit in a German University was about eight years old. The first holder of that Chair, A. W. Schlegel, had published an edition of the *Bhagavadgita* with a Latin translation in 1823. His younger brother, a moving spirit of the Jena Group, had already said in his *The Language and Wisdom of India*, published in 1808, that 'even the loftiest philosophy of the Europeans appears in comparison with the light and vigour of oriental idealism, like a feeble Promethean spark in the full flood of the heavenly glory of the noon-day sun, faltering and feeble and ever ready to be extinguished.' In 1816, Bopp established that Sanskrit, Greek and Latin had a common source. About fifteen years before this historic philological discovery Perron's Latin version of Dara Shiko's Persian translation of the Upanishads had made a landmark in the history of western interest in our literature. Half a century after this publication, Schopenhauer said about the Upanishads, 'It has been the consolation of my life and will be the consolation of my death.'

But the enthusiasm did not define a critical approach to Indian poetry which could enlarge the circle of its readers. It remained the enthusiasm of extraordinary minds and that could never be a stable foundation for reasoned criticism. So the see-saw of attraction and repulsion in the Western man's view of Indian literature such as is exemplified in Goethe remained. It reappeared particularly in the reception of Rabindranath Tagore in the West. While the Swedish Academy which awarded the Indian poet its Nobel Prize remarked that 'no poet in Europe since the death of Goethe can rival Tagore in noble humanity, in unaffected greatness, in classical tranquillity' there was great confusion in literary circles in Europe and America when an Indian poet achieved this recognition.

Not many could agree with W. B. Yeats who said about the *Gitanjali* that 'we are not moved because of its strangeness, but because we have met our own image' and even Ezra Pound who discovered in the work 'a saner stillness come now to us in the midst of our langour of mechanisms' later remarked that 'Tagore's philosophy has not much in it for one who has felt the pangs of being pestered with Western civilization. . . .He is neither Villon nor Leopardi.'

It seemed to Pound that a mind without Villon's experience of a tragic and criminal life was incapable of producing the right kind of poetry for the Western reader. D. H. Lawrence felt nervous about

Tagore's eminence and asserted: 'better fifty years of Europe even as she is/ when the Indian poet's reputation was at its highest in Europe in 1921, a critic observed that a full 'acceptance of Tagore's ideas would mean a grave danger, nay the decline of European culture.' One thing, however, is certain: the Hellenistic thought which until now dominated the spiritual history of Europe and was responsible for its progress must be rejected as an error, should Tagore be right. It was the fear of Goethe uttered by the harsher tongue of a much lesser man. But it was indeed a very strange observation that the whole civilization of Europe could be menaced by a lyric poet from Bengal as it was at one time by the Visigoths or at another by the Turks.

Indian literature, then, has been an exotic plant in the West carefully preserved in an intellectual hot-house by those who are specially interested in things other than their own. It is liked because it is strange. And it is an object of a deeper appreciation only amongst those who have a painful awareness of what they call the insufficiency of Western culture. It has never been a part of the Western universe which is in essence the Graeco-Roman universe. Its appeal has mostly been the appeal of an alternative ideal which could not be comprehended within the framework of western culture.

English scholars have done some good work in the field of our medieval literature. Tulsidas was presented to the English reader by F. S. Growse who joined the Indian Civil Service after a distinguished career at Oxford. After him several other English scholars have translated *Ramacharitmanas*. Still the work is little known to the western reading public. In spite of works like Macauliffe's *The Sikh Religion*, Wescott's *Kabir and The Kabir Panth* Kingsbury and Phillip's *Hymns of the Tamil Saivite Saints*, Machnicol's *Psalms of Maratha Saints*, Thomson's *Bengali Religious Lyrics*, Kennedy's *Chaitanya Movement*, Keay's *Kabir and His Followers* and Fraser and Edwards' *The Life and Teaching of Tukaram*, Hindu devotional poetry is much less known in the West than ancient Hindu philosophy. And it would be fair to assume that out of ten English scholars who have heard of Prudentius and Jacopone not one will have heard of Sambandar or Eknath.

If the Western understanding of Indian literature is a problem it is a problem for the Western man. We must not expect him to show interest in our literature by way of decently reciprocating our interest in his. It would be odd to insist on a happy balance of trade in the things of the mind. A sensitive reader of poetry does not read

a poem of another literature for the promotion of international understanding and we will sin against the light of poetry if we come to it for an exchange of diplomatic courtesies. We must take it as a literary problem, as a problem of taste and of criticism. The danger of an Indian cooperation with the Western man's effort at understanding our literature is that it may encourage a retailoring and redressing of the thing to suit a different taste. It would be unwise to enlarge our literary market before we are sure that there has been an enlargement of taste. That enlargement of taste is primarily a literary objective and if it is also an aid to happy international relations the gain is welcome. But intellectual provinciality dies hard and may even survive political largeheartedness.

In the last century a Professor of Poetry at Oxford who was also a distinguished poet regretted that the English mind was shrinking because of its insularity and he desired that it should look to France and Germany and to the East for fresh ideas. To Matthew Arnold this was a problem for the critic. But the nineteenth century failed to devise a critical apparatus by which the poetry of the East could be placed alongside the poetry of the West in a common perspective. And where the nineteenth century failed the twentieth has not succeeded. Even today to the Western reader a book of Indian verse is very like a Persian carpet or a Japanese print; it is interesting because it is foreign.

In France, Sainte-Beuve summoned the critic to this task of enlarging the literary perspective of the European reader and he had none of Lawrence's neurotic fear of losing the central European values by reading a page of the English version of the *Bhagavadgita*. But neither Matthew Arnold nor Sainte-Beuve exercised any influence on the literary opinion of the new generation of readers in the twentieth century. In fact, in the period between the two wars the European protectors of the Mediterranean values often appeared to be so many Captain Ahab's furiously chasing an oriental Moby Dick. Today the intellectual temper of the West is more equable but the task to which Sainte-Beuve called the critic is yet to be undertaken.

Recently, an American critic has remarked that 'Shakespeare and Kalidasa are surprisingly united in their art and are complementary and not hostile in their spirit.' He then warns his reader that he must not judge the Indian poet by the canons of Aristotle. By what other canon must then he judge an Indian poet and how can he escape a kind of aesthetic double-thinking if he is to manage without a universally acceptable critical standard? In the last century a

distinguished Sanskritist of Oxford created similar confusion when he said in a lecture on the Indian epic that the Ramayana and the Mahabharata could 'scarcely fail to interest the admirers of Homer' and then added that 'Oriental compositions must not be judged from an exclusively European point of view.'

The whole question about Western response to Indian literature today then is: Can a European enjoy reading our literature without taking a holiday from his European critical standard? That is, can a European read and judge Indian literature as literature and like or dislike particular works as he likes or dislikes works in his own literature? To reconstruct criticism to make this possible is a task of great magnitude. It is a task involving major affections and interests and calls for important enterprises in literary criticism. Neither a European intellectual's good word about the Vedanta nor our own novelists' flair for English writing can help much in this. We must now wait for a generation of translators and interpreters who would affiliate our literature to the total literary inheritance of the West. That such affiliation is possible is the hope of every enlightened reader today.

The question today is—if the missionary, the administrator-scholar and the Indologist have failed to weave our literature in the fabric of the literary life of the West what must now be done to achieve that end? The UNESCO has taken an initiative and it has already subsidized the publication of several Indian works in translations. But it is extremely unlikely that this will be sufficient to create that literary common market which we contemplate. Only a greater interest in the literature of this country can bring that about and how that interest will be created must be left to history.

*Section E: Tools of Criticism*

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SISIR KUMAR GHOSE

## Sanskrit Poetics and Western Literature: Towards an Inquiry



I SPEAK with hesitation and humility, as who would not, speaking on a subject so vast, complex, for the most part unexplored, so full of pitfalls? Sanskrit poetics and Western literature is a theme worthy of years' of research and re-education. It cannot be reduced to a matter of a few weeks, or hours, refling of other men's flowers, a tyro's confession. Hence is a subject with an almost inexhaustible potentiality. I would rather learn than hold forth. But let me not be too modest. In the task ahead our personal limitations are less important than the awareness of the problem, the need for a larger perspective, the recovery of a lost horizon. At last we are waking up and if our labours force us to face the sheer relevance of the theme that will not be a bad thing at all. The need for dialogue has expressed itself on all fronts. As Krishna Chaitanya put it: 'It does seem worthwhile in the circumstances to make a fresh attempt to communicate the ideas of the great Indian thinkers to the English-speaking world which is perhaps half the world today.' Yes, but this will not be, one hopes, an annex to a belated national propaganda, an export industry, or, as in Krishna Chaitanya's own case, an obsessive search for 'extraordinary parallelisms'. That way our gain is likely to be minimal. The work has to be done in terms of a wider horizon as well as rootedness. The exercise will be valuable for the

balance, adventure and the sense of direction it is bound to give to our present inchoate schizophrenic critical efforts which are neither here nor there. The attempt to mediate between foreign fields and the native ground—and to the true *rasika* nothing is alien—will help to define our role, difficult, dangerous but necessary. Nearly a century back, Matthew Arnold had required that ‘every critic should try and possess one great literature at least, besides his own; and the more unlike his own, the better’. In that case the Indian student of Western humanities has his task cut out for him. (The recent passion for comparative literature is in some ways a good thing. Unfortunately, decadence is all that the comparatists seem to know and care for.) The task before us is not purely academic or intellectual. It is a question of the quality of our life and what we are going to do about it. It calls for the subtlest of discriminations and ‘communicating the ideas of the great Indian thinkers’, surveying the entire field of Indian poetics or Sanskrit rhetorical analysis is not all that there is to it. In any case, it is beyond our present schedule and before communicating it to others it will be advisable to assimilate it within our own system. Otherwise, the field is so large that one may stray too far away or get bogged by irrelevancies. What, for reasons of convenience, I shall do is to refer to a few key ideas of Indian aesthetics and give one example of the application of some of these ideas to Western literature as a pointer or paradigm. This is obviously not enough. I hope others will readily fill up the blanks, for the blanks are bound to be there. In commuting between the two, Sanskrit poetics and Western literature, one need not fear unemployment: from *Odyssey* to *Dr Zhivaga*, from *Divina Commedia* to *Les Fleurs du Mal*, from Sappho to Sartre there are worlds, countries of the mind to explore, to make one’s own.

As I see it, literature is part of a larger pattern whose name is culture. Culture today—to the raucous background music of ‘To Hell With Culture’—is not a one-way or a two-way traffic, but a many-way traffic. There are greater possibilities of culture (sanskriti) than those known to our effete universities and political leaders, and greater possibilities of accomplishment, and responsibilities, than those displayed by the well-heeled in their drawing rooms or mini-revolutionaries who have to import their fury and fantasy from abroad as preludes to freedom. The sensitivity with which we can relate opposites may be our only strategy against the overwhelming disvalues of the day. In such a context, of encounter between civilizations, ‘To say that East is East and West is West is simply to

hide one's head in the sand'. Not either/or but both is the imperative of our times. This does not mean that we rush towards easy equations or, worse, play variations on *Herrenvolk*. That infantility has lost its *raison d'être*. Today it is impossible to be content with the simple, and untenable, idea that our own past or culture can provide all the values, all the answers that we need. Such self-complacency can only be suicidal. Sanskrit poetics is not a cure-all. That would be an absurd simplification. We cannot overlook the disparities in experience, the new element the modern world has introduced. One may even learn from the differences, if one knows how to. Old insight, insofar as it is only old, cannot be answer to the agonies of the new situations. Many things have happened since and these cannot be easily put into the straitjacket of *shastras*, however liberal. Perhaps differences are not the heart of the matter. Art, Stephen Spender had once said, is a Hindu temple where many gods co-exist. Not only co-exist but also co-fertilize.

It is vain to think that we can understand Indian culture, its motives and its potencies without a familiarity with and an inner feeling for the Indian arts, their theory and practice. But Indian arts, and poetics are an endless topic, branching away in different and dubious directions, with specialists ready to pounce on the unwary amateur. The specialists deserve respect for the manner in which they have guarded their knowledge. But, as a rule, the pundit tends to be parochial and fails to relate or provide the link with our own times. Frequently, they are either innocent of Western literature or terribly naive. If this were not so, we would not be needed. So let us be thankful to them for being fallible! If we want the creative waters to flow again we must distinguish between the essential and the inessential. Else we will be swamped by details. There are so many schools or approaches, each with its own special theory, emphasis and vocabulary: the Vedantic, Buddhist, Yoga, Samkhya, Vaishnava, etc. Unless we wish to lose our way in the woods we must make some choice. For our purpose we shall choose only one basic, seminal psychological insight, characteristic of the Indian experience.

The emphasis on psychology is justified. As Pravas Jivan Chaudhuri, in his essay on 'Aesthetic Metaphysics', has pointed out: 'Now this Indian theory is more a psychology of artistic experience than a philosophy of beauty.' It was, at the same time, he adds, a 'psychology of emotion valid both in life and art', a unified theory.

But what was its nature, what was it about? As expected, it dealt with the nature or ground of Being and Consciousness, that is, there

were ontological implications,<sup>1</sup> I shall confine myself to three aspects of this basic insight which Indian culture has cherished and stood for more than anything else. The ancient Indian idea is absolutely true, says a thinker of modern India, that delight, Ananda, is the inmost, expressive and creative nature of the Spirit. This idea of the creative delight of the free spirit has often been mistranslated in Western thought as pleasure. The misunderstanding is due to an inability to distinguish between two levels of being, the substitution of the profundities of soul-culture by the superficialities of a sensate culture, in brief, the difference between the secular and the spiritual. In the early days the theory of the two souls—Goethe's *Zwei Seelen* and Shelley's 'being within being'—the desire soul and the true psychic being was admitted. This psychic postulate was really a discovery, an aesthetic event essentially renewable. As Whitehead said, 'The fertilization of the soul is the reason for the necessity of art.' A third, ancillary but no less necessary distinction was the idea of the Witness Self, *sakshi purusha*, common to Yoga, Upanishad, all the disciplines, including the canons of art, the *silpa shastras*. The Witness Self was regarded as the ideal spectator, *ab extra*, he or it is the relisher of world experience. This triad: the free, delight self, the soul and the witness self remains a permanent feature of the Indian view of the arts. Its time-transcending stance is explained by virtue of the fact that aesthetic experience tends to be a logical and non-empiric, not time's fool, *kalatita*.

How have these mature insights been re-interpreted in our own times and applied to literature other than our own? That is another story, not altogether happy. Yet there are always indications and one can learn even from missed chances. Before we come to deal with the second question the ground has to be cleared a bit. Among works needing to be done are reliable translations of ancient texts. These will include the clarification of concepts—such as *vak*, *rasa a-laukika*, *sadharanikarana*, *anattayaparatantra*, *sahridaya*, *santa*, *dhvani*, *pratibha*, *tanmayibhavana*, to mention only a few. Incidentally, to admit Sanskrit poetics to a universe of discourse on par with other disciplines is not to canvass for its theology or supporting sociological ethos. This, an unfounded fear, haunts some of our humanists who are put out by, the faintest hint of anything 'meta'. The sentimentalist overlooks the fact that 'The whole man is naturally a metaphysician'.

Regarding the application of ideas to other culture contexts or forms of art, I should like to mention only one example. One could hardly think of a better example of possible cross-fertilization. In the

West tragedy has always held the highest rank among the literary genres and well it might. Of late we have been hearing of 'beyond tragedy'. Indians have not been unfamiliar with the existential and tragic fragility of life, the sense of doom or fate (*adrishta*) overhanging our experience of the world. But from the earliest times Indians have developed a strategy to contain the tragic schedule. The idea of the world as a play, of surplus energy has acted as prophylactic against the tragic invasion. To these have been added the epic undertone of heroic activism, not merely for the warrior class but for all men engaged in the battle of life. And yet the performance of one's duty, in a spirit of detachment (the distancing of pain), is a joy, as in Rama's cheerful choice of exile in the forest. This is so even in the face of death, since death may not be a terminus but a process and a programme. All this is by no means an escape from honour, dignity or encounter. The transformation of the tragic is always a test and target for art no less than for life, But thanks to the inwardness of Indian values—works of art, we are reminded, are to be realized and relished as *dhiyalambas*, supports for contemplation,<sup>3</sup> or, to use Denis de Rougemont's phrase, as traps for meditation—even tears become tears of joy. Lear and Hamlet are gay, wrote Yeats in a Nietzschean vein. In *Shiva Stotra* we have an archetypal image of the terrible turning into the numinous. It is unfortunate that with such subtle and sublime thoughts available no Indian scholar has so far done any critical work on tragedy, Greek or otherwise. The books such as exists are written either in yesterday's borrowed idiom or, if the writer is young, today's. The use of jargon makes the only difference. This is not to be wondered at. Our universities have been seats of profoundly uncritical thinking, wholly unrelated with the milieu. It is time somebody called the bluff.

But there are always exceptions. I shall mention only one, to the work of one who turned his back upon college teaching. I mean Sri Aurobindo's *The Future Poetry*, which remains an outstanding but for the most part neglected work of criticism that modern India has thrown up. The occasion was almost casual. It grew out of a review of James Cousins' *New Ways in English Literature*, Unlike Coomaraswamy who quotes chapter and verse from all available traditional, scholastic and medieval sources for any statement or principle referred to, Sri Aurobindo does not refer too much or at all to literary canons or petrified *shastras*. With his sharp intuition he fixes on a few essential insights, usually Vedic or Upanishadic, and utilizes them, generously, in expounding cycles of new and diverse

experience, and a body of literature utterly different from the source of his insights. The way he ranges and relates is almost incredible. The whole thing is done with an ease and an assurance, fairness, subtlety and elevation which makes it at least a *tour de force*. For him it was the only natural thing to do and ties up so well with his other works.

True, he is a man with a thesis. (Pray, who is not?) And what is that thesis? To one like Sri Aurobindo James Cousins had suggested one possibility above every other, the possibility of what he has called *mantra* in poetry, something analogous to what Abbe Bremond called prayer, and others incantation, the Revolution of the Word. This master intuition he deploys with a firm determination to the course of English poetry, a daring thing to do. For this he depends on a view of poetry, as he knows, vastly different from the fashionable models. But, chip of the old block, Sri Aurobindo pins his faith in the power of the rhythmic word for the expression of our soul-vision and world-vision, with a depth of sense and power of infinite suggestion. In this view the intensity of the movement of poetry comes from the stress of the soul-vision behind the word. It is, as he says, the spiritual excitement of a rhythmic voyage of self-discovery among the magic islands of form and name in these inner and outer worlds. The visionary voyage, towards self-discovery, it is not without awes of its own, many gradations,. At its simplest he refers to a force of vital style, emotional style, intellectual style, also a force of the highest spiritual imagination. But beyond these stands a higher style of poetry to which we have to climb. 'This intensity belongs to no particular style, depends on no conceivable formula of diction. It is not a style, but poetic style itself, the Word; it creates and carries with it its elements rather than is created by them.' Among these elements of highest poetic utterance is vision: 'Vision is the characteristic power of the poet', says;-Sri Aurobindo, echoing the time-honoured Indian idea of the *Kavi* as seer (*drashta*). 'Sight is the essential poetic gift', he says elsewhere. Contrary to popular misconceptions, Sri Aurobindo does *not* want the poet to be a philosopher, prophet or preacher. He makes it quite clear that it is not necessary for the poet to have an intellectual philosophy, a message for humanity, or a solution of the problems of the age, a mission to improve the world, 'to leave the world, better than he found it'. These superficial indices and functions are not the heart of the matter. As Sri Aurobindo sees it: 'The poetic vision of life is not a critical or intellectual or philosophical view of it, but a soul-view,



a seizing by the inner sense; and the *mantra* is not in its substance or form poetic enumeration of a philosophic truth, but the rhythmic revelation or intuition arising out of the soul's sight of God and Nature and the world and the inner truth—occult to the outward eye—of all that peoples it, the secrets of their life and being.'

The soul-view is, however, not a static view. It is not to be confused with any fixed religious dogmas of the past. Here Sri Aurobindo springs, as it were, another surprise or proof of his originality. Sri Aurobindo is an evolutionary seer, a fact still missed by many. Poetry, he says, like everything else in man, evolves. "The poetic vision, like everything else, follows necessarily the evolution of human mind and according to the age and environment, it has its levels, its ascents and descents and its returns." To illustrate the thesis Sri Aurobindo chooses, of all things, the history of English poetry, with many a side glance on the Continental, with which he is perfectly familiar. This revised history of English poetry forms the main body of the texts in *The Future Poetry*. We give below one of the many *aperçus*, on how English poetry seems to have followed the successive steps of the natural ascending order of our developing perceptions. As Sri Aurobindo puts it:

'It began by a quite external, a clear and superficial substance and utterance. It proceeded to a deeper vital poetry, a poetry of power and beauty and wonder and spontaneous thought, the joy and passion and pain, the colour and music of life, in which the external presentation of life and things was taken up, but exceeded and given its full dynamic and imaginative content. From that it turned to an attempt at mastering the secret of the Latins, the secret of a clear, measured and intellectual dealing with life, things and ideas. Then came an attempt, a brilliant and beautiful attempt to get through Nature and thought and the mentality in life and Nature and their profounder aesthetic suggestions to certain- spiritual truths behind them. This attempt could not come to perfect fruition, partly because there had not been the right intellectual preparation or a sufficient basis of spiritual knowledge and experience and only so much could be given as the solitary intuitions of the poet could by a sovereign effort attain, partly because after the lapse into an age of reason the spontaneous or the intenser language of spiritual poetry could not always be found or, if found, could not be securely kept. So we get deviation into another age of intellectual, artistic, or reflective poetry with a much wider range, but less profound in its roots, less high in its growth; and partly out of this, partly by a recoil from it

has come the turn of recent and contemporary poetry which seems at last to be approaching the secret of the utterance of a profounder truth with its right magic of speech and rhythm.’

Such is the general survey at its most general. *The Future Poetry* is scattered with perceptive suggestions and judgments, epigrammatic no less than expository. We shall refer only to a few, restricted to romantic poetry and the romantic poets.

As we have seen, and can guess, the Aurobindean view is based on a sensitive psychology of Being and though he does not mention Kierkegaard—he was then little heard of, anyway—he fixes upon subjectivity as the mark of the modern. Distinguishing between the older and the newer subjectivity, he points to the greater assertion of the subjective personality of the modern poets: ‘the self of the creator visibly overshadows the work, is seen everywhere like the conscious self of Vedanta both containing and inhabiting all his works’. The comparison cuts both ways and he does not hesitate to say that in minute psychological observations—this is, in effect a door of escape from reality or ‘the illusion of realism’—the moderns surpass all previous ages. But where will this psychological process lead? According to Sri Aurobindo it is likely to lead to the rediscovery of the soul. This connects, in the mind of Sri Aurobindo, with another feature of the modern consciousness: its futurism, “an insistent interest in future “man”. Never has the past counted for so little, says the sage of tomorrow. His other suggestion that modern writers are ‘passionately occupied with the things beyond’ may not ring true. But the way psychological events have replaced simple events in modern literature and the arts lends support to what he says.

So much by way of general observation. We may pass on to one or two critical opinions on the individual poets. Neither Byron nor Wordsworth, says our critic, were poets in the whole grain of their being and temperament. Wanting to be critics of life they made illegitimate demands on their poetry. Byron has paid for his contemporary reputation. As for Wordsworth he sings too little and states too much, has incredibly flat passages. Yet, with all his defects, he remains one of the seer-poets, the poet of man’s large identity with Nature. Shelley, potentially a greater poet than almost any one else, does not understand earth-nature enough to transform it. He is too much at war with his time—or war with life, as Arnold interpreted it—to provide the links. Even in his later poetry, in *Prometheus Unbound*, for instance, one senses an absence of *tapasya*. This is an extremely bold and pertinent use of one culture’s concept to illuminate the



situation in another. It needed a sensitive man, one who always sees from within, to do it. As for Keats, whose early death, he thinks, was the greatest loss in this field of human endeavour, he had not yet found the thing he has to say, not yet seen what he was striving to see. What was that? To believe Sri Aurobindo it was ‘the discovery of the divine Idea, Power and living norm of Beauty which by its breath of delight has created the universe, supports it and moves towards a greater perfection, inspires the harmonies of inward sight and outward form, yearns and strives towards the fullness of its own self-discovery by love and delight. He has found the clue in the thought but not quite its realisation in the spiritual idea.’

His critique of romantic poetry is always from a relevant focus, utterly fair, because in terms of a superior insight than what it discusses. Without being openly nationalistic it reveals a ‘pitch of consciousness’ at once oecumenical and timely. The freedom and fullness of his exposition, the justice of the approach from a central tradition moving towards the future, the ability to breathe life into ancient viewpoints all stand out clearly as something exceptional. Instead of writing footnotes to foreign scholarship he has written a new chapter in creative criticism.

It is true we cannot have Sri Aurobindos for the asking. (And many of the Indian intellectuals have, or pretend to have, an allergy towards him bordering on the pathological.) Of course it is not necessary to echo Sri Aurobindo’s views and valuations. Vision cannot be duplicated or used as a formula. We are not looking for a blueprint for a school of blind sheep but a tone, a further intensity, an inclusive awareness. Here is an *adhikari*, of unlimited competence, equally at home in the East and in the West. And yet he remains unimpressed by either the exclusive prestige of the past or the pride of the present. With his faith in the total and human whole he has his eyes fixed on the essential and emerging values and is not *shastra-bound*. An expert in epigram as well as prolonged exposition, in spite of a constant and natural elevation of style and thought modest in the manner<sup>4</sup> of his presentation—a model of a mediator. Tolerant of a thousand ways of the spirit, it is not agreement to his views that is at stake, but the cause of mutual understanding. There have been few bridge-builders as competent, and as elegant, as Sri Aurobindo.<sup>5</sup>

To profit from him and from the developing situation, we have to cure ourselves of myopia and astigmatism. And we have to establish relevance. This cannot be done in terms of a preconceived pattern but in terms of a new context, the context of a unified culture in which

differences will no longer divide. What is required is a deepened need and a sense of direction, an enhanced responsibility, a finer tone. And this we can see everywhere. There is under way an enlargement of interests, an adventure of ideas. There are miles to go before a true meeting of mind can take place. Here is a new lease of life for the so-called English-educated. Let us go about it with caution, courage and confidence.

Sanskrit, including Sanskrit poets, is less a matter of a dead language or a dead frame of references. Facile, false assumptions and practices should be laid to rest. A return to first principle is not the same thing as a medieval nostalgia or an imposition of dead dogmas and archaic social organizations. The aesthetic education of man is another name for the willed evolution of the human whole. The real work of Sanskrit poetics is for ever to refine, clarify and illuminate art, life and consciousness, *atmasanskriti*. We have no desire to be *gramya*, parochial. The dialogue between the past and the present, the near and the far, is a prelude to a creative future. Such at least is the faith that sustains these primary and no doubt inadequate probings. 'Let us not to the marriage of true minds admit impediments.'

#### NOTES

1. "Consciousness is the great underlying fact, the universal witness for whom the work is a field, the senses instruments."-Sri Aurobindo. Also see: 'This perception of the metaphysical self through the communion of Art is what is called in Sanskrit aesthetics *rasa*'-Vidyaniwas Mishra.
2. In the poetics we are considering only the active and the contemplative lives are treated as values. The life of pleasure of which the end is pleasure only, is looked upon as sub-human. Another contrast would be between different views of 'inspiration', above and below.
- 3 'Works of art are reminders, in other words, supporters of contemplation.'  
-A. K. Coomaraswamy, Or, as Denis de Rougemont would say, 'traps for meditation'.
- 4 See 'I have tried to explain in *The Future Poetry*-very unsuccessfully I am afraid-that there are different grades of perfection in poetry.' *Letters*, III, 15.
- 5 Apart from Sri Aurobindo's critical insights he has another distinction to his credit: that is the creative enactment of the ancient vision in his later poetry. This is where he towers above everyone else, and provides a convincing proof of his own thesis about the return of the Rishi. Not a chip of the old block, but the old block itself.

O. M. ANUJAN

## Metrical Structure of the South Indian Languages



ETYMOLOGICALLY, the word metre means a measure. The Sanskrit equivalent for measure is *mātrā*, but this word has a restricted meaning in prosody, The Sanskrit word for metre is *chandas* or *vr̥tta*, but strictly speaking, these two are not considered as synonymous. The term *chandas* which is borrowed by prosodists from the Vedic hymns originally means the number of syllables fixed for a line; by *vr̥tta* is meant the various permutations and combinations within the framework of a *chandas*.

The primary basic element of all verse is the line. Every line of verse is connected originally with the neighbouring line or lines. The Sanskrit equivalent for line is *pāda* but one is likely to confuse a *pāda* with a foot. An English foot is a *gaṇa* and not a *pāda*, *Aṭī* is the Dravidian prosodic term for line. This word means both a foot and a beat and, therefore, those prosodists who favour a musical scansion define an *atī* as a unit of time measured by a rhythmic cycle. The line-break is called 'caesura' or *yati*.

The second basic element is the foot which may differ according to the genius of the language. Sanskrit metres are divisible into those made up of syllables and those of morae.

The third basic element of metrical composition is the verse in the sense of stanza. 'Stanza' is borrowed from Italian where it means

a station or stopping place. Stanzas may be of any length; they are the distinct sections of an extended poem. They are distinguished by their rhymes or *prāsa*. Though *prāsa* is a *sabdālaṅkara* in Sanskrit poetics, it has a much more important function to play in the regional languages of India. It is used as a tie to connect single lines into the larger metrical unity of stanza or stave and, most often, a difference in the position of the recurrence of similar sounds changes the stanza pattern.

Rhythm means periodicity which can be divided into temporal periodicity, spatial periodicity and regular incidence of force or stress as the metrists call it. A foot or *gāṇa* is the basis of metrical music. While in prose, words follow each other in an order almost entirely determined sense, in poetry the order is largely determined by fixed regular rhythmic schemes. In English prosody an accented syllable forms the foot rhythm. In Sanskrit it is formed by the recurrence of either the trisyllabic feet or the *catumātra gāṇas*. In Tamil the foot is called *cir* composed of monosyllabic and disyllabic *aśāis*.

Indian metres are divided into three types according to their foot system, namely, the Vedic, the classic and the indigenous. The three varieties have, at their basis, 'three varieties of music, representing three different elements of it current among us'. (H. D. Velankar, 'Metres and Music', *Poona Orientalist*, vii, 3 & 4, 1943, p. 202). These three varieties are the *svarasāṅgīta*, the music of voice modulation, the *varaṇasāṅgīta* or the music of sound variation and the *tālasāṅgīta* or the music of time-regulated accent.

Vedic metres have the music of voice modulations as their basis. This is done on the basis of the three broadly distinguished notes, namely, the *udātta*, the *anudātta* and the *svarīta*, or the high, the low and the middle. These notes are associated with the syllabic nature of a word, but no difference is made between the long and the short. Syllabic uniformity is not observed in the lines of the same stanza. It appears that at the end of the Vedic period, poets gradually discovered that long and short syllables are essentially different from each other in respect of their sound value and they also require different amount of effort for their pronunciation. They discovered that a skilful variation of long and short produces a peculiar music. This, perhaps, resulted in the discovery of the syllabic music seen in classical Sanskrit metres. The Sanskrit prosodists arrived at a definite method of calculating the possible long and short variations within the given number of syllables in a line. They also calculated that a long syllable takes double the time taken to pronounce a short one.

The unit of relative quantity or volume later came to be known as *mātrā*. A short syllable was regarded as having one *mātrā* and a long one two *mātrās*. When this was accepted, the natural tendency was to measure the time moments called the *mātrās* and to give a regularity to their incidence in each rhythmic unit. However, whether it is the total variation or the syllabic character or the time moments, the basis of Indian metre is the regular incidence of any one of them at fixed intervals.

Among the Dravidian languages, Tamil was the first to develop a literary form. Classical Tamil prosody defined in *Yāpparuṅkalakkārakai* does not accept the theory of the *mātrā* or the syllable as the basic unit of the foot as is done in Sanskrit and other Indian languages. The syllable is not by itself very important in classical Tamil metres. It is a combination of syllables called *asāi* that forms a foot or *cīr* as they call it. *Asāis* are divided into *nēr* and *nirai* and a set of these *asāis* forms a foot. A *nēr asāi* can be formed in four different ways as follows:

- |  |       |
|--|-------|
| 1. A long syllable                           | — Kā  |
| 2. A short syllable plus a closed consonant. | — kal |
| 3. A long plus a closed consonant            | —kāl  |
| 4. The last short syllable of a foot         | —ka   |

A *nirai asāi* too can be formed in four ways :

- |   |       |
|---|-------|
| 1. A short plus a short                     | —atu  |
| 2. Short plus short plus a closed consonant | —ati  |
| 3. Short plus long                          | —atā  |
| 4. Short plus long plus a closed consonant  | —atāl |

A *nēr* can be replaced by a *nirai* making it impossible to fix the syllables or the *mātrās* in a particular metre. The foot (*cīr*) is formed of one to four such *asāis*. The succession of *cīrs* decide the rhythm. There is a definite rule of linking one foot with another. These links are called *talai*. A line or *aṭi* can have two to five or more feet linked by different *talais*. *Toḍai* (*prāsa*) too has an important function. Tamil has several types of metres like *veṅpa*, *agavarpā*, *kalippā*, *cañcippā* and *maruṭpā* each of which has further subdivisions like *turai tālisāi* and *viruttam*.

It is interesting to note that the above definition holds good only in the case of Tamil classics written till the tenth century A.D. when many modern Indian literatures were still in the early stages

of infancy. Tamil poetical works written since then did not strictly follow these prosodic principles. The popular appeal of the Saiva Bhakti movement in Tamil-nadu represented in the *Tēvāram* and *Tiruvācakam* works written between the seventh and ninth centuries was responsible for the acceptance of folk metres into poetry. Therefore, it was these folk metres and not the classical metres which influenced even Malayalam which, as a language, is closer to Tamil than any other South Indian language. The *asāi* system of Tamil, like the trisyllabic system of Sanskrit, is at present a yardstick fit to measure a dead tradition and has become a straitjacket which, even Tamilians, now find difficult to accept.

Kannada has three kinds of *gaṇas* namely the *akṣara gaṇas* (syllabic feet), the *mātrā gaṇas* (quantitative feet) and the *amśa gaṇas* (a mixture of both syllable and quantity). Of these, the first is used only for metres borrowed from Sanskrit and refashioned by Kannada poets. *Mātrāgaṇas* are of three kinds, namely those formed of three, four and five *mātras*. Among these types, there are different stanza patterns namely *dvipadi*, *caupadi* and *ṣatpadi*. Most of these metres are formed of a repetition of the same type of *mātrāgaṇas*: Only one *ṣatpadi* namely *bhāmini* is formed of a combination of *trimātrā* and *caturmātrā gaṇas*. There is a variety called *kandas* which are derived or adapted from the Sanskrit *mātrā* variant called *āryāgīti*. *Amśagaṇas* are of three kinds, namely *brahma-gaṇa* having two, *viṣṇugana* having three and *rudragana* having four long syllables in a foot. The initial long in these feet can be substituted by two shorts. The substitution of other *gurus* (longs) rather follows a different rule. However, the poets have to observe the basic rule of Kannada prosody that no foot can begin with a single short. There are some *tripadis* (triplets) among *amśagaṇa* metres, but though they are triples in writing, they are recited as quadruplets. A part of the second line is repeated and made the third line and the third line sounds to the ear as the fourth.

Indigenous Telugu metres have two types of foot systems, the *mātrā* and a mixture of *mātrā* and *akṣara*. Even in *mātrāgaṇas*, the succession of long and short is rigid and hence the freedom sanctioned in *mātrā chandas* is absent in Telugu. Telugu metrical rules are so hard and fast that even the last short syllable in a line cannot be elongated. Telugu too has a few *amśagaṇas* like Kannada. They have two *Sūryagaṇas*, six *indraganaṇas* and fourteen *candraganaṇas*. The structure of these *gaṇas* shows a mixture of the *akṣara* and the *mātrā* concepts, but the method by which these *gaṇas* are devised violates all familiar notions of foot formation. The *prastara* in Sanskrit prosody

works out all possible permutations and combinations of a given number of syllables. This is taken as the basis of these *gaṇas*. The *chandas atyukta*, *madhya* and *pratiṣṭha* which have two, three and four syllables, respectively are taken as the basis of these *gaṇas*. They have four, eight and sixteen types, respectively, but Telugu prosodists omit the first two. While taking the remaining types, they prefix one more *laugh* to all *gaṇas* beginning with a *laghu*, thereby upsetting both the number of syllables and the number of *mātrās* in the foot system.

Of all the Dravidian languages, Malayalam prosody is the simplest and the least rigid. The following are the basic rules laid down by Raja Raja Varma, the author of *Vṛttamañjari*:

- (1) Malayalam metres run in units of two lines.
- (2) These two lines are a structural unit and do not stand for a stanza. A stanza can have any number of lines.
- (3) The metrical basis is either the *mātrā* or the syllable as the case may be.
- (4) A short can be made long in recitation. Eliding a long is not so common though it is permissible as a rarity.
- (5) Malayalam has *mātrāgaṇas* of four kinds, having two, three, four and five *mātrās* in a *gaṇa*.
- (6) The foot system is solely based on rhythm or the style of recitation.

Of all the Dravidian languages, Malayalam is the only language which does not care for the intrinsic nature of the syllables. A particular syllable can be short or long according to the position it occupies in the line. Practice is placed above theory. The theory of one *mātrā* for *laghu* and two for *guru* also does not hold good in Malayalam. Often a syllable is elongated into more than two *mātrās* if it is placed in such a position in a line. Elongation can go upto seven *mātrās*. Here the Malayalam prosodist comes very close to the border line between musicology and prosody. As far as my knowledge goes, no language other than Malayalam has accepted this kind of musical elongation as a prosodic principle.

Though Tamil is the oldest and richest language, its prosodic system does not seem to have influenced any other south Indian language. Tamil metrical system, we have seen, is based on two types of *asāis*, the *nēr* formed of the one syllable and the *nirai* formed of two syllables. Talkāppiyar says that two other *asāis* can be formed by adding the letter 'U' to these two. They are called *nerbu asāi* and



*niraiṇu aśai*. Instead of one constituent, the syllable or the *mātrā*, there were four forming the basis of the Tamil foot; but later Tamil prosodists left out the last two. By the time that most other South Indian languages developed a literary form, the Tamil poets had already ceased to use the classical metres based on the *aśai* system. Therefore, we find that even Malayalam which had drawn heavily from Tamil in its early stages had not adopted the Tamil prosodic system.

When the three south Indian languages, Malayalam, Telugu and Kannada, were subjected to the influence of Sanskrit literary forms, a peculiar blend with the indigenous genius had to be achieved. While Tamil did not accept anything without Tamilizing it, the other three languages unquestioningly accepted Sanskrit metres and Sanskrit vocabulary as they are. Malayalam, the youngest of the south Indian literatures, evolved a peculiar blend called *Mampravalam* in the ninth century A.D. and it continued to enrich the language till the early decades of the present century. We have seen that Kannada and Telugu have the syllabic feet and the moric feet. The syllabic feet are used for metres borrowed from Sanskrit. Besides borrowing Sanskrit metres as they are, they have also changed some. For example, Kannada has taken *Sragdhara* and substituted the first long syllable of each line by two shorts. This is known as *mahāsrāghara*. When the new metre is divided by trisyllabic feet, the whole definition has to change and it is a new metre altogether. So also there are many new metres in Telugu such as *utpalmāla campā-kamāla*, *mattēbha*, *mattakōkila* and *tarala*, These are indigenous brands of Sanskrit metres. Another interesting thing in Telugu is that in a poem in Sanskrit metre, a word can be split between the second and the third lines of a verse. No difference is made between the first line and the second line, and between the second line and the third line. Words can jump over to the second half. The Kannada indigenous metres are called *ragale*. The Telugu indigenous variety is called *ragada*. Kannada *ragales* are formed of three, four and five *mātrās* in a foot. Each line has four feet. In the tetra moric variety, two feet are sometimes combined together, thereby, each line being split into two octomoric feet in the three-five or five-three order. Telugu *ragadas* are nine in number, but five of them are only seen defined in prosodic works and nowhere else. Out of the remaining four, three belong to the *trimātrā* type, the only difference is in the number of *gaṇas* in the line. The fourth is *pañcanmātrā*. In the same way as the poets of



these two languages have their own brands of Sanskrit metres, we have seen that they have their own brands of *gana* formations known as *amsāganas*.

Malayalam is prosodically different from all other south Indian languages in this respect. When Malayalees borrow Sanskrit metres, they do neither change the order by substituting longs by two shorts or allow the words to jump over from the second line to the third. Classical Sanskrit metres which do not have rhythmic music are used as they are; but poets are so fond of the *dirṭiyākṣara prāsa* (agreement of the second character in each of the four lines) that till recent times, it was considered as compulsory. When metres formed of the same type of *gaṇas* are handled, Malayalam poets consider them as indigenous metres and handle them with their characteristic freedom. For example, the metre *Svāgatā* is popular in Sanskrit, but it is not so as a Sanskrit metre in Malayalam. It is ruled out as an *apavṛtta* (bad metre) by the author of *Līlātilakam*, the fourteenth century Malayalam grammar. But Kunchan Nambiar, the eighteenth century Malayalam poet, found that this metre defined in syllabic terms by the Sanskrit prosodists (*ra na bha go go*) has at its root a tetramoric (*caturmātrā*) music; the first half of it has a double tetramoric (three-three-two) division and the second half has two clear cut tetramoric feet. What this poet further did was to use it as a *mātrā-vṛtta* altering the order as he wished, in utter disregard of the succession of long and short. Here are four lines in this metre.

citra sēnamum/vṛdavumellām/  
citta sammatam/pūṇṭugammiccū/  
Vṛttra Vairiye/ccennuvaṇaṅgi/  
ttatra mevinā/nanatumati citram/

There are ever so many Sanskrit metres which are converted into *mātrāvṛttas*. When once they are converted, Malayalam poets use them with all the freedom associated with Malayalam poetry. Not only that longs are substituted by two shorts, but also shorts are made longs and vice versa.

Another device that Malayalam poets employ is truncation. They take one metre as the basic one and drop some *mātrās*. This dropping is most often done at the end of a line; but dropping the first or the middle *mātrā* or *mātrās* is also not uncommon. Sometimes truncation can take place in the middle of a foot or whenever the poet chooses, a mixing up of all these types is seen in one poem.

Sometimes, redundant feet or *mātrās* are also seen in a line as a variety. This freedom is a blessing for the poets, but a big problem for the prosodist.

Most Malayalam verse runs in units of two lines. But quatrains are not very rare. Malayalam has a kind of metres called *kīrtana* metres where the verse ends with a refrain. In this type, Sanskrit metres of the Malayalam brand are used. Whatever be their definition, they fit into a *tāla* pattern. Since these are intended to be sung, it cannot be otherwise. Malayalam poets have taken Sanskrit metres which, though defined in syllabic terms, are formed of one type of *mātrāgaṇa* or the other. It is possible that these were borrowed from the Prakṛt and Apabhramśa metres or folk metres of northern or southern India and later harnessed to the syllabic system of classical Sanskrit prosody.

V.I. SUBRAMONIAM

## Linguistics and Modern Poetry— Tamil



THE MEDIUM of poetry being language, any technique devised for the analysis and understanding of language is also relevant for the study of poetry.

To clarify the problem, grounds which are already familiar to students of poetry have to be resurveyed, at least briefly.

Poetry contains a message. The medium of that message is language. An elementary definition of poetry will be a message conveyed through a medium. Indeed, such a definition is vague and comprehensive enough even to include genres which are different from poetry.

Just as poetry, plastic and performing arts have a message to convey. Thus the element, message cannot differentiate arts.

But the medium differentiates paintings from poetry; sculpture from drama; dance from folklore. Within literature, poetry is differentiated from prose by its medium. Drama is differentiated from folklore by its language.

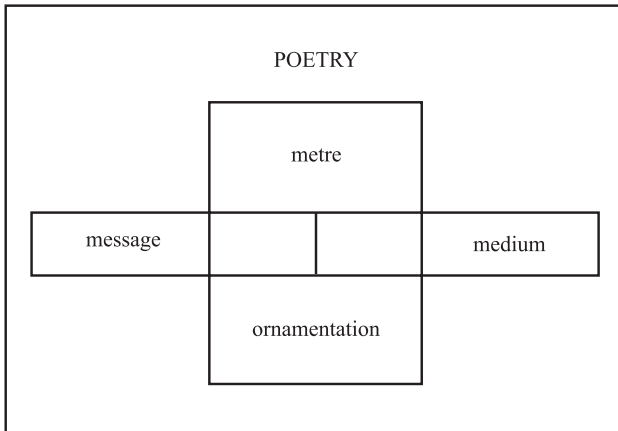
Within poetry, contributions of one author is differentiated from another on the basis of his language. Thus style is determined largely by language.

The language of literature—poetry or prose—is not the spoken speech but a standardized abstraction based on one or more spoken

forms. Actual spoken forms are interlaced but only occasionally for effect. Even in folk compositions the spoken speech is standardized for wider appeal.

In poetry, in addition to standardized speech, metre, poetic device, like simile, metaphor and other figures of speech restrict the choice of words, In ornamental prose also the figures of speech have a role to play. It may be major or minor according to the idiosyncrasy of the author.

Diagrammatically



Linguists are concerned mainly with the analysis of the medium. Information theorists are concerned with the analysis of message (information) in general. Attempts to analyse poetic ornamentation as fraction sentences are also made by a few. While comparative linguists have attacked metre to establish family relationship between languages and to guess the pronunciation of sounds of languages, now forgotten or now not in vogue, the experimental phoneticians have explained formation of metres on the basis of patterns of intonation used by the speakers of that language. Linguistic techniques are useful in understanding all aspects of poetry. But, all explanations offered by linguists for the several aspects of poetry are not acceptable to all. Nor need they be accepted by all. The availability of such explanations is the only point which is relevant here.

#### SURVEY OF THE APPLICATION OF LINGUISTIC TECHNIQUES TO POETRY

Extension of the linguistic techniques to poetry is not recent. Ever since the bimodel classification of form and content was accepted

by the Russian and European formalists, linguistic techniques became handy for the analysis of form. Roman Jakobson introduced a synthesis in the bimodel classification and demonstrated how effectively the inner pattern of the language of poetry can be studied by analysing it. The contributions of Rene Wellek and Austin Warren most of which were later collected into a book *Theory of Literature*<sup>1</sup> extend linguistic techniques for defining poetry and discusses the various aspects of criticism with a perceptible awareness of the developments in linguistics.

During the second world war and immediately after that period, the Bloomfieldian procedures<sup>2</sup> of analysis of a language gained acceptance in the United States. Archibald A. Hill<sup>3</sup> and Saymore Chatman<sup>4</sup> extended the Bloomfieldian method for the analysis of the language of poetry. T. A. Sebeok, who is familiar with the developments in the East European countries, brought a synthesis between the analytical techniques of Bloomfield and the formalist's approach to poetry. His contributions on Cheremis Folklore and his book, *Style in Language*<sup>5</sup> which he edited reflect this synthesis. Since the publication of Chomsky's *Syntactic Structures* in 1957 the transformational approach to poetry gained ground in the United States and elsewhere. Samuel Levin<sup>6</sup> was one of the earliest in the USA to adopt this model to poetry and continues to refine his application. James P. Thome<sup>7</sup> did it in UK, Richard Ohmann<sup>8</sup> and Curtis Hays<sup>9</sup> of USA extended it to prose literature also.

Those who have applied the transformational model have taken as their guidelines (1) that the grammar will generate only grammatical strings, (2) deep syntactic relationships are indicated by the basic strings, and (3) by a finite set of rules it can generate innumerable sentences. For constructions of the type: It is a hungry dance (Wallace Stevens), Her hair's warm sibilance (Hard Crane), Behind a face of hands (Dylan Thomas), He danced his did (E.E. Cummings), A grief ago (Dylan Thomas) etc., the rules of generation or co-occurrence have to be modified to accommodate them.

Among the rules some are general and some specific. The consequence of codifying a general rule to accommodate strange constructions will be disastrous. For instance, all Noun Phrases (N.P.) can be replaced only by nominals in normal English. If we take the construction 'He danced his did' we have to replace the noun phrase by a verbal 'did'. This being a general rule we have to restate that all Noun Phrases are replaced either by a nominal or verbal. By this rule all articles and pronouns will now modify

not only nominals but also verbal (e.g.) his book, his did. This change in the general rule will effect several areas of grammar. If modifications are made in specific rules, like the co-occurrence of a verbal noun before 'ago' in addition to time denoting nouns like 'sometime', 'moment', etc., the consequences will be little. If a device can be found whereby no rule—general or specific—is modified for generating the language of poetry, it will be an ideal one. If that is not possible at least modifications should be restricted to specific rules, so that consequences will be minimal. The sentence of Cummings 'He danced his did' will illustrate this point. The poetic piece is as follows:

'any one lived in a pretty low town  
 (with up so floating many bells down)  
 spring summer autumn winter  
 he sang his did not he danced his did'

The stretches 'he sang his did not' and 'he danced his did' have a similar pattern like haves and have nots or does and don'ts. In the above stretches 'did not' and 'did' are nominals which are verbals, and as such a specific rule will be needed for these strings. Another possibility will be to have as basic strings the following: *he sang his songs which he did not have* and *he danced his tunes which he did have* and apply erasure transformations. The failure to adopt erasure transformation is a shortcoming in the work of Levin and others.

In India, Mahulkar discussed the techniques of correcting one's own song with illustrative material from Keats,<sup>10</sup> A. R. Kelkar<sup>11</sup> defined the being of poetry in a recent article. Their main concern was not the extension of linguistic techniques to poetry though both are quite familiar with them. V.I. Subramoniam demonstrated how a series of contractions of tales will lead to a irreducible minimum of the plot which can be further stated in the form of a series of logical propositions or motifs which will help in comparing one version of a story with another.<sup>12</sup> P.R. Subramanian applied this technique to folklore and stated that the logical propositions are regular in dirges but not in lullabies.<sup>13</sup> In this paper the technique is extended to modern poetry in Tamil'.

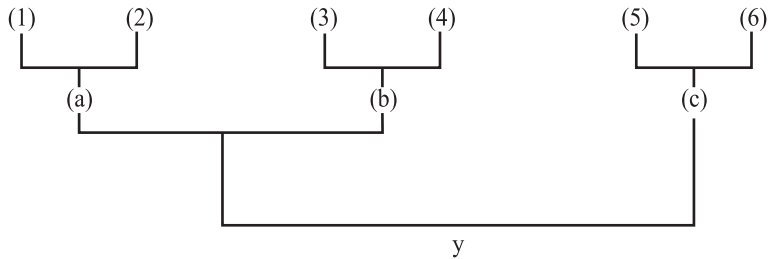
#### THE PROPOSITIONAL BASE

Conversion of a sentence into a phrase or two or more sentences into a single sentence or clause without any obvious change of meaning is familiar to students who engage in precise writing.

Tagore is a poet	(a) Poet Tagore
	(b) Tagore who is a poet
Tagore is a poet	(a) Poet Tagore wrote Gitanjali
He wrote Gitanjali	(b) Tagore who is a poet wrote Gitanjali
	(c) Poet Tagore is the writer of Gitanjali

On the left hand column, the text consists of several words and sentences which are converted into smaller stretches in the right hand column without any perceptible change in the meaning. This can be repeated by successive stages of reduction, until no further reduction will be possible. A pyramid-like structure will emerge out of this reduction,

Diagrammatically



This irreducible minimum is the idea base on which the edifice of the text is constructed. The idea base can be further simplified into a set of logical propositions which can be used for motif indexing if it is a tale, for comparison of the plots if the tale has several versions. In poetry, the idea base and its components, the logical propositions will indicate the manner of cognition of a situation which forms the subject matter of poetry. The same event, like the demise of Mahatma Gandhi, has been cognized differently by poets in Indian languages. The idea base can bring out their differences in a precisely statable form. The successive reduction of poetlic texts can indicate the style of individual authors, the degree of ornamentations and elaborations in poetry.

The idea base is not similar to the deep structure of the transformationalists. The deep structure is an assumed base to generate sentences in a language. Simplicity in grammar will determine its nature and constituents. The idea base is an abstraction on the basis of contraction of a single or multiple sentences on the same topic. While deep structure with the aid of transformational rules have to account for all words in the sentence, the idea base is extracted out of contraction of words which are in

modified relationship. Further, deep structure is not successive in its abstraction, whereas the idea base is so.

For illustration we have taken two of the leading modern poets in Tamil who are alive and are active. Kannadasan, the lyricist, and Mudiarasan, the conscious craftsman, have sung elegies at the death of N. S. Krishnan, the gifted humourist of the Tamil stage and the film world. The selection of this piece is motivated by two reasons: (a) it is free from the political bias and propaganda which both of them share, the former in a large measure, and (b) it is only on this topic, the same poet Kannadasan has sung thrice perhaps within a period of two or three days (my inference). How a single poet cognizes the same situation in different points of time just as two different poets cognizes, the same situation can be illustrated by this example.

#### THE ANALYSIS

The elegiac stanzas under the captions AaRaattuyar—Unending sorrow by Mudiarasaa (M)<sup>14</sup> and Kalaiyaa vaanan—unfading Vaanan (Krishnan) by Kannadasan (K)<sup>15</sup> are subject to analysis. Mudiarasan's composition has five songs having four lines. Each line consists of eight feet. Totally, it has 168 feet. Kannadasan's composition consists of seven stanzas of four line each. Every line consists of only six feet. Totally it has only 160 feet. The texts are more or less equal in length. By contracting the stanzas the ideational sentences for M and K are listed below:

	M		K
(1)	vaanan maaymtaan col paRamtatu naan coormteen avan nakaiccuvaikai enRu kaanpeen (Vaanan died (that) word spread I was afflicted Where else can I hear his humour)	(1)	naan tuumkineen vaanan iRamtaan enRaan avan illai (When I slept Some one told that Vaanan died Vaanan is no more)
(2)	Kalakkattai cirippu akaRRum avan colluvaan naam tuyar maRappatu ewaaRu avan cirippu marumtu aamoo iyaRkaiyee aluviroo (Mind's sorrow can be mitigated by laughter He will say this How can we forget this loss Will his laughter be the medicine All elements! are you weeping)	(2)	naan elumteen avanaip paartteen toolan araRRi naan naan nakaitteen (I stood up I saw my friend He wept I laughed at him)



(3)	<p>avan kataiyai keetpatu ennaal vaanoli karuttaik kuuRaatu naṭikar talaivar yaaruḷar kuṭumpam coormtatu atai ceyal patuttuvaar yaar (When can I hear his stories The Radio will not broadcast his ideas Who among the actors can advise them like him His family is desolate Who will revive it)</p>	(3)	<p>nallavan naaRpatil vaalvaan avan piRarkku vaalmttoon kaṅkal avan cetta uruvattai pitittukkoḷlum (The good one will attain fame even in forty He lived for others My eyes will preserve His appearance at his death)</p>
(4)	<p>pakuttaRivai cuvai aakkinaan mannavan ciRaiyil aṅcal ilaan caakkaatu iraiyaaka koṅṅatu ataRku veeR oruvarum illaiyoo (His humour was based on rationalism Even in prison he was not tired Death has eaten him as its food It has none else for it)</p>	(4)	<p>avan caavataam taṭiyar caavaar vaḷḷal caavaanoo atu illai (Will he die Only the fleshy will die Will a philanthropist die That is not possible)</p>
(5)	<p>maturam aaRRa vallaa_loo avan aaRRalai makkaḷ maRapparoo kuṭumpam yaatu ceyyum min vaalvu ninatu nii neṅcil niRaimtaay (Will Maturam (his wife) bear this Will people forget his ability What will his family do Like a lightning you lived You live full in our heart)</p>	(5)	<p>tooḷkal viḷumtana taaṭi venmai aayatu kaṅkaḷ kuḷimntana avan maanṅtaan uru niRkum nencil (His shoulder drooped His beard greyed eyes have sunk deep He died His sight stays in my mind)</p>
		(6)	<p>iḷaiyan maanṅtaan enRum iḷaiyanaay vaaḷa ninaittaan naan kiḷamai peRReen avan iḷamai nencil niRkiRatu peeran pool kiḷavaree sukamaa enRu cirippaan (The young man died He lived young throughout I have become old His youth remains in my mind Like my grand-son he will enquire Whether I am keeping fit and laugh)</p>

	(7)	ciRiyavan maRaimtaan CiRumai illai aRiñan maRaimtaan anpan pirimtaan teyvarri aaka vaḷiviṭṭaan meeni pirimtatu piRappil pukaḷkoṇṭaan (The young man died He died with no blemish The learned died The lovable one died The God-like left His body parted Even from birth he was famous)
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By comparing the idea bases of the two compositions the following emerges:

- (1) M praises the greatness of Krishnan known as Kalaivaanan. The impact of the loss on the author is mentioned only briefly. K, on the other hand, is subjective. His reaction to the death was portrayed, The greatness of Krishnan is only briefly mentioned.
- (2) Chain relationship of the propositions found in the stories are not available in elegies because of the lack of a story or plot base.
- (3) A further broad abstraction on the basis of propositions is possible like greatness of the departed soul, the impact on the poet etc. in lyrics but not in stories.
- (4) The outlook of the stanzas or the poetic piece in general can be located with objectivity through this analysis.

The rules of generation when listed bring out the individuality of the two poets. Each sub-category listed below represents a rule—transformational or selection rules. The analysis though not exhaustive is representative.

	M	K
Adjective	12	10
Relative participle .	14	13
Relative participle Base	3	3
Appellative Relative Participle	2	0
Appellative Relative Participle Base	1	0
Adverbs	7	4
Verbal participle	27	16
Noun bases with cases	17	22
Noun bases without cases	19	15
Noun bases without cases and ending verbs	3	0

Noun Noun-compounds	..	10	4
Emphatic	..	5	4
Expletive	..	5	3
Adnominal modifiers	..	2	0
Embedded Sentences	..	5	12
Simple sentences	..	27	25

While M and K have almost the same number of rules for Adjective, Relative Participle, Relative Participle base, Emphatic and Expletive, they differ in Appellative Relative Participle, Appellative Relative participle base, adnominal modifiers and Noun bases without case and ending verbs which are not found in K. The larger number of complex embedded sentences using hookers are found in K. The use of case ending is more with K than with M. The use of verbal participles is more with M than with K. The individuality of each author in the mode of expression is clearly and effectively brought out by this analysis.

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## APPENDIX

A.L.S. Muthaiya (pseudonym: Kannadasan) was born on July 5, 1926 in Chirukudalpatti, Ramnad District; after serving as Sub-Editor and Editor for a number of journals he entered into the film industry; has written stories, lyrics and scripts for quite a number of films; recognition came for his lyrics; his works include: *Kannadasan Kavitaikal* (collection of poems in 2 Volumes) and a number of short stories and novels; awarded National and State awards for lyrics; some of his poems were translated into Indian and foreign languages.

Language known: English

K.S. Durairaj (pseudonym: Mudiarasan) was born at Periyakulam, Madurai District on October 7, 1920; worked as a Tamil Pandit in a High School at Karaikudi; influenced by the two great modern Tamil poets Bharathi and Bharathidasan; works are: *Mudiarasan Kavitaikal* (1953); *Kaaviyappaavai* (1965); also wrote an epic (*Puunkoti* 1964); nine of his poems were selected by the Sahitya Academy for translating them into other Indian Languages.

Languages known: Telugu and English

N.G. JOSHI

## Marathi Prosody (Its Peculiarities and Salient Features)



FORMATION of verse, like any other form of art and literature, is essentially a form of beauty, an aesthetic creation. Its roots might have been in the ancient temple arts of song and dance. But even there the composition of a song, however primitive and spontaneous, was a thing of beauty and a perpetual joy.

Like other major northern Indian languages, Marathi is an Indo-European language. The words in it are formed on quantitative basis, and not on the qualitative. The qualitative aspect of a syllable is present in it to a certain extent, but it is more of a subjective employment of stress and emphasis in the intonation of letters and words. Unlike the English language and more like French the language of Maharashtra had manifested certain verse patterns which were based on the flat calculation of the number of syllables, irrespective of their quality or quantity. At least the writers: in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries of the Christian Era could not make out the rhythmic basis of the units of four syllables or three syllables, employed in the composition of the verse. This rhythmic pattern of verse was called, in ancient times, the *Ovi* or the *Abhanga stanza*. Perhaps, the first possible serious and sensible attempt at its classification was made by the great saint-poet of Maharashtra, Santa Namdeva. He, in two of his now well-known Abhangas, points

to two separate types of Abhangas—the longer Abhanga, with six syllables in the unit and the shorter Abhanga with four syllables in the unit. Of course, a modern student of Marathi verse-forms knows that even the so-called six syllable unit is, in fact, a combination of two four-syllable units, with a ‘leap’ (Pluti) or modulation of sound filling up the gaps. This is patently manifest in the way the Abhanga is recited.

A comparative study of versification in some of the north Indian languages shows that the versification in Bengali was done much on the same lines. The unit employed in its formation, a four-syllable unit, had much of the same characteristics as in the Marathi Abhanga or the Hindi Kavitta-Ghanakshari or the Gujarati Manahara-Ghanakshari compositions. Unfortunately, the now available patterns of the old Hindi (Vrajbhasha) verse are not as old as the Marathi Abhanga. The Bangla ‘*Payara*’ verse could be very well compared with the Marathi Abhanga. ‘*Ovi*’ is the other synonym of Abhanga. The *Ovi* compositions were much lauded by the ancient writers of treatises on music, notably the ‘*Manasollasa*’ of the Karnatak (Chalukyan) king Someshwara III which mentions *Ovi* as the folklore verse-form, recited by the Maharashtrian females while grinding or sifting the corn. Incidentally, Someshwara III reigned in the southern part of India, in the twelfth century A.D.

And now I come to the really tough part of my thesis—the real rhythmic basis of these ancient verse units. Apparently its numerical equality was considered as a possible basis of its rhythmical harmony. We, in the age of modern linguistics, cannot remain satisfied with such a naive way of explaining away this basic point. Of course, I hasten to add that it was the only way possible in those times, when the writers of these verses were almost always unconcerned with matters of technical finesse. Poetry almost naturally came to them, and the automatic employment of the available verse form was quite sufficient for their purpose.

But is it really so? Is it true that units of three or four syllables are formed without any concern of the quantity? The norm of the ‘time’ taken by a syllable) to be pronounced, was labelled as either ‘long’ (‘*Guru*’) or ‘short’ (‘*Laghu*’). It was this classification of the normal time taken in pronouncing a letter or a syllable, that was the basis of classical patterns of verse. But writers of verse in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries were not used to those classical Sanskrit patterns. Late in the fifteenth century such patterns were copiously used by the Mahanubhaava poets, but very nearly they were avoided

by the saint-poets of the famous Warakari school. Even the great Dyaneshwar (Jnaneshwara), the most learned and respected of these saintly poets did not condescend to use any Sloka Pattern. The very famous successor of his, Saint Eknath, used the 'Bhujanga-Prayata' Sloka very naively, lapsing almost entirely into a flexible folklore pattern. The compilers of his Gatha (as verse collections of Saints were then called) invariably labelled them as 'Abhangas', which of course, was just a common way of binding the compositions together, and not at all a serious attempt at classification of those compositions. The same was the case with Saint Tukaram's Sloka compositions.

But the writers of the Abhanga, some of them quite well-versed in the classical Sanskrit prosody, were obviously not impressed by the classical mode of placing and counting the 'long' and 'short' syllables in the usual three-syllable units. They were conscious of the fact that some other mode of scanning and analysing was necessary. The most obvious and useful way was counting the whole number of the syllables, not in a 'Charana' or a 'pasa', i.e., a line but in the entire stanza. But Namdeva's classification of the Abhanga clearly shows that he was employing an ingenious and indigenous mode when he pointed out the syllables in one entire line and then went on further to state the way of the formation of the verse-stanza, which was then known as a 'Chowk', The entire composition of such 'chowks' was mentioned by him as Abhanga. Its other synonym Ovi had been delegated to signify the more colloquial form of folklore verse, as also to denote the more artificial form of loose rhymed verse that was employed by the saint-poets in writing long treatises and narrative poems. They are now known as Geya and Granthik Ovi respectively. The first Ovi was musically rhythmic. The other Ovi was devoid of any music (excepting that of the rhyming). Dyaneshwara has clearly pointed this out in one of the significant references to his Ovi. He says that his Ovi is charming and beautiful even without any sing-song music ('geeten vinahi rangu davi'). Students of prosody and metres afterwards pointed out that the 18 syllables of the Abhanga-ovi 'charana' (plus four last ones of the appended beat, the Ardha Pada) were, in fact, further broken into three distinct beats of six syllables each in the case of the longer Abhanga; and that every line of the shorter Abhanga contained 8 syllables. They did not go any further. Dr M. T. Patwardhan (the famous Marathi poet 'Mathav Julian') it was who in the fourth decade of this century showed further rhythmic beats. But he, too, employed the same

numerical code, saying that the unit in these lines of verse was either a group of three syllables or of four syllables, every syllable being of an equally long duration. I am given to understand that the same mode was used by the old scholars of Bengali metres, when scanning or analysing the verse pattern called 'Payara' which was almost universally accepted by the ancient Bengali Saint-poets as the most natural instrument for conveying their devotion to God poetically.

The modern mind tries to go deeper into the processes of rhythmic patterns. We, in Maharashtra, are not at all unanimous on the point, in deciding whether the norm of the rhythmical beat in an Abhanga composition is the uniformly long syllable or the average time (duration) of a given rhythmical beat (further subdivided into approximately equal, singular letter). It is reported that the modern experimenters of verse in Bengali are of opinion that the peculiar way the letters are pronounced in that language lends it a characteristic which is akin to accentuation in the English language. I do not know whether it only means that the syllable in a beat in the verse could be more emphasized or less emphasized. If it means that, we can understand it, as even our Indo-European languages, when colloquially employed, tend to assume a qualitative aspect, often called the 'spoken' or the 'colloquial' rhythm. But in such cases the 'stress' or 'accent' that is employed is merely a subjective expression of one's emotional attitude. I hope it is not claimed that in the stress or accent there is a phonetically and phonemically tenable 'norm' of the language, that, to wit, it is a phoneme, as normal and natural as in the case of, say, the English language.

The Abhanga proved to be a hard nut to crack, as it was always recited with the constant drumming accompaniment of the rhythmic beats of the cymbals and the) Dholak. The only glimpse of its rhythmic pattern a modern discerning mind gets was when the numerically repetitive beat of four letters was belied by an extra letter in the unit. The following lines from one of Santa Tukaram's famous Abhangas will illustrate this point far better:

Sundara teṅ   dhyana ++	Ubje vite   vari ++/
Kara Katta   -vari ++	Thevūniya // 1//
Makara-Kunḍale + +	Talapati shravani ++/
Kanṭhi Kaustubha mani ++	Virajata // 2//. . . .

Here in the first long line there are three uniform units, with six rhythmic beats, and the last unit is the so-called half-line beat,



making the whole 'charana', a 'Sardha Tripadi' or a stanza with a half and three padas. Every unit or 'pada' is composed of two beats, the first beat comprising four syllables (letters) and the second, of two syllables (letters), with an elongation of the last syllable. It is, in fact, not 'half', but with elongation of the last 'swara' is equalized in quantity. But there are two extra syllables in the other long line beginning with 'Makarakundale', as the second apparent letter 'la' in 'talapati' is really not a syllable, because in recitation, it is slurred to make the beat even with the normal beat of four syllables. In the same way the apparently visible syllable 'bha' in 'kaustubha' is, in fact, slurred and the beat becomes even with other uniform beats. This process of slurring was unconsciously employed by the writers of verse in ancient times. In reality it is essentially the normal way a word is spoken in the colloquial usage of the language. But even the otherwise unconventional saints of old used the vehicle of the Marathi language in the conventional classical way, wherein every letter is bestowed with a syllable, either long or short, irrespective of the fact that many of these syllables are actually slurred in the process of pronouncing the whole word. In the case of the regular beats in the time measures of an Abhanga, the syllables are uttered in such a way that, while qualitatively making them long or 'guru', it does not tease our ear, as the artificiality of the process is as less pronounced as possible. It is almost an impossible task, but it is achieved so very naturally. The same naturalness is manifest in the case of the shorter Abhanga. This could be illustrated by quoting a few lines from Tukaram's other famous Abhanga, which is generally chanted at the end of every 'Kirtana' in Maharashtra:

Hechi | dāna de=gā | devā  
 Tujhā | visara na | vhāvā | |  
 Na lage | Mukti-dhana-sam | padā  
 Santa | -sanga de=gā sada |

The first two lines quoted here are quite regular but in the third line as given above, there are, in the 1st and 2nd beats, normally comprising two and four syllables, as shown in the former two lines, two extra syllables, 'la' in 'na lage' and 'na' in 'muktidhana'; The vowels there are slurred, in the same way as was explained earlier in this paper.

The verse-pattern 'Ghanakshari' follows almost the same mode of intonation or pronunciation. Unlike its counterpart in Hindi and

Gujarati, the Marathi 'Ghanakshari' has 31 syllables in a line, which has three beats of eight syllables each and the fourth one of seven syllables, or 'aksharas'. The letters or 'aksharas', in this pattern are significantly called 'ghana', i.e., 'emphatic' or 'strong'.

The rhythmic unit in these verse-patterns is determined by the 'tala'—matra, and not by the natural quantity of a syllable. So the modern prosodist has to evolve a formula that would establish the relationship between the two-fold 'akshara matras', the 'guru' and the 'laghu' the units of quantity accepted by the conventional classical prosodists, and the actual 'tala matra' of the beat in the 'talas' of the Tabla. The equation we arrive at is—

$$\text{one (1) tala matra} = \begin{array}{l} 1 \text{ guru akshara} \\ 2 \text{ laghu aksharas} \end{array}$$

Thus the actual qualification of syllables in an Abhanga comes to this, that the syllable in its beat is exactly corresponding to a 'tala matra' and so every 'akshara' in the Abhanga or 'Ghanakshari' is 'guru', or that it becomes a 'long' syllable by virtue of its position in the pattern. The beat of the 'tala' is subdivided into two halves of four 'tala' matras in each half. This is the unit of 8 'akshara matras' (four 'guru' aksharas) which is very commonly employed in the formation of Marathi verse-patterns of ancient and modern times. The Tabla 'tala' that goes with it is 'Dhumali' or 'kehrava',

In another form of Marathi verse a different rhythmic unit is employed. It is the commonest type of Marathi 'Arati' song, sung at the time of the ritualistic revolving of the sacred lamp, around the face of the holy image of the god or the goddess. The unit comprises three syllables each and every 'charana' has three such beats, with the fourth one having, generally, two syllables or their approximate equivalent in quantity. As in the Abhanga, a lot of slurred vowels are envisaged. An example from Santa Namdeva's extremely popular Arati of Vitthal or Pandurang will illustrate this:

Yugeṇ at | thāvisa | vitevari | ubha | . . .  
 Koshavasi Namadeva Bhaven Ovāḷiti ||  
 Jaya Deva! Jaya Deva! Jaya Paṇdurangā  
 Rakhumai Vallabhā—  
 Rāhichyā Vallabhā, paveṇ jivalagā ||

But this is a pattern with a difference. The quantification herein is almost normal with three units, or beats, of threte tala matrasi

each and the fourth beat with two tala matras,—so that every line in this Arati form (now called the ‘Parilina’ pattern of matraic metres) consists of 11 tala matras, or of ‘laghu’ 11 or ‘guru’ syllables or 22 ‘laghu’ ‘akshara’ matras. Often the purely matraic beats are mixed with the so-called ‘chhandas’ or prolonged type of beat. The following lines are of this mixed types.

Jaya Deva | Jaya Deva | Jaya Hanu | mantā  
Tujheni | Prasade | Na bhi Kri | - tāntā | |

This is composition by the great patriot-saint of old, Swami Samartha Ramdas. The ‘Ya’ in the first line is usually slurred and in the remaining beat, the ‘aksharas’ are either grammatically ‘guru’ or are rendered so by virtue of their position in the scheme of rhythmic units’.

The other similar form of old Marathi verse is very peculiar to the Marathi language, the like of which is not found elsewhere. This is the famous Dindi pattern of the mixed rhythmic character, discussed above. It is always sung or recited to the accompaniment of the Tabla or the Dholak. Here is an example from the most charming of the Akhyanakar poets, Kavi Raghunath Pandit:

Na so | - di hā Nala Bhumipāla | Mātēṅ  
Aseṅ | Jaṅoni | Hansa Vade Tyatēṅ |

In this Dindi the weak beginning consists of 1½ tala matra or 3 akshara matras, the second unit is almost always of 3 ‘guru’ syllables, the third beat is of 3 tala matras or 6 akshara matras and the last beat, almost always, consists of 2 ‘guru’ syllables (i.e, 2 tala matras). Both the Arati and the Dindi patterns are governed by the rhythmic beats of the drum. The tala employed is the Dadra tala.

The Sāki type of verse was a gift from the Akhyanakār or Kirtanakār poets of old, and it was revived by the early writers of Sangeeta plays. The Aryā of Moropant, the greatest of the medieval classical poets, was in fact the ‘Geet’ metre of verse and was profusely produced by medieval poets, most notably the Kirtanakaras, and the latter-day Sangeeta play writers. The way it was rendered to the accompaniment of the Mridanga was simply superb. The tail-piece of the recent Filmfare Award carrying lyric, ‘Ramaraksha Hari’ abundantly echoes the last flourish of an Arya, sung in a Kirtana, although the said lyric might actually be an echo of the other type of

musical composition, the Sāki, to be precise. One of the verse forms, akin to the Sāki was the 'Fatakā' or the scourge (Chabuk-stroke) of moral admonishment. It comes nearest to the film composition referred to above which begins with 'Kālakā paharā' or something like that. The Sāki is generally set to music in the raga Jogia, the 'Fatakā' to the mixed popular turns of Khamaj-Pillu, while the Aryā is best rendered in the combined tunes of Bhairavi-Kalingada and Desa, with the last flourish ringing with reverberations of 'Rāmā Rāmā Raghuttamā Rāmā! All of these three patterns are, as a rule, set to Dhumali-Kehrava tala or the Teen tala (Trital).

Another composition, very much popular in the days of the Kritankāras and the Sangeeta Natakakars, was the verse pattern set to the famous 'Jhampa' or Jhaptala. It is a form akin to what is called 'Jhulana' in Hindi and Gujarati. It was, generally, sung in the Karantaka-cum-Hindustani raga of Shankarabharana (Shankara). The rhythmic beat is of 5 matras of the Jhaptala and is generally repeated by the matra pattern of the Sanskrit metre 'Sragvini', two 'gurus' with a 'laghu' syllable in-between, is the prosodic unit. The great Gujarati poet Kanta was influenced by these Marathi compositions in the musicals and plays, and called it 'Shankarabharana' composition, when he attempted it in Gujarati. In more sophisticated musicals it was set to the tunes of Raga Shankara, the Hindustani equivalent of the Karnataka Raga Shankarabharana.

The immense wealth of Marathi folksongs has given to the Marathi language a number of delightful new patterns, many of which have become popular with the theatre-going and the film-loving people, even with those outside of Maharashtra. Everybody has heard the cowherd cry 'Govinda ala re ala', which is in a mixed type of rhythmic pattern, called 'Mrigapaṅkti', a pattern widely used by ancient poets in composing the cradle songs to celebrate the birth of a god! The most popular of them begins with 'Bala jo jo re', and is generally sung in the Raga Saranga, at the birth of Lord Ramchandra which is supposed to have occurred at the stroke of twelve at noon. The sāki-fatakā echo is heard in the famous film song: 'Kālakā paharā', probably reminiscent of Samartha Ramdas's well-known composition 'Ghatakā geli, palēṅgeli, tāsa vāje thaṅānā' the pattern being a variation of the former beats. The third song of this type has, probably, the echoes of Veer Savarkar's immortal song, 'sagara prana talamalala'. The line of a film song, very popular a few days back, rings like this: 'Bānāvāri re . . .', a lyrical pattern that was once

a very common kitchen song in Maharashtra: 'Aji Akrur Ha', the fisherman's well-known song: 'Dona phade, dona phade de go malā' does not require any further elaboration. It is a patent pattern, set to the Dadara tala. The Bhopali or early morning devotional song known as Prabhatika in other parts of India, 'Ghanashyāma Sundara Shridharā', is now known almost in every part of India. The pattern was popular in medieval times and is better known by Namdeva's composition 'patitpavan'. The Bhopali is generally rendered in the Bhopali raga or other of the allied ragas. The folklore Bhopalis are of different patterns, including the 'jhulana', in which such songs are generally composed in Hindi and Gujarati. The Ghanakshari pattern was even more popular among the medieval writers of Bhopalis. I am of opinion that many of the Lavani patterns, so much loved by the populace of Maharashtra, have their origin in the early devotional songs of the band of roaming ballad singers, called the Gondhali. The popular dance-and-song patterns of the Gondhali, Kolhata, Lalita, Naat, Swanga and such other types of folklore musicals enriched the Marathi verse to a very great extent, ultimately giving it the Lavani pattern of compositions.

And in the end I turn to the modern, even ultra-modern patterns of Marathi verse. The so-called 'Mukta Chhand' is obviously a growth of modern times, but in Marathi, its first outcome was governed by the Abhanga or Ovi patterns of old. The famous poet who popularized this new mode of expression was Kavivarya Anil (Shri A. R. Deshpande) the much-respected, sensitive experimenter of modern Maharashtra. The first attempts revealed that they had the Akshara or latter as the basic measure of time. The way every syllable was intonated seemed similar to the way a fetter would be uttered in any Abhanga, by a somewhat deliberate emphasis on each syllable. The beats were either of five or of six syllables, and were marked by a pause after the first three syllables. To illustrate the point let us consider a few lines from Anil's famous verse composition, 'Bhangamurti':

Moduna |kshullaka ||kṛtrima|bheda  
 Vīslāraṇē Lāge || Jivana|Kshetra  
 Sarva de|-shacheṇ || Saṃveda|nāmaya  
 Banavāṇē Lāge || Eka sha|rira ||

This mode of intonation gave a certain lilt to the verse, a sort of modulating movement born of interchanging beats of six and

five syllables. The most effective combination, of course, was the succession of three-plus-two syllable beats, as is seen from the lines of another of our indomitable experimenter, Shri P. S. Rege. The lines are from his poem 'Urvashi':

Dushprapya ālān | vayupari mee ||  
 Nako re yevus | jāyeeṇ māghari |  
 Tarehi punbā | Urvashi! Urvashi ||

But very soon this pattern of 'Mukta Chhand' was slightly modified, and made almost the natural vehicle of the poet's 'significant experience'. It was the way the syllable was pronounced that made the difference. It brought the new mode closer to the way in which the Marathi language is actually spoken. Here I crave the indulgence of the learned scholars and students of literature, as I am, now going to illustrate this point from one of my own attempts, inspired, of course, by Anil's bold experiments:

Krusa nā | māraka, | taraka | banela, |  
 Agni nā | dahaka, | pāvaka | raheela, . . .  
 Vyakticheṇ | 'MAHATMYA' | utkaranta | hovuna  
 Akhila | Samashti | 'VISHVATMA' banela,  
 Vikasa | dhyeya heṇ | Bhavishya Kalachya |  
 Vishala | udāra | Manava | jāticheṇ |  
 Vishva | manavacheṇ | (From 'Vishva Manava')

In this passage we have beats of three and two syllable pattern interspersed with 3+3 syllable measure. The first syllable is more emphatically uttered and the following two (or one, as the case may be) are a bit slurred, thus giving the measure a more convincing intonation, while keeping in tact the modulations and the lilt. There were some other variations attempted, but this was by far the most prized by myself.

Then there was a change in outlook. Shri Rege had tried a sort of 'Sahaja Kavya' in the thirties. The later poets tried this 'natural' mode again. Poet Nanalal of Gujarat had already evolved his 'Dolana Shaili'. In Marathi, the newer mode was; called the 'Mukta Shaili', much the same as the 'Gadya Kavya' in Gujarati (as Nanalal's Dolan Shaili was called by critics), the 'Bhava Chhanda' in Hindi and the 'Gadya Chhanda' in Bengali. The Kannada poets, perhaps, still call it 'Mukta Chhand'.

In this respect, the claim of the Bengali prosodists that the Bengali has a peculiar way of accentuating the syllable, could be very well accepted. What the Marathi poets did with the first type of Mukta Chhanda was, perhaps, more naturally done by the Bengali poets in the case of the un-rhymed, running-on type of verse-stanzas called the 'Amitrakshara Chhanda', the blank verse in *payār*. The line had beats of four syllables each as of old. But each of it was further broken into two sub-beats, thus evolving a series of small measures of two syllables, the first syllable being more emphatically stressed and the second relatively slurred. Thus it is a sort of positional stress, and not the natural stress in a language as it otherwise becomes a norm, the 'phoneme', the unit that determines the very nature of the language. The further attempts of younger poets at the 'Gadya Chhanda' make the measure almost natural, as the spoken rhythm of the language is unerringly caught and variously employed to make the 'chhanda' a natural vehicle of the poet's experiences and their contents. It is attempted almost everywhere, but the Bengal of the great poet Michael Madhusudan Dutta should be considered as the forerunner or even the pioneer of the movement that went on from one stage to another, till we have now come to a point of no retreat.

NILRATAN SEN

An Outline of the Three Major  
Eastern NIA Versifications  
(A Comparative Study of Bengali,  
Oriya and Assamese Verse-metres)



KNOW THY neighbour to know thyself better. This maxim is equally applicable to the study of literature as to any other branch of our studies. As a student of prosody, a much neglected branch of enquiry, I was guided by this spirit to a study of the versifications of our three major Eastern sisterly vernaculars, viz., Bengali, Oriya and Assamese. A preliminary investigation has recently been completed in this field, a broad outline of which has been presented here.

Linguists are of opinion that the Eastern NIA vernaculars like Bengali, Oriya, Assamese, Maithili (including Newari), etc., have evolved out of OIA, through various MIA stages of Prakrit and Apabhramsa. The scripts of these vernaculars also are alike, emerging from the same *kutilalipi*. All these languages have similarities in phonetic, morphological and other structural characteristics. It is presumed that Oriya first separated itself from a common stock known as Eastern Apabhramsa, then Maithili (including Newari) got a separate entity, and ultimately Bengali and Assamese bifurcated themselves. In all probability, these separations were completed sometimes before the thirteenth century A.D. During the last



seven hundred years all these vernaculars, specially Bengali, Oriya and Assamese, have flourished immensely, both in verse and prose compositions. Early writings in all these languages were in verse, and it is only in the British period that both verse and prose have attained to a standardized form.

The earliest available book written in Eastern NIA is an anthology of fifty Buddhist *carya* songs, with Sanskrit commentaries by Munidatta. It is a palm-leaf manuscript, now preserved in the Rashtriya Abhilekhalaya of Nepal. About sixty years back (1907), Mm. Haraprasad Sastri discovered this book and published the same with three other mss.<sup>1</sup>, under the title *Hajar Bacharer Parana Bangala bhasay Bauddha Gan o Doha* (1916), under the impression that all these four books were written in the Bengali language and script. Professor Sunitikumar Chatterji, after careful scrutiny, decided that the first book captioned rather arbitrarily by Haraprasad as *caryacaryaviniscaya* was written in old Bengali, but the language of the remaining three books was a specimen of Eastern Apabhramsa, and by no means of any of the Eastern vernaculars. Other experts in the line like Md. Sahidullah, Prabodhchandra Bagchi, and Sukumar Sen also have supported his conclusions.

As at least six folios, including the title and colophon pages, are lost, it is now difficult to ascertain the title of the *carya* anthology. The available sixty four folios<sup>2</sup> contain forty-six full songs and six lines of another ten-line song. Proportionately, some portions of the commentaries also are lost. In the Tibetan translation of the anthology, discovered by Prabodhchandra Bagchi, the title has been mentioned as *caryagitikosavrtti*; the name of the vrtti-writer (commentator) has been mentioned as Munidatta. So, *caryagitikos* might be the probable title of this book. Dr Sunitikumar Chatterji observed that these earliest specimens of Bengali songs were composed by various Buddhist acaryas (preceptors) in a period ranging from the tenth to the twelfth centuries A.D. Md. Sahidullah, however, wanted to fix the earlier date at the eighth century A.D. These fifty songs were selected from twenty three composers. A hundred other songs were in vogue in the then Buddhist communities, and such songs are still being sung in various monasteries of Nepal and Tibet. Professor Arnold Bake and Dr Sashibhusan Dasgupta collected a few years back some of them and recorded a few tunes, still in use in those monasteries.

In Nepal the Buddhist scholars and monks consider these songs as their own Old Newari songs; scholars of all the sisterly languages also claim these *carya* songs as written in their respective languages.

Their claims, however, cannot be rejected outright. The separation of all these Eastern NIA vernaculars might not have been completed at the time when these songs were composed. So, in vocabulary and in phonetic and morphological characters, these songs have some resemblance with all these sisterly vernaculars.

In the analysis of the Cg. metre it appears that the simple moric pattern applied here has a close affinity with the later Eastern Apabhramsa metrical style available in the contemporary Doha songs. In this style the closed syllables are bimoric, the open short syllables are single moric, while the long open syllables have both bimoric and unimoric uses. This looseness in the pronunciation of the open long syllables is a clear indication of phonetic changes in the vernaculars due to the indigenous compact style of pronunciation. In due course, two or three centuries later, all the open syllables, irrespective of their long or short phonetic characters in Sanskrit and Prakrit, were converted into short single moric units, in all these three Eastern vernaculars. Maithili composers, of course, having close affinity to Sanskrit and Hindi style of composition, retained the open long-short pronunciation till the early twentieth century, and even now they practise this old style, side by side, with compact free verse and rhythmic prose verse.

In the structural forms of these Cg. songs, the three major *mātrāvṛtta* forms in vogue in the contemporary Prakrit and Apabhramsa songs have been applied. These are: (a) sixteen moric, dicaesuric, (8-8) *pādākulaka*; (b) twenty-four moric, dicaesuric (13-11) *doha*; and (c) thirty moric, tricaesuric (8-10-12) *caupāi*.<sup>3</sup> The sixteen moric, dicaesuric (with tetra moric rhythm) rimed couplet (sloka) pattern of *pādākulaka* is more common than the other two forms, both in Cg. songs and in medieval verses of all these three vernaculars. . . Thirty, out of the available forty-seven carya songs, are composed in *pādākulaka*, which in all probability paved the way for fourteen moric (8-6) *payār*, the most popular form in all these three vernaculars for the last seven centuries.

Three examples of these three patterns may be cited here from Cg. songs:

<i>pādākulaka</i> : (8-8)	ka-a- tarubara    panca bi da-la- cancala ci-e    paitho-ka-la-. 1.
<i>doha</i> (12, 2-12):	maharasa pa-ne- ma-tela re-   tihuana saela ue-khi-

	panca bisaare- na-yaka re-    bi-pakha ko-bi na de-khi- .16.
<i>caupāi</i> (8-8-12): (modified)	kabari-na le-i      bodi-na le-i    succhade pa-ra kare-i, jo-rathe cadila-11 bahaba na ja-bai    ku-le-ku-la buda-i-.. 14.

Like the Sanskrit and Prakrit mātrāvṛtta gana or tetra-beat, here also, the light tetra moric pause-beat is clearly felt; and all the E. ver. verses in-herited this tetra pause beat from Pkt-Apbh. songs.

It is interesting to note that, excepting this *caryagitikos* mss., the earliest writings in all these three languages can be traced from the fifteenth century onwards. In Bengali it is a narrative play-song on Radha-Kṛṣṇa love episode, known as *Srikrṣṇakirttan(?)*, in Oriya, Saraladasa's *Mahabharata*, a free verse composition based on Vyasa's work; in Assamese it is the *Ramayana* of Madhav Kandali, again a free adaptation from Valmiki. All these books were written as musical verses, having definite verse structures and mention of musical raga-raginis.

Now, setting apart this Cgk. mss., as a common source book of the earliest Bengali-Assamese-Oriya versification, let us come to a closer analysis of the medieval and modern verse of these three EA vernaculars in search of the basic metrical styles evolved out of them. In MB three broad metrical styles developed which in) modern terminology can be named as simple moric or (*saral*) *kalāvṛtta*, composite moric or *misra kalāvṛtta*, and syllabic or *dalavṛtta*. This *dalavṛtta* again can be divided into two groups, viz, *laukik* or folk style, and *samslista* or the compact caesuric style. Excepting this *samslista dalavṛtta* all styles developed in Assamese and Oriya also, with some indigenous phonetic genres of the respective vernaculars.

The earliest patterns of simple moric style can be traced in the Brajabuli songs of Vidyapati, the famous Maithili poet of the late fifteenth century A.D. He developed this style in the line of Jayadeva, a court poet of Laksman Sen, the king of Gaud (1179-1202). Most of the followers of Vidyapati, in this Brajabuli songs, hail from Bengal, and a limited few from Assam and Mithila. But none of the Oriya writers was attracted to imitate this artificial language and metre, so sweet and melodious for the Vaisnava kirtan songs. Hundreds of Vaisnava poets from Bengal practised this style of versification through out the entire medieval period. Even in the modern period, a

poet like Rabindranath Tagore was tempted to imitate this artificial style, with the pseudonym of Bhanusinha. The basic principles followed in this old simple moric can be formulated as, (a) closed syllables (syllable preceding a compound letter) are used as double moric, (b) open syllables written in hrasva-svar orthography are used as single moric, (c) open syllables written in dirgha-svar orthography are used both as double moric and single moric, according to the wishes of the composers; (d) in pause-pattern light uniform pauses are maintained of uniform four, five, six, or several moric units. Jayadeva wrote in Sanskrit, so he had no option to use long open syllables as short. Here, Vidyapati perhaps took the cue from *carya* and other early vernacular songs, now lost to us. Jayadeva's most significant contribution was the introduction of regular light pause patterns of various sizes; moreover, avoiding the syllabic sequences of various patterns he virtually ushered in a new free style of mātṛāvṛtta metre. Making free long-short use of the open dirgha svar Vidyapati again advanced one step forward in this process of modernization, or to be more precise, vernacularization.

In the modern period Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) devised a standard principle for this simple moric metre. He used uniformly all the closed syllables as double moric and all the open syllables (irrespective of their short or long orthography) as single moric. In all these three vernaculars, phonetically, all open vowels are short. Tagore respected this changed phonetic character in the standardization of the simple moric metre. Of late, taking the cue from Tagore, modern Oriya and Assamese poets also have been following this principle. A few examples may be cited here to show the gradual development of the simple moric, through different phases:

(a) From Jayadeva's *Gitagovinda* song: 12th cen. A.D. (last decade);

badasi yadi || kiñcidapi || dantaruci | kaumudi ||  
 harati dara || timiramati || ghoram. I  
 sfuradadhara | sīdhabe || taba vadana | candramā ||  
 rocayati | locana ca | koram.. I (no. 19)

(b) From *brajabuli* songs: 17th cen., A.D.

tuṅgamaṇi | mandire || ghana bijuri | sañcare ||  
 megharuci | basana pari | dhānā. I  
 yata yuvati | maṇḍali || panthamājhe | pekhali ||  
 koi nahi || rāika sa || mānā. I (Śaśisekhar)

- (c) From Rabindranath's poem: 19th cen., (last decade):  
 pañca śare | dagdha kare || karecha eki | sanyasi ||  
 viśvamay | diecha tare | chaḍāye. I  
 byakulatara | bedanā tār | bātāse utṭe | niśvasi. ||  
 aśru tār | ākaśe paḍe | gaḍāe . . . I (*madanvasmer par*)

For the convenience of the readers, all these three examples have been chosen from identical verse-structure of 5,5 || 5,5 || 5,5,4 ||. Only in the third example one moric unit is dropped at the end of a verse line. This first example from Jayadeva being composed in Sanskrit, open long syllables have been used here uniformly as double moric, like the closed syllables. In the second example, open long (dirghasvar) syllables are not always double moric; the composer has had his option to use it as either single or double according to his convenience. Here the process of phonetic vernacularization has been started. In fact, it started from the time of *carya* songs in 10th-12th centuries, but was properly patternized by Vidyapati in the 15th century. In the third example all open syllables, irrespective of their hrasva-dirgha orthography, are used as single moric, showing respect to the natural pronunciation of the Eastern vernaculars. In Assamese, Sankaradeva and a few of his followers have attempted Vidyapati's *brajabuli* style, but in variety and quality the verse is not so rich. Now of course some of the modern poets are practising it in the line of Tagore, but, excepting two or three of them, none commands any recognizable mastery over this style. In Oriya, none of the medieval poets attempted the simple moric; only in the forties of the previous century a few young poets of *Sabuj Kavita* group made successful use of it in the line of Tagore. Two more examples, one each from Assamese and Oriya, may be cited here from these modern practitioners.

Assamese: Ratnakanta Barakakati (1897-1963)

yadi jagat | tomār melā  
 mor jivan | tomāre khelā ||  
 tente kiya | laṭighaṭi 11  
 rātie dine | chaṭifuṭi ||  
 kiya tene | ene biṣam | ṭhelā I  
 ene || marmabhedi || kihar khelā. I (From Mahendra Barā,  
*Asamiya kavitar chanda*, p. 53)

Oriya: Ananta Patanāyak (1910-)

kie se kahe | devatā sehi ||

devatā seta | nuhere nuhe; I  
 khelichi khelā | hasichi hasa ||  
 maniṣa pāi | maniṣa kahe. I  
 sakala gāli | nindā sahi ||  
 baraṣā kharā | harase bahi ||  
 kaala siśu | mukhare āji ||  
 sehi ye nua | kahāni kuhe; I  
 kāhāra pāse | ajāna sehu ||  
 parāṇa koṣe | saburi ruhe, I

(From, *Kabitavali: tohori sāthi*,  
 Gopabandhu Dasa, p. 179).

In Assamese, four and six moric patterns are more common than five and seven moric forms. But very few poets, like Ambikagiri, Devakanta or Nabakanta, have made proper use of closed syllables written in compound letters. Most of the poets could not find out the mystery of this style. Assamese pronunciation has much more consonant endings than Bengali and so often some sort of gliding effect is felt in the quick utterances of closed compound consonants. That might be an hindrance to the proper use of this style. Only metrically conscious poets have over-come it. In the present example also the last two lines are faulty.

It should be admitted that the simple moric is an artificial metrical style in all the three Eastern vernaculars. In Bengali, Rabindranath with his unique genius made possible the introduction of its modern form, and that could be materialized because of the existence of such a rich medieval tradition of *brajabuli* songs, down from Jayadeva upto the end of the eighteenth century. In Oriya there is no such medieval tradition; and it was introduced only in the modern period, probably by Gopabandhu Dasa (1877-1966). It is yet to be seen whether or not this foreign style would be acceptable to Oriya poetry. In Assamese though this modern simple moric style is being attempted by a good number of poets, most of them, due to their compact style of pronunciation, have changed the character of this metre to a large extent. In Bengali simple moric, uniformly all the closed syllables, irrespective of their compound or non-compound orthography, are used as double moric, whereas in Assamese, so often, closed syllables, specially written in dental or nasal compounds, are used as single moric. For example,



kon rahasya- | lokara majedi ||  
 gavhir adim | *andhakār* bhedi ||  
 ahil aryagan I  
 mukhat agni | jyotih mantra, ||  
 hāte hāte praharan. I (Prasannalal Chaudhuri,  
*Sripañcamī, Sancayan* p. 345)

Here, the word *andhakār* is used as four moric instead of usual five moric pronunciation. This characteristic, so common in Assamese simple moric, should be taken into consideration in the framing of its rule. In Bengali, besides Tagore, Dvijendralal Roy, Satyendranath Datta, Nazrul Islam, Jatindranath Sengupta, Premendranath Mitra, Subhash Mukherji are a few popular names, who made a plentiful use of this style. In Assamese, probably Ambikagiri Roychoudhuri (1885-) was the first to manipulate it in its correct form. Contemporary poets like Padmadhar Caliha (1895-), Ratnakanta Barakakati (1897-1963), Dimbeswar Neog (1900-1966), Prasannalal Chaudhuri (1902-), Debakanta Barua (1914-), Nabakanta Barua (1926-), and others later joined the team. In Oriya it was Gopabandhu Dasa who probably introduced this style in the early twenties. Then the poets of *Sabuj Kavita* group, viz., Kalindicaran Panigrahi (1901-), Baikuntha Patanayak (1904-), Mayadhar Mansinha (1905-), Radhamohan Gadanayak (1911-) and others tried to make it popular. Yet, in comparison to Bengali and Assamese, simple moric is a less popular metre in Oriya poetry.

Composite moric is perhaps the main metrical vehicle of all these three Eastern vernaculars. The earliest specimen of this style is largely preserved in *Srikrishnakirttan*, written by Badu Candidas in the early fifteenth century.<sup>4</sup> Like simple moric, this composite moric also developed through Prakrit-Apabhramsa mātrāvṛtta metre. But due to a fresh impact of the compact pronunciation of E. NIA, vernaculars, this cm. style got a natural speech rhythm which immensely helped in the composition of narrative verses. The Oriya vocabulary having mostly a vowel-ending pronunciation, its cm. style differs considerably from Bengali and Assamese cm. Again, Assamese cm. having more consonantal ending words than Bengali, is more compact in pronunciation. But before entering into comparative analysis, we should make clear the conception of composite moric style as reflected in Bengali verse, and particularly where it differs from the simple moric. It may be formulated in the following terms:

(a) Already we have seen that in simple moric closed syllables are always bimoric, irrespective of their compound or non-compound orthography. In cm., closed syllables written in compound orthography are single moric, like open syllables; closed syllables written in non-compound orthography, in the final position of words, are double moric and in the initial or medial positions the poets use them both as single and double moric according to individual option.

(b) Secondly, in sm., light foot-pauses comprising four, five, six or seven moric units are prominent; whereas in cm., longer caesuric units comprising eight, ten, or six moric units, all even numbered, get prominent.

Obviously these general rules have some minor variations in the cases of Oriya and Assamese cm. styles.

In MB and NB periods composite moric became the main metrical vehicle of literary expression. The three popular forms used by the composers are, the (1) fourteen moric, dicaesuric *payār* (8-8), (2) twenty moric, tricaesuric *laghu tripadi* (6-6-8), and (3) twenty-six moric, tri-caesuric *dirgha tripadi* (8-8-10). In medieval Bengali verses, due to the musical style of reading, standard composite moric pronunciation could not be developed. Sometimes it is elongated like MB simple moric pronunciation, sometimes it is compact, like syllabic speech-pattern of folk syllable. Still it seems not so difficult to trace the pervasive influence of the composite moric style. Here, three pairs of *payar*, *laghu tripadi* and *dirgha tripadi* are cited, showing the MB and NB pronunciations, side by side.

*Payar*: from Skk., early 15th century:

- (a) *hasa* kumuda tor || dasana keśar.  
 futila bāndhuli ful | j bakata adhar. .  
 bahu tor *mṛnāl* kar || rātā utapal.  
 aparūp kuca *cakra* || *bāka* yugal. . (*chatra khaṇḍ*, Skk., no. 33)

(b) From Rabindranath, 19th century (last two decades):

jībanmaraṇmay || sugambhṛ kathā,  
 arānyamarmar sama || marma byākulatā,  
 ihaparakāl byāpī || sumahān prāṇ,  
 ucchvasita ucca āśā || mahatver gān. (*ākāṅkḥā*, *Mānasi*)

*Laghu tripadi*: (6-6-8):

- (a) From Skk., 15th century:  
 kibā cāhe kāhṇa bāṭe rahāe



bujhiten naron *tār* maṇe,  
 rājā kamsāsūr āti durubār  
 se jaṇi ehāka śuṇe. . (*dānakhaṇḍa*, Skk, no. 6)

(b) From Rabindranath, 19th century:

tui to āmār bandī abhāginī  
 bādhiāchi kārāgāre,  
 prāṇer sṛṅkhal diyechi prāṇete  
 dekhi ke khulite pāre, (*rāhur prem, Chabi o Gān*)

*Dirgha tripadi* (8-8--10)

(a) From Skk., 15th century:

āmme āihangoālī sab guṇe āgālī  
 śīśu mukhe parbat ṭālī,  
 tore bolon banamālī papen māen diba gālī  
 pantha chāḍe *baila* eta beli. . (*dānakhaṇḍa*, Skk. no. 54)

(b) From Rabindranath, 19th century:

ei biśvajagater mājkhkhāne dāḍāiyā  
 bājāibi saundayer bānsī,  
 ananta jibanpathe khujiyā caliba tore,  
 prāṇman haibe udāsī (*pratidvāni, Prabhātsangīt*)

Here the underlined portions (all from ‘a’ types) have some variations, if they be compared with the standard pronunciation of cm. Through out the MB period (1300-1800 A.D.) this looseness prevailed in all the three major metrical styles. It was only in the nineteenth century, with the predominance of the printing presses, that the poets lost the privilege of reciting verses before an audience, and at the same time lost the opportunity of correcting metrical defects through recital elongation and shortening, and grew conscious of metrical standardization. . . . The standardization of cm. style was complete by the sixties of that century, and then Madhusudan Datta (1824-1873) and Girish Chandra Ghosh (1844-1911) made further experiments in verse-liberation by introducing *amitraksar* (blank verse) and *muktak* (free verse) in cm. In poetry *muktak* became popular through Tagore’s writings. He otherwise wrote both in cm. and syllabic styles. All such experiments might not have been successful, before the cm. style reached a standard phonetic height. Two examples may here be cited, one from Madhusudan of blank-verse, the other from Tagore of free-verse.

Blank-verse from Madhusudan's *Meghnādbadh kāvya* (1860)

praṇamiā guruane madhurbhāṣinī  
 sambhāṣi madhurabhāṣe daityabālādale,  
 kahilā.—”lo saḥacari, eta dine āji  
 furāilā jībalīla jībalīlasthale  
 āmār, Firiā sabe jāo daityadeṣe !  
 kahio pitār pade e sab bāratā,  
 bāsanti ! mayere mor”—hāy re, bahila  
 sahasā nayanajal ! nirabilā sati;  
 kāndila dānaba bālā hāhākār rabe ! (nabam sarga,  
*Meghnādbadh kāvya*)

Free verse from Rabindranath's *Balaka* (1916)

mṛtyur antare paśi amṛta na pāi yadi khūje,  
 satya yadi nāhi mele dukkha sāthe yujhe,  
     pāp yadi nāhi mare yāy  
     āpanār prakāśa-Iajjāy,  
 ahaṁkār bheṅge nāhi pade āpanār asahya lajjāy,  
     tabe ghar chāḍā sabe  
     antarer ki āsvās-rabe  
     marite chuṭiche śata śata  
 prabhāt ālor pāne lakṣā lakṣa nakṣatrer mato.  
 (Poem no 37, *Balaka*).

In MIA Sanskrit, Prakrit and Apabhramsa, written letters were more or less syllabary letters. Excepting use of ḥ and ṁ at final position, there were no use of closed syllables written in non-compound letters. But in some of the E. NIA vernaculars, from the very beginning, non-compound closed syllables were introduced. Bengali and Assamese bear that testimony. In Cgk., mss. ‘ ’ sign (below, right) has been used to denote the non-compound closed syllable. This variation in the use of non-compound closed syllable has slightly changed the character of the cm. style of these three vernaculars.

Oriya reciters seem to be prone to syllabary pronunciation, inherited from MIA Sanskrit-Prakrit style. In medieval Oriya (14th—mid 19th cen.), invariably all non-compound letters were used as syllabary. Only in recent times, probably due to the influence of neighbouring vernaculars, occasionally non-compound closed syllables are being used in Oriya verses. It is yet to be seen whether or not this style of pronunciation gets root in this language. The Oriya

cm., in the true sense, can be called *aksaravṛtta*, because each letter is a syllabary, having single moric pronunciation. On this particular point Oriya cm. basically differs from Bengali or Assamese cm.

In Sarala *Mahabharata*, the earliest available narrative verse in Oriya literature, *dāṇḍī* or fourteen moric *payār* is the usual form used by the poet. It is difficult now to get the authentic version of Sarala's composition. Still if the earliest available mass be compared with its popular current version, the change towards standardization can clearly be felt. Sarala himself was a pastoral poet, an agriculturist by profession. In an earlier mss., the following text is available in loose *d'andivṛtta* pattern:

brāhmmana sarupa dharile pañca bire  
trikaccha basana ābharana kaṭire.  
nabaguṇa paitā kandhare uturi hoiachi  
bedi adhyayana mantra pokhu saburi kākhe achi.

(*Adi parba*, Sarala Mahabharata Utkal Univ, ed.)

The same passage in a popular edition runs in the following standard fourteen moric form:

brāmmaṇa rūpa tahi dharile pañca bire.  
trikaccha kari basana pindhile kaṭire. .  
nabaguṇa paitā ye kandhare uttari.  
adhyana mantra pothru hāte chānti dhari. .

(From 'Typical Selection from Oriya Lit.' Cal. Univ,)

This change clearly indicates that Sarala and other reciters of his *Mahabharata* had an inclination to read it in fourteen syllabary *payā*-pattern.

The next important poet of MO literature is Balaram Das. An extract may be cited here from his Jagamohan Ramayana, composed in the same *dāṇḍivṛtta* form:

sahasre kumāri delaka kuśadhāri  
kebaṇa yubati abā tāhaṅka aṭesari  
indra apasari ye achanti tora pure  
bidyadhari kinnari gahala tora pure.

(Extract from *Jagamohan Ramayana, kavitavali*,  
Utkal University)

Here also, the fourteen syllabary *dāṇḍivṛtta* form is not fully standardized. In its recitation almost the same effect of katha-katha (musical recitation) of Bengali and Assamese scriptures (like, the Ramayanas, Mahabharatas and other Mangala Kavyas), is felt. Usually, it is read with two primary and two secondary stresses on the 1st, 3rd and 9th, 13th moric units, respectively. Stress-pattern plays a very important role in Oriya cm. style. The nine moric *bhāgavata*, twenty moric *baṅgalāsri*, or more complex stanza patterns like, *cokhi*, *kamodi*, *kalasa*, *saṅkarābharāṇ*, *padmāvati*, *barārī*, *kedār*, etc., are some of the much used popular forms. All of them have parallel metrical and musical notations, distinct from each other. Here a few examples may be cited.

(a) *bhāgavata*: nine moric line with primary stresses on the first and eighth syllabary, and secondary stress on the fifth

rājā bacane abadhūta  
takṣaṇe hoi stambhībhūta.  
rājāra mukha cāhi dhīre  
bolai bacana gabhīre.

(Jagannath Dasa's *Bhāgavata: ekādas khaṇḍa*)

(b) *baṅgālaśri*: it is almost like Bengali *laghu tripadi*(6-6-8) with primary stresses on the 1st, 7th and 13th units; and secondary stresses on the 4th, 10th and 16th units.

prabeśa hoi ye bolai jaṅgama  
madhura komala kari  
priya udanta to ānichi e haṃsī  
boli galā apasārī.

(Dhanañjay Bhañja: . . . *Ratna-mañjari*)

Medieval Oriya poetry is very rich in stanza patterns. Here only two examples are cited:

(c) *cokhi*: four verse-lines with different pause-patterns and rimes, as shown here:

	pause-pattern	rime
bitalaku ālingana	8	KA
kari jahi biṣobhāna	8	K A
hare sura bara tapa		
cāru dhārā se. I	8    5 I	-    KHA

bahe makara ketana	8	GA
ucchanna rati saman	8	GA
purita hoichi puni	8    5 I	-  KHA
aśeṣa rase. I		
vidya haimavati padare. I	9I	GHA
biṣakaṅṭha toṣa dāni		
beni matare. . I	8    5 I	-  GHA
(From Upendra Bhanja's (1670-1710) <i>Baidelusa lilāsarū</i> )		

(d) *kāmodi*: four verse limes with different pause-patterns and rimes as shown here:

bādhulā jāni kṣamā	7	KA
kara nahile ramā	7	KA
ramaṇa daṇḍe dia tāli I	7-2	IKHA
tumaṅku jagannāthā	7	GA
āji mo manorathā	7	GA
bharati kari debi gāli I	7-2	IKHA
he kṛpānidhi I	5 1	refrain
karuṇā-sindhu boli kari	7-2	GHA
kahante budhe uri mari    I	7-2    I	GHA
kālasarpa āpaṇa	7	NA
kabala kara prāṇa	7	NA
pavana mānaṅku sabari I	7-2 I	GHA
he kṛpānidhi I	5 I	refrain

(From Kavisurya's (1789-1854) *Sarpa-janan*)

It should be noted that in the Bengali and Assamese cm. style the caesuric pause units are usually even moric, comprising eight, ten, twelve-or six morae. In Oriya cm. odd moric units like nine moric (of *bhāgavata*) or seven moric (of *kāmodī*) are also in vogue.

Both in modern Oriya prose and verse, non-compound closed syllables are being used; and that has helped the introduction of modern non-musical versification. In the last hundred years Oriya poets have attempted to compose blank-verse, free verse, even prose verse following the style of modern Bengali poets. Here an example of blank-verse payar may be cited from Radhanath Rai (1848-1908), one of the 'great modern trio's of modern Oriya Literature'.

ehi ki se āryabhūmi ? e bhūmir suta  
tumhe ṭike āryanām dāyāda jagate?  
binā yuddhe na debāku sucagra medanī

pana yeū āryañkara: tañkari śonit  
bahichi ki āhe yodhe, tumma dhamanire ?  
dhr̥k ! dhr̥k! satadhik ! dhik e mantraṇā !

(*Amr̥ṣi vāṇi:mahāyātrā*)

On recitation it would be quite clear that the modern style of reading has changed considerably in this new pattern of poetry.

The Assamese cm. has all the salient characteristics of Bengali. In MA, most of the words were pronounced as vowel ending, like MB and MO. Medial vowel-diphthongs had more single moric use than in Bengali. In Assamese modern speech style, the use of final closed syllables is more intense than in Bengali, and this speciality has added new strength to its cm. versification. Some of the popular forms used in Assamese cm., are fourteen moric (8-6) *payār* or *pad*, fifteen moric (8-7) *mālai*, twenty moric (6-6-8) *laghu tripadī* or *duladī*, twenty-six moric (8-8-10) *dirgha tripadī* or *chabi*, and thirty moric (8-8-8-6) *caupadī* or *lecādī*. One *payār*, and one *dirghatripadī* extracts may be cited here from the earliest (14th cen.) Assamese poet, Madhav Kandali:

- (a) tāto sitā khuji-luḍi napāyā hatāśe.  
dhaulivare pasilanta dutiya kailāśe. .  
suvarṇara sūrya dila rajatara śāśi.  
dina rātri najāniya ovarita paśi. .

(*Rāmāyanara parā; sundarakāṇḍa*)

- (b) śankhinī citriṇ nāri          paḍmini hastinī ādi  
tribhuvane yateka sundarī.  
digbijayata sāji          devasure—raṇe jini  
lañkesvare āniāche hari. , (ibid)

As an illustration of compact pronunciation in vowel diphthongs, another laghu tripadi or duladi specimen may also be cited here:

- (c) mādha vacana || śuni ātiśaya || *bhaila*  
upasāma. I  
kale *paile* āra j | nāhike jivana || sākṣāte  
lai jai yama . . I (ibid)

The compact, single moric pronunciation of the vowel-diphthongs. in the underlined words should be noted. In Bengali,

composers would use this sort of diphthongs either as single moric or as double moric, according to their convenience. The Assamese cm. is undoubtedly more compact in pronunciation than the Bengali cm.

In the modern period Assamese poets have also introduced blank-verse and free verse after Bengali models, Here two examples may be cited from Bholanath Das (1858-1929) and Ratnakanta Barakakati (1897-1963):

Blank-verse payār:

(*amitrākṣar*)

prabhātīlā niśā. uṣā āśugati dhari  
 āsilā; kuruli dilā sudīrgha pecak;  
 bāyas karilā ‘kā kā’; yena heruvāi  
 laṅka, laṅka-priya-paksi kukkut puchilā  
 laṅkapur kata’ buli; gāila caudiśe  
 prabhātiya git yata prabhāti bihaṅga;  
 bṛkadhūrta dal dilā huvā-dhvani dūre.

(*Sitaharan-kābyarparā*). . .  
 composed in 1902 A.D.

Free verse (unrimed): (*muktak*)

saundarya adhik kār?  
 samiraṇ mṛdu hillolat  
 kāṅpi uṭhā banānīr  
 jāti jui, cāpā, ei  
 śevāli, bakul  
 prasūn-puñjar ?  
 natu, yuvakar samukhat  
 nagarar harmmya-śobha,  
 udbhinna-yauvanā yuvatīr  
 bhulunṭhita keś-guccha  
 madan pichali parā  
 kāmāgnīr dhumra-āvegar ?

(*saundarya*: from *Saṅcayan*).....

Sonnets were also introduced in Assamese literature of this period, in Petrarcan and Shakespearean models. The introduction of cm. *payār* pattern in blank verse and sonnet is a clear indication of the influence of Madhusudan and other contemporary Bengali poets on Assamese poets of the early twentieth century.

Syllabic folk metre is perhaps the earliest and the purest indigenous style of metre in all the Eastern NIA vernaculars. In all

these three languages, the nursery rhymes and cradle songs (known as *chele bhulana chaḍa*, *ghum paḍani gān*, *nicukani*, etc.) the mantras and aphorisms (known as *dak*, *becan*, *mantra*, *bratakatha*, etc.), various social songs (known as *biḥu gan*, *bia nam*, etc.) are the best specimens of this folk-syllabic style. It has tetra syllabic pause units with initial stresses. But like the moric styles of the medieval period, this syllabic style also could not be standardized. In indigenous dhamali folk songs there is a popular tetra beat known as *kawāli*; this tetra-syllabic folk metre might have developed from this tetra kawali beat of *dhāmāli* songs. This metre having been introduced in serious poetry in the nineteenth century, its metre also has been standardized, since then. The rules can be formulated in the following frame-work: (a) light pause-units should be formed with four syllables; (b) in the formation of these pause-units open and closed syllables should be used in such a way that counting the open syllables as single and the closed syllables as double moric, it should vary between four to six moric units; (c) use of too much open or closed syllables in a tetra pause unit should be avoided. Modern poets, while writing serious poems, very often avoid the initial stress. Dvijendralal Ray (1863-1913), talented Bengali poet-dramatist, a contemporary of Rabindranath, made new experiments to compose serious poems in a compact syllabic style, where the pause-units are caesuric, each syllable, closed or open, being pronounced as single moric.

Bengali and Assamese folk rhymes are really very rich in the syllabic style; comparatively, Oriya literature is poor in this respect. In one sense, Oriya cm. is a syllabic style of versification. That might have been a reason for the failure of tetra-syllabic folk metre to flourish in that literature. Here a few examples; may be cited from different stages of development of these three vernaculars,

- (a) Bengali: (i) early and medieval folk-rhymes:  
 ore āmār dhan chele  
 pathe pathe base kānchile.  
 mā bale bale dākchile  
 dhulo kādā kata mākhchile  
 se yadi tomar mā hata  
 dhulo kādā jheḍe kole nita.

(*chele bhulano chaḍā*, no. 4:

compiled by Nityanandabinod Goswami)

Here, each line has two light feet. The first line has 4, 3 syllabic division, but from the next line the first foot has either six or five



syllables; naturally, the reciters feel inclined to pronounce it as six moric. The next foot also has either three or four syllables, which should be considered as a complete foot. Each foot has initial stress, common to all the folk rhymes of this period. Till the end of the eighteenth century Bengali folk rhymes had this sort of loose construction, which could be atoned easily by the musical reading style in vogue in that period.

- (ii) modern folk-syllabic: from Rabindranath:  
 anek jhañjhā kāṭie bujhi ele sukher bandarete.  
 jaler tale pahaḍ chila lāglo buker andarete.  
 muhurteke pānjargulo uthla kenpe ārta rabe—  
 tāi nie ki sabār saṅge jhagḍā kare marte habe?  
 (*bojhapaḍa, Naibedyā*)

Here the lines are four footed, each foot having four syllables with a blending of open and closed syllables. The initial stresses also appear to have lost their strength when compared with nursery rhymes.

- (iii) compact syllabic style, introduced by Dvijendralal:  
 ekkhāni tār tari chila  
 bijan sūnya ghāṭes bādhā  
 ekdin haṭāt dube gela jhaḍe;  
 ekkhāni tār kuḍe chila  
 nadīr dhāre; — puḍe gela  
 ekdin haṭāt āgun lege ghare,  
 (*hatabhāgya, Ālekhyā*)

Here, the poet has attempted to introduce long (even numbered) eight, ten, six syllabic caesuric pauses, like cm. patterns. Pronunciation is also compact, each syllable having a single moric weight. It is a very forceful style of versification, quite appropriate for the exposition of our compact speech pattern. Unfortunately, it has not been tried properly by the Bengali poets; not to speak of others in the sister languages.

(b) *Oriya*: Tetra syllabic pattern is not so popular in Oriya nursery rhymes; but it has very rich stock of various other syllabic patterns. A few of them may be cited here showing stress and pause varieties.

- (i) 3,4 | | 3,2: with primary and secondary stresses:  
 alakā pākhu tora | | e mathā maṇi, I  
 egāra keṇḍājūmpi | | muṇḍare puni. I

gumtstā basikari | | talikā kalā, I  
dadei dekhi tora | | hasinā delā. I

(From *Odiya Gramyagiti*, ed. Chakradhar Mahapatra)

This is a bicaesuric 7 11 5 syllabic pattern, with primary stresses on the 1st and 8th syllables, and secondary stresses on the 4th and 10th syllables. The word-sequence is 3,4 | | 3,2 syllabic.

(ii) 3,1 | | 3,1: with primary and secondary stresses:

śrāvana dhōi | | bādhai nāhi. I  
bhādua dhoi | | *kichu kichu thāi*. I  
āsvina dhoi | | samule yāi. I (Ibid)

Here the syllabic division seems to be 4, 4; there again, the word-sequence seems to be 3,1 | | 3, 1 or 2, 2/2, 2. Moric division seems to be 3,2/3, 2; i.e., open and medial closed syllables are single moric, final closed syllables are double moric. The underlined foot is an exception; it can be adjusted only with musical recitation.

(iii) 4/2,3 | | 4/2: with initial foot-stress:

āsa āsa | *pāḍa jodika* | | mo pindhāre | basa. I  
khāibāku | *debi tumāku* | | nadiāra rasa. . I  
pibāku | *debi tumāku* | | beṅṭa pukhari | pāni.  
suiḅāku | *debi tumāku* | | *malighara* | ani. . I

(collected from villagers)

Here, the measurement of each foot is tetra syllabic, but the second foot 'in each line is five syllabic. The third line has two exceptions viz, *pibāku*, and *beṅṭa pukhari*. It seems that the moric measurement of each foot is six units, and this has maintained the symmetry of all the feet. This example has similarity with Bengali and Assamese terta syllabic folk metre.

In modern Oriya poetry, examples of this folk syllabic style are very rare. One reason of it might be, that the cm. is also a syllabary style in Oriya and that various stress patterns have been attempted there. So, the poets did not feel any attraction to introduce this particular style of folk metre in modern Oriya poetry.

(c) *Assamese*: Assamese literature is a rich store of folk rhymes dak and khanabacan, and various social songs like *bia nam*, *dhai-nam bibu-geet*, etc. Most of these folk songs are composed in syllabic metre. Modern poets also are making proper use of this folk-syllabic style. Like the old and medieval Bengali syllabic style, in Assamese also this style lacked in standardization. Here also the musical tune worked as the catalyzing agent between syllabic and moric adjustments. Only

in the modern period has the standardized tetra syllabic-sesta moric form been developed. A few examples, showing the contrast between medieval and modern use of this style, may be cited here.

- (i) Old-medieval forms:4,4 11 4, 1:  
 dhenu cāri | mainā mor || gucāilek | ānt. I  
 rad pāl jilikiche || mukutāre | dānt. .1  
 dai thaicho | dugha thaicho 11 thaicho āru | lāru. I  
 śubar śayyā | pāri thaicho || tāte thaicho | gāru. I  
 (Typical Sec. Assam. Lit., vol. I p. 2)

- (ii) Old—medieval forms:4, 4:  
 porolā śāk | rohit māch.  
 ḍāke bole | sei beñjan sānch. .  
 māgur māchar | cirkuṭiā.  
 hālādhi mari | hiṅgak diā.  
 tail Ion diā | karib pāk  
 bhal byañjan | bolay dāk. .

(Ibid, *dak bhaniia*, p. 143)

Further, loose patterns, almost like the modern free syllabic verses, were also in use in *mantra* collections,

Modern Assamese poets are using this syllabic style in its standard forms.

- (iii) eṭi gharat | duṭi māthon || duṭi mānuh | dhare;  
 eṭi khele | lukāi sapon 11 eṭi jali | mare,  
 eṭi hāhe | tārār mukhat || falar gandha | ṭāni;  
 eṭi kānde | dharār bukat || kular bandha | māni.  
 (*duṭi mānuh*, Ratnakanta Barakakati)

But sometimes to bring the dialectal effect of story telling loose forms are used. For example:

- (iv) eṭā kagā | eṭā bagā || nānaṭh pithat | bhut I  
 kathā pāte || ṭākuṭ ṭākut | kuṭ, I  
 aṭāi kale, | puṭ puṭ puṭ, ||  
 iṭove ma | maḥ jokari | kale) dhut dhut. I  
 mā,) dekhibalai | ene bhal || bhut-povālr | nāc, I  
 kibā-kibi | gān gāy 11 fuc fuc | fāc; I  
 (Kumpur sapon:Jyotiprasad Agarwala)

Prose-verse or gadya kavita is the latest development in the verse liberation movement. In Bengali poetry this movement started much earlier, but got proper momentum in the writings of Tagore, early in

the thirties of this century. In the forties it became a fashion with most of the young Bengali poets. Almost at the same time, Oriya and Assamese young poets also started composing prose poems. As this style has no regular method of matra-counting, neither in syllabic nor in moric units, it is very difficult to formulate any rule for its metrical analysis. Some of the characteristics which may be formulated are, (a) the use of the colloquial compact style of language, in order to create an effect of natural speech rhythm; (b) the use of shorter sensical pause-units, shorter than usual prose clauses; (c) the use of changed syntax pattern to create some emotional speed-effect; (d) the repetition of similar syntax-pattern, word-sequence, and similar other phonetic alliterations. More or less, most of these features are present in gadya kavita. Three short extracts may be quoted here from the three languages concerned.

*Bengali.*

yābār samay ei mānasī mūr̥ti  
 raila tomāder citte,  
 kāler hāte raila bale  
     karba nā ahaṃkā̄r.  
 tār pare dāo āmāke chuṭi  
 jībacer kālo-sāda sutre gāthā  
     sakal paricayer antarāle;  
 nirjan nāmhīn nibhṛte;  
 nānā surer nānā tārer yantre  
     sur mile nite dāo  
                     ek caram samgiter gabhīratāy.

From Rabindranath's *Śeṣ Saptak*, no. 43)

*Oriya*

pauṣar āji ei patrajharā dināntare  
 mu dekhuci āsāḍhar svapna,  
 mu cāhuci mausumīr megha-mallār  
 dhūsar ei dharitrīre  
 mu cāhuci śyamala samāroha.  
 kie tumi anukampita,  
 smita osthare mote kahuca,  
 'puspa nia,  
 pallava niai  
 saundarya nia,  
 saurabha nia,  
 marā jantura upatyakare subarṇa saṃaroha'

mu to achi maguni basanter ei utsab  
 ei saundarya,  
 ei saurabh  
 baisakhar kharā niḥśvāsare,  
 jāhā kāli poḍi yiba, jali jiba,  
 piṅākir nayanāgnire ratikanta kendarpa pari  
 bhasmasāt hoi yiba.

(From Radhamohan Gadanayaka's  
 'mu dekhuci āsādhara svapan')

*Assamese*

ki duḥsaha sundar rāti, uṣṇa, āveg āru uttāp,  
 romāñcita hay mor man (yi man lai mai khelā kare).  
 yena ekti ujjal sāp  
 sonāli yar gār raṃ, mṛtyur krur āveg tār dṛṣṭit.  
 (kenekai ei svapna safal hala āmār ei bandhyā sṛṣṭit?)  
 anubhav hay muktir bipul ānanda  
 mor sttāt, mor cetanat; jivanar anāyās chanda  
 sarpil gatire bhāhi jay rātir andhakārar nadit  
 uddām, uttāl, abārit.  
 unmādar dare mai bhal pāo eṭi man, alkātrār dare  
 gār raṃ kono ek beśyār.  
 svapnar aranyat bicaraṅsil eṭi ujjal sonāli sāp  
 tar caupās gheri sonāli stabdhatā, duḥsaha bismay, āru uttāp  
 andhakār āru andhakār.

(From Homen Baragohani's *sāp*)

Now, before concluding this short treatise on Bengali, Oriya and Assamese versifications, the salient points emerging out of the comparative analysis, may be formulated here for the convenience of the readers.

(i) The earliest Eastern vernacular verse of *caryagitikos* mss., composed in Proto-Bengali, in a period ranging between the eighth to twelfth centuries A.D., have much resemblance with sister languages like Maithili, Newari, Oriya and Assamese, in respect of scripts, vocabularies, phonetic and morphological forms. So, in a broad sense, it can be taken as the common predecessor of all these vernaculars.

(ii) The *carya* songs were composed in Prakrit *mātrāvṛtta* metre, with significant phonetic changes. Here also the closed syllables are double moric and open short syllables single moric. But open long syllables (*mukta dīrgha svar*) are used as both long and short according

to the convenience of the composers. This is a distinct departure from the phonetic rules of Sanskrit and Prakrit versification.

(iii) The three major metrical forms used in *carya* songs are, sixteen moric *pādākulaka*, twenty four moric *dohā*, and thirty moric *caupāi*, which, in all probability, transformed to fourteen moric *payar*, twenty moric *laghu tripadī*, and twenty six moric *dirgha tripadī* respectively.

(iv) In Assamese and Bengali three broadly metrical styles, viz, simple moric or *kalāvṛtta*, composite moric or *mi@sra kalāvṛtta*, and syllabic or *dalavṛtta* evolved through three different types of verses. In Oriya only two styles of metre developed during this period, the *ak. saravṛtta* or syllabary-moric, and *dalavṛtta* or syllabic.

(v) The brajabuli songs originally composed by Vidyapati, the famous Maithili poet of the fifteenth century, are the early specimens of old simple moric. Medieval Bengali and Assamese vaisnava poets imitated him, throughout the three subsequent centuries. Both Vidyapati and his Bengali-Assamese followers were immensely influenced by the metrical styles of *carya* songs, and Jaydeva's *Gitagovinda* songs. Brajabli-poets used open syllables as single moric and closed syllables as double moric; in the use of *dirgha svar* syllables they applied their discretion in considering them either as single moric or as double moric, according to their need. Four, five, six, and seven moric light pause-units were introduced by them, in the models of *carya* songs, *Gitagovinda* songs and Vidyapati's *brajabli* songs. Rabindranath Tagore in the last two decades of the nineteenth century devised a standardized form of sm, with uniform use of open syllable (irrespective of long or short orthography) as single moric and closed syllable as double moric. In Oriya, poets of the early twenties (of *Sabuj Kavita* group) introduced this modern sm. in the line of Tagore; in Assamese Ambikagiri Ray Choudhuri (1885) and Ratnakanta Barakakati (1897-1963) are the early exponents of this style, who were followed by a large number of poets in the last fifty years.

(vi) Both in Bengali and Assamese phonology tendencies of dropping the final vowel, diphthongization of vowels, vowel mutation and similar other changes towards compact pronunciation, made possible the use of cm. style as the main vehicle of poetry. Here, both open syllables and closed syllables written in compound letters are used as single moric. Closed syllables written in non-compound letters are double moric in the final position of words, and in the medial or initial positions the poets are at liberty to use it either as

single or double, as they like. In Madhav Kandali's *Ramayana* (14th century Assamese poet) and Bam Candidasa's *Śrīkrṣṇakirttan* (15th century Bengali poet) the earliest specimen of cm. has been recorded. Fourteen moric *payār* (evolved from sixteen moric *pādakulaka*) is the most common metrical cm. form used both by medieval and modern Bengali-Assamese poets. Other popular forms used in this style are, 6-6-8 moric *laghu tripadī*, 8-8-10 moric *dīrgha tripadī* etc. In the modern period, blank-verse, and free-verse also have been successfully attempted in this style.

(vii) In Oriya pronunciation final vowels being largely retained but other changes towards compactness being followed, a new style of syllabary cm. metre has been evolved. Like Bengali and Assamese *payār*, here also fourteen moric (written in syllabary) *dāndī vr̥tta* is the most practised form. Other popular forms are, nine moric *bhāgavata*, twelve moric (7-5) *kalahaṁsa*, twenty moric (6-6-8) *baṅgāla@sri*. etc. Various stanza patterns also were devised in Oriya syllabary cm. from the early medieval period. *Cokhī*, *kalasa*, *saṅkarābharāṇa*, *padmāvati barādī*, *kedār* are some of them. Still now, in all these three languages, cm. is the most powerful metrical style used by the poets and dramatists.

(viii) Syllabic folk metre, an indigenous tetra syllabic, initial stressed style, was popular in all these three languages. The nursery rhymes, cradle songs, aphorisms, maxims, and various folk songs are the best specimens of this metrical style. In Bengali and Assamese this style was standardized in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In early twenties of the present Rabindranath and Dvijendralal used it in a more compact, colloquial form, and it became a modern vehicle of serious poetry. Dvijendralal devised a very compact style of syllabic metre, probably in the instance of English syllabic style, where he introduced caesuric pauses of eight, ten and six syllabic-moric units. In Oriya verses tetra syllabic folk metre is not so popular as in Bengali or Assamese. But various other syllabic forms are popular in Oriya songs, mostly confined to un-sophisticated compositions.

(xi) Prose-verse should be considered as the latest metrical development in all the three languages. Rabindranath made this style popular introducing colloquial language, shorter sense-based pause-groups, changed syntax-pattern, and repetitive similar clauses, words, and sounds. Modern poets, since the forties of this century, have been making plentiful use of this free verse style, considering it to be a symbol of the verse liberation movement.

## NOTES

1. The titles of the other three mss. are (a) *saroha bajrer dohākos*, (b) *kāhṇa-pāder dohākos*, (c) *dākārnaba*.
2. In the available mss., the last folio no. is 69, and the commentary of the song no. 50 is incomplete. So, at least one folio after that is lost, Five other folios (nos. 36, 37, 38, 39, 66) are also lost.
3. In Hindi versification *caupāi* is 15—15 moric rimed couplet, a slightly changed version of *pādākulaka*. Hindi *caupāi* is dicaesuric (8-7), whereas this Prakrit *caupāi*, as described in Pkt-paingalam, is tricaesuric, Tripadī pattern of E. vernaculars probably evolved out of this tricaesuric *caupāi*.
4. Madhav Kandali, the fourteenth century Assamese poet of the Ramayana is perhaps the earliest of all poets in the three vernaculars. But the mss. of his book, discovered so far, are not so old.



MASUD HUSAIN KHAN

## Urdu Poetic Forms and Indian Literature



WE ARE already familiar with the literary term of 'Western Literature'. Some Oriental enthusiasts are also talking of 'Asian Literature', as though Asian literatures, comprising such national literatures as Indian, Arabic, Persian and Chinese have a common source of inspiration. There is, however, a greater claim to envisage an Indian Literature: to find out its unifying themes through the various periods of its history, spanning over three thousand years or so. 'There is', says Dr Suniti Kumar Chatterji in his *Languages and Literatures of Modern India*, "a fundamental unity in the literary types, genres and expression among all the medieval and modern languages of India". His classification of the three main matters in the poetry of all the Indian languages is also worth noting: (i) The matter of Ancient India or of the Sanskrit world, (ii) the matter of Medieval India, and (iii) the matter of Islam or Perso-Arabic world.

Urdu and its literature belong mainly to the third category, although Urdu poetry is not totally devoid of the matters of ancient and medieval India. In fact, the early Urdu poetry abounds in it. In this respect, Urdu resembles Tamil, which, in spite of all the influence of the 'Sanskrit world' "has preserved an independent tradition" of its own.

Urdu is a mixed language, as one of its name 'Rexta' (the mixed

one) signifies. It is the direct product of the linguistic situation of medieval India, when Persian was the language of the Court and administration. By the middle of the eighteenth century the influence of Persian had been on the wane and its place was being taken in the north by this mixed jargon which had already acquired a literary stature in the Deccan in the beginning of the seventeenth century. The earlier development of literary Urdu was confined mainly to poetic idiom. For this the language leaned heavily on the Perso-Arabic tradition of poetry. Perso-Arabic influences are not only evident from poetic diction and forms, but a totally alien system of prosody also was employed for Urdu poetry from the very beginning. It shared these Perso-Arabic elements in common with Sindhi, Panjabi and Kashmiri, as also the Arabic script. Perso-Arabic influences also made inroads into the literary traditions of such languages as Bengali, Marathi and Gujarati, but the main linguistic area which came under its influence consisted of Panjabi, Sindhi, Kashmiri and Hindi.

With the rise of a new consciousness of Indian nationalism in the latter half of the nineteenth century and development of modern Indian literatures, Perso-Arabic elements began to recede before the revival of linguistic and literary heritage of ancient India. Of all the languages of modern India, Urdu and Kashmiri still stick to the Perso-Arabic literary tradition. They are the only languages whose poetic forms and prosody do not conform to the Indian literary tradition.

I have earlier pointed out that as far as the contents of Urdu poetry are concerned, they have a rich diversity, as the language itself is. Urdu draws poets from all religious communities of India. All through its history it has possessed a remarkable secular strain in spite of poets like Hali and Iqbal. But the language as it is constituted and the poetic forms as they are being practised, are deeply interwoven with the Perso-Arabic literary tradition. This tradition stands apart from the Indian literary tradition, so far as the forms of poetry are concerned. That Urdu could not be submerged with Hindi as one of its 'Shailis' like Braj, Awadhi, Bhojpuri, Maithili and Rajasthani, is a sufficient evidence of its being a language *per se*. Its poetry has played a great role in keeping up this identity. Therefore, like Indian nationalism, the concept of an Indian Literature has to be defined and elaborated in such a manner as to bring into its fold, not only languages like Urdu, Tamil and Kashmiri, but also the different literary traditions they cherish. Perhaps the linguistic and

literary diversity like the religious and racial variety, is the destiny of India. In any definition of Indian literature let there be the concept of uniformity amidst diversity. Let it not be a single tune, make it a symphony. Define it as a richness born of diversity and multiformity.

With this broad-based definition of Indian literature I would now proceed with my analysis of the Perso-Arabic system of prosody, the major area of confrontation between the Perso-Arabic and Indian literary traditions. Urdu poetry employs a system of prosody completely alien to India. In fact, all that is written in Urdu script is not Urdu literature. The main criterion for judging what is Urdu poetry and what is not, is its metrics. Right from the beginning in the middle of the fifteenth century, Urdu poetry is distinctive from most of the other Indian literatures for its employment of a foreign system of prosody. In the history of Urdu poetry there are instances when poetic diction had descended to the level of pure Indo-Aryan vocabulary, when its motifs have come from purely Indian sources, but hardly any significant piece of Urdu poetry had ever been written on Indian metrics. It is due to this consciousness that such popular poetic forms as Doha, Kibat and Sortha, sometimes employed by the Sufi poets, do not find a significant place in the history of Urdu poetry. It is wrong to assume that the Urdu geet-form, inspired by the Indian tradition on the side of content as well as diction, is written on Indian metres. Even the great experimentalist and advocate of Hindi Pingal, Azmatullah Khan, has written his best geets in Urdu metres, e.g.

1. Mujhe pīt kā yan koi phal na milā.
2. Mire husn ke liye kyum maze.
3. Dam men yān nā āiye dil na yahān lagāiye.

Now let us briefly look into the nature of the two traditions of metrics, the Indian and the Perso-Arabic. The traditional division of the Indian metres into 'matric' and 'varnik' is well-known. While in the matric metres it is the number of moras that is counted, the 'laghu' being equivalent to one unit, and 'guru' to two; the varnik carries the classical principle of quantity. The movements of the metre is regulated by the concept of 'yati' or 'vishram' which occurs at fixed intervals. The other great regulating principle of 'matric' metres is 'gati' which is based on the good sense of the poet and falls within the purview of the musical theory of metrics. The Varnik Chand is based on the concept of the 8 'ganas', formulated into 'man bhai jar sat' and is quantitative basically. Theoretically speaking, the

Arabic system of prosody is also quantitative and is based on the counting of the letters (harf) into 8 'rukns' (-ganas)—two having five letters: failin, faulun, and six having seven letters; mafailu, mafulat, failatun, mistafilan, mutafailun, mafailatun.

The Arabic prosody codified by Khalil-bin-Ahmad Basri (d. 786 A.D.) had 15 basic metres to which were added another 4 at a later stage, thereby making the total of 19. Out of these, 7 metres are made by the repetition of the same rukn (foot) and 12 are compound metres, combining different feet. The Arabic prosody in course of time was adopted by the Persians for their language. Now, we know, Persian is an Indo-Iranian language much different in its structure from the Semitic Arabic. The resulting tension between an alien metric system and the Persian language led to the breakage of the 19 metres into 108 'bahars' (metres). This was effected by the invention of a number of metric formulas known as 'metric circles' for memorization, which fit in the educational system of medieval times. From Persia this poetic legacy was passed on to India, where the tradition of an indigenous system of prosody was well-established. Further changes in Perso-Arabic metrics took place mostly through a process of adaptation and selection—to fit in the frame-work of an Indo-Aryan linguistic structure. Now, all the 108 metres are not being practised in Urdu. In actual practice they are limited to only half of them; only one third of them having a reasonable frequency. Even the greatest masters of Urdu poetry, like Ghalib and Iqbal have had their own handful of choice, Ghalib once a while trying his hand on such unusual metres:

- (1) A ki miri jān ko qurar nahin hai  
Taqat-e-badad-e-intizar nahin hai.
- (2) Ajab nashat se jallad ke chale hain ham age  
Ki apne sae se sar, paon se hai do qadam age.

These ghazals of Ghalib are recited with a halting pause even by those who know their business.

Although there is very little in the books on Urdu prosody to indicate it, a linguistic analysis gives insight into the subtle changes that have taken place in the process of five hundred years integrating an alien metrics to the great rhythms of an Indo-Aryan language like Urdu. Since all verse is an 'organized violence' superimposed on the rhythm of every-day speech, the great rhythmical impulses of Urdu language when patterned on a foreign prosody created linguistic tension of the highest degree. In this respect the history of Urdu

prosody is worth studying; how through the concept of ‘poetic license’ the iron-jacket of Perso-Arabic prosody was fixed up on the body of a supple and now-agglutinative language, began to show up chinks. Through a process of selection and elimination the Urdu poet limited himself only to those metres which could go along with the rhythms of Urdu speech.

It is totally wrong to assume that a common metrics in any way brings together the three languages—Arabic, Persian and Urdu, when poetic recitation is made. The role of the different phonologies and grammatical structures of these languages are instantaneously visible if we listen to an Arab and Persian reciting in the same metres. There is clear evidence that performance in poetry is not bound up with the metric feet or moras. Ultimately the phonological elements of a particular language predominate and the common metre submerges into the greater rhythms of different languages. I have personal experience of listening to Arabic and Persian poetry, in recognizable metres, but I confess that for me as an Urdu speaker, every time that I had listened to a Persian or an Arab, I had the feeling that the poet was ‘out of metre’, as goes an Urdu phrase.

It is also a well-known fact that had it not been for the Persian compounds, and especially its ‘izafat’ and ‘vav-atf’, the employment of these metres would still have been a problem with the Urdu poets. Whenever a poet like Mir, Nazir, Asmatullah Khan or Arzbo Lakhnari writes in an idiom free of these constructions, he is forced to take to metres which are closer to Indian metrics and thereby to the prose rhythms of the language. For example, we know that these poets select some form of ‘Bahre Mataqarib’ (name of a metre) which is surprisingly similar to certain Hindi chandas. The opening couplet of a ghazal of Mir runs as follows:

Uti hogain sab tadbiren kuch na dava ne kām kiya  
Dekha! is bimaraye-dil ne akhir tamam kiya.

This may be compared with the following lines of Subhadra Kumari Chauhan in ‘Jhansi Ki Rani’

Un ke gatha chor chale ham Jhansi ke maidanon men  
Jahan Khaṛi hai Laxmi Bai mard bani mardanon men.

Another fine comparison can be established between ‘Shiksha Chand’ of 18 moras and ‘Bahre Mutaqarib Musamman Maqsur’, the most popular metre for Urdu Masnavi form:

Hindi:— Are uth ki ab to savera hua  
 nahin door tera andhera hua  
 (18 Moras)

Urdu:— Voh ujla sa maidan, chamakti si ret  
 Uga nur se chand taron ka khet  
 (Metre: faulun, faulun, faulun, faul)

But this incidental similarity does not go very far because of the internal arrangement of the Perso-Arabic metres. While the Indian metres are internally organized by the concept of 'Yati' or 'Vishram' Perso-Arabic metres have a more vigorous organization in the form of 'arkans' (feet). I think it is because of this rigid frame-work of Urdu prosody that most of the Urdu poetry is not sung in the Indian ragas. Its beats are more regular and as such, are best displayed in recitation at Mushairas. Hence the reason why the Urdu Mushairas are so popular. On the other hand, 'matric chandas', loosely built up as they are, submit themselves better to the modulations and rising and falling notes of music. Since all the languages are a continuum, syllabic movements followed by pauses, the languages whose poetic metres are flexible are better suited for the display of variations of sound pitches. No doubt better organized rhythmic pauses have their own element of surprise, but they ultimately tend to become monotonous and therefore less amenable for musical purposes. There is, however, one advantage of a prosody such as Urdu has; its rhythmic patterns are never submerged in musical notes. The semantic part of poetry always dominates in whatever raga one may sing a ghazal. Urdu poetry has neither submerged itself into the Indian metrics, nor submitted itself to the demands of Indian music. It has no doubt exploited to the fullest extent the common elements of sound patterns, keeping apart its identity and strength born of linguistic confrontation and tension. It is also a refreshing departure, from what is too common: hence the exquisite charm of Urdu poetry and its Mushairas are enjoyed even by those who are unable to follow its diction and symbolism to the fullest measure.

After discussing in some detail the nature of Urdu metrics, and the peculiar situation in which it happens to be, I would now like to make a few observations on the most important and popular poetic form of this language—I mean the ghazal, the *honor par excellence* of Urdu poetry, as one of the Urdu critics has remarked.

Ghazal as a poetic form grew out of Qasida—the panegyric, popular with Arabs. It was, however, in Iran that it was given the

status of an independent genre. It is essentially a lyric in its early stages of development, in form as well as in content. The word ghazal literally means 'to converse with the fairer sex'. This conversation naturally consisted of amorous themes of love. Due to the peculiar social conditions and temperament of the Iranian people, it later on perverted towards the symbolism of homosexuality ('Imrad Prasti'). Gradually, however, it comprised within its orbit themes of mystical love and morals as well. At the present time one can write ghazal about any subject on earth, provided its symbolic style is not abandoned.

As a poetic form ghazal has not shown much development. A typical ghazal consists of not less than five couplets and is usually made of odd numbers 7, 9 or 13 couplets. Each couplet of a ghazal is complete in itself usually having no thematic relationship with the following couplet. It, however, has a unity of form having a single metre all through and a chain of rhymes. No doubt from early times some of the ghazals have a unity of themes or at least of mood, but the general pattern is that of formal unity and thematic variety.

I do not know of any Indian literature which has any poetic form resembling the Urdu ghazal. They usually have continuous lyrics or single couplets like 'dohas', so popular with the medieval poets. While a doha has great similarity with a couplet of ghazal and likewise contains, an ocean of meaning in a dew-drop of form, one has an astonishing sense of loss of brevity when one passes from one doha to the other. There is no doubt a common metre between the two dohas but a linking rhyme is missing as also the grand opening of a ghazal, its 'Matla', which fixes up not only the metre but a chain of rhymes for the succeeding couplets.

It is my opinion that ghazal goes very well with the temperament of a civilization with its miniature paintings, floral designs in architecture and non-rational, mystical way of thinking, probing into the nature of the relationship of the moth and the candle, ocean and the drop, sun and the dew-drop. Ghazal is a sort of exercise in Urdu poetry, because every poet begins his poetic career by writing ghazals; it is also a consummate art since all the great poets of Urdu were ghazal-writers first and foremost.

Urdu ghazal is a unique form in more than one way. It is not only highly rhymed, most of the ghazals have also a 'radif' which literally means 'a co-rider'. Radif is unknown to either English or Hindi poetry; It is that repetitive word or phrase which comes after rhyme in the second line of each couplet of a ghazal. It no doubt acts



as a fetter to expression. Nevertheless, once the achievement is made the musicality and consequent poetic effect of a couplet are greatly enhanced. The most delicate job on the part of a poet of ghazal is how to strike an adjustment between the rhyme and the radif, for all the radifs do not go with all the rhymes linguistically.

The other important forms of Urdu poetry are Masnavi, Qasida, Qita, Rubai, Musaddas, Tarkib Band and Tarji Band. I am not mentioning the other types of classification which are based on the concept of themes like Marsiya, Khamariyat, etc.

From the literary point of view after ghazal, masnavi is the most important form of Urdu poetry, qasida (panegyric) strictly speaking has the same form as ghazal although totally different in its contents and the length. Masnavi is usually employed for narrative poetry and sometimes contains a few thousand couplets. Ghawwasi, Ibene Nashati, Nusrati, Mir Hasan, Pandit Daya Shanker Kaul, 'Nasim' and Shauq are some of the great masnavi writers. The metres of masnavi are limited in number. The most famous of them being 'faulun, faulun, faulun, faul' which has a remarkable similarity with the Hindi 'Shiksha Chand', already mentioned. The masnavi form is more flexible and free as rhyme is limited to the two lines of the couplet changing in every following couplet. The radif is also conspicuously absent. Masnavi has lost its popularity in modern Urdu literature.

The Rubai form is well-known to the English reader through the famous renderings of Omar Khayyam by Fitzgerald. Although no major Urdu poet subsists only on Rubais, a good many Rubais have come from their pens. The difficulty with the Rubai is that its metres are contained and peculiar, and it requires great craftsmanship to write on them. The four lines of Rubai, three of them having rhymes, are a powerful medium of expressing philosophical thought. The mastery over Rubai is usually attained after poetic maturity.

There is nothing particular about the other forms of Urdu poetry, which are half-way between ghazal and masnavi. Their identity depends more on their stanza-arrangement than on the choice of metre of the rhyming scheme.

Of late a revolt has set in against these forms, yet Urdu poetry is still highly conscious of them. All the movements of free verse and a-poetry have not dislocated Urdu poetry from its moorings. It is still bound by metre and rhyme structure, its own symbolism and phonetic orchestration making it still unique and distinctive in the whole range of Indian literatures.



SISIR KUMAR DAS

## Towards a Unified Theory of Style



STYLISTICS<sup>1</sup> is comparatively a very young discipline. It seeks to provide an objective frame-work based on the linguistic structures within which it will be possible to identify and analyse the features that constitute 'style' of a given text. It has gained much from the methods adopted by literary critics and from the principles of rhetoric but does not consider them adequate for an analysis of style. The purpose of the present paper is to examine some of the points of view presented by the students of literature, rhetoric, and other disciplines interested in literary style and eventually to construct a model for style analysis.

The study of style has been made throughout the centuries mainly from two important perspectives: *Rhetoric* and *Personality*. Aristotle talks about three basic elements in a tragedy: the *matter* (i.e., *muthos* 'plot', *ethos*, 'character' and *dianoia* 'thought'), the *medium* (i.e., *lexis* 'word'/'language' and *melos* 'song') and the *manner* (i.e., *apsis*, 'spectacle'). The concern for lexis is manifested in the study of rhetoric. Rhetoric, in the beginning and even in its developed stage, was an art or device to persuade people. It involves, however, the study of special usage of language since it is the art of discovering all possible means of persuasion on any subject whatsoever.

The study of rhetoric was a controversial subject in the ancient world, at least for a certain period. Both Socrates and Plato reproached rhetoric very harshly for being a cheap and unethical device. Aristotle

justified the study of rhetoric on ethical grounds and established it firmly. The *lexis* and the *taxis* (structure) formed an important part in his *Rhetoric*. He wrote, 'it is not sufficient to know what one ought to say,—but one must also know how to say it and this largely contributes to making the speech appear of a certain character'.<sup>2</sup> Aristotle and later almost all exponents of rhetoric, enumerated various components such as clarity, propriety and ornaments, etc., which form the total texture of a style. These elements of style analysis are useful to some extent but they fail to account for the differences in style among different authors. Moreover, rhetoric was primarily prescriptive in nature and therefore it failed to emerge as an apparatus for description. This does not mean, however, that the students of rhetoric were unable to describe the features which they might thought were the constituents of style. They created a rhetorical matrix but even that could not tell one why and how a writer differed from another in *his* means of persuasion. Is it because of the theme, or context or something more vital?

Isocrates<sup>3</sup> (430-338 B.C.), another defender of rhetoric, finds in eloquence a creative process, and not only a device of persuasion but a reflection of character, an outward image of a true and virtuous soul.<sup>4</sup> This reference to character and soul ultimately brings us near to the question of individuality in style. When Aristotle says 'metaphors cannot be learnt from any one else', he implies, I suppose, it is not possible to prescribe the rules of its usage since it is essentially related to individual personality<sup>5</sup>. Longinus also declares, 'sublimity is the true ring of a noble mind'.<sup>6</sup> It certainly gave an insight into the phenomenon called style. The traditional rhetorical approach is entirely mechanical: it describes style according to certain features of usage and implies that any text could have been written in any style. This concept of style as a 'garment' was influential for several centuries: handbooks of rhetoric distinguished several levels of discourse—*stylus altus*, *medius* and *humilis*. They are useful in certain context but are inadequate for the analysis and evaluation of literary styles. The concept of personality, therefore, provides a better perspective.

Buffon's oftquoted epigram 'the style is the man himself'<sup>7</sup>, or Gibbon's 'style is the image of character', or Newman's 'style is the shadow of a personality' have been echoed by several literary critics.<sup>8</sup> Though the problem of personality is important to many critics today there is *no* agreement among them about its correlation with a given text. When Lucas writes 'literary style is simply a means

by which personality moves others', we hear a modern echo of an ancient voice. But then he takes us to a difficult area when he claims that 'the problems of style, therefore, are really problems of personality—of practical psychology. Therefore, this psychological foundations should come first, for on it the rules of rhetoric are logically based'<sup>9</sup>. Personality is not a self explanatory term. Any text book of psychology will give several definitions of personality. Neither Lucas nor the critics who so emphatically claim that style is but a verbal manifestation of *personality* have provided us with any objective frame-work of reference within which the personality can be identified and the relation between personality and the style can be observed, measured and established. I am not denying that the problems of style are really problems of style but there is very little evidence to accept the proposition without reservation. And certainly I do not understand why problems of style should be considered as problems of practical psychology and not as problems of literary studies or linguistic analysis. Such attitudes simply blur our vision. As a result all such studies have either transgressed into inquiries into the biographical detail of the artist or have become victims of standard rhetorical canons. 'Many legends in the biographies of artists have sprung,' writes Croce, 'from this erroneous identification, since it seemed impossible that a man who gives expression to generous feelings should not be a noble and generous man in practical life; or that the dramatist whose plays are full of stabbing, should not himself have done a little stabbing in real life.'<sup>10</sup>

Whether style is the man or it is a means by which personality moves others—the problem of personality would lead us into a very complex field. A satisfactory method of understanding personality and of identifying its relation with the verbal techniques would undoubtedly yield interesting results. But the literary critic is yet to accomplish such a task. And psychologists who have worked on the problem of style have failed to achieve a method that could be used in literary criticism. I shall speak about them a little later.

The concept of style as a means of persuasion and an expression of personality has exerted a great influence on our literary studies. The older approach implies style 'as an addition to a central core of thought' or 'expression'.<sup>11</sup> Charles Bally, the pioneer of stylistic studies, also defined style from this point of view. He wrote: 'the effective value of the facts (items) of organized language, and the reciprocal action of the expressive facts (items) that concurrently form the system of means of expression of a language'<sup>12</sup> fall within

the field of style analysis. If style is marked by the expressive items there is a possibility of an utterance *without style* also. And the concept of *without style* is not very uncommon in literary criticism.

If we view style as an addition or embellishment to the norm it can be viewed also as a deviation from norm and many linguists study style from that point of view. Bernard Bloch, for example, says, 'the style of a discourse is the message carried by the frequency distribution and transitional probabilities of its linguistic features especially as they differ from those of the same features in the language as a whole.'<sup>13</sup> A deviation from the norm is probably the most important feature of a style, but a style is not necessarily a deviation from norm and the possibility of an adherence to the norm cannot be ruled out in certain cases.

Charles Bally and many other critics of the 'personality school' have searched for the clue of an individual style in the *expressiveness* of language. The whole theory of expressiveness rests on the concept of *choice*. If a language has only one item for one object the possibility of individual choice does not arise and the question of 'personality' becomes irrelevant. All natural languages have certain sets of alternative forms of expression and writers are free (to a limited extent) to use any one of them. Hockett says, 'roughly speaking, two utterances in the same language which convey approximately the same information, but which are different in their linguistic structure, can be said to differ in style'.<sup>14</sup> However, it is not easy to say whether two utterances convey approximately the same information or not. *He died* and *he kicked the bucket* would ordinarily be viewed as utterances carrying the same information though they differ in linguistic structure. But any difference in structure—phonological, lexical or grammatical—causes a difference in the information. Therefore, choice between these two is not guided by linguistic reasons. Many critics would say that choice is essentially a feature of personality. But choice can be due to many other reasons—grammatical, metrical, situational and of course stylistic. In a choice between *loves* and *love* in a situation like *he X her* the choice is grammatical since *he love her* is not English. In another choice between *eating* and *selling* in *he is X rice* both are grammatically possible, but the speaker or writer would choose one in particular situation. Similarly, choice of an item might be guided by metrical reason and, therefore, all such choices have no stylistic relevance. But the choice between

She took me to her elfin grot  
 And there she wept and sigh'd full sore  
 And there I shut her wild eyes  
 With kisses four

and

She took me to her elfin grot,  
 And there she gaz'd and sighed deep,  
 And there I shut her wild sad eyes—  
 So kissed to sleep

is neither grammatical, nor situational but *stylistic*. Therefore all choice is not important in style but *some* choices<sup>15</sup> are. And any theory of style has to account for a specific choice by a writer.

## II

More technical and mechanical approaches to the problem of style have been made by the psychologists and the statisticians in recent years. John B. Carroll, for example, has applied the techniques of *factor analysis* presented by L. L. Thurstone<sup>16</sup> in his *The Vectors of Mind: Multiple-Factor Analysis for the Isolation of Primary Traits* (Cambridge, 1935) in a study of style. Factor analysis is a procedure for identifying and measuring the vectors responsible for variation to be observed in any set of phenomena. Psychologists use that technique in studying intelligence, personality, interests, etc. Carroll thinks it could be used to 'study the personalities of samples of prose'. Carroll's procedure is quite complicated for a literary critic without any training in practical psychology. He has taken 150 passages of prose and has studied them from two angles—what he calls *measures*—and has determined the correlation of each measure with each other measure. This correlation matrix was later subjected to a factor analysis. These tabulations do not lead us anywhere and Carroll remains sceptical whether the dimensions identified in his analysis can really 'represent the aspects of style that truly make the differences between great literature and the not so great'.<sup>17</sup> In fact, psychological approach to style has been successful in a very limited sphere, such as in the identification of anonymous authors—Ullman refers to an article entitled *Speech Personality* by F. H. Stanford in *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol. 39, 1942—or in establishing a correlation between the ratio of verbs and adjectives and the emotional stabilities of the subjects examined.

There have been several attempts to analyse style by psychological methods but no one has been able to describe the problems adequately.<sup>18</sup> Leo Spitzer's method—I shall discuss it towards the end of this section—is known as psychological stylistics but Spitzer does not use any of recognized procedures of applied psychology. Like psychological approach the statistical approach, as demonstrated by Yule, Herdan and several other scholars,<sup>19</sup> have been successful in a limited area. Herdan wrote, 'may not a difference in style between two writers reveal itself as a difference in the frequency of use of certain linguistic forms, which might then show 'frequency of use' as, at least, one characteristic feature of style?'<sup>20</sup> The emphasis on frequency of certain linguistic elements is the basis of any statistical method. Herdan's analysis has certainly given us new insight into style analysis. He shows that language embraces both law and chance. While we think that style is the outcome of the deliberate activity on the part of the writer, Herdan claims that the choice of words is subject to chance to some extent. The statistical law of language describes the relations between linguistic elements in terms of chance or probability. Herdan has analysed the vocabulary of several texts and has characterized style by the 'quantitative characteristic of the relative frequency of use of particular words'.<sup>21</sup> The methods employed in this discipline are highly complex and mathematical. But like psychological methods this method, too, is indifferent to the quality of a literary discourse. It is valuable no doubt. It has been useful in textual criticism: to establish the chronology of an author's work, to solve problems of authorship and to establish the unity of a work. As an ancillary technique it can be of great help to literary studies. But at present it remains an ancillary branch of stylistics. No more, no less.

Leo Spitzer's method, the so-called psychological stylistics, is interesting. His approach is basically intuitive and even mystical. One can trace two sources of influence in his method. He follows Croce, and Vossler, in viewing language as creative self-expression and he follows Freud in his interpretation of this artistic process.<sup>22</sup> He has no pre-established model but starts with this axiom that any stylistic peculiarity has its root in the author's mind. In order to identify that peculiarity he follows a procedure, which he refers to as 'philological circle'—which has three phases. He simply starts reading a particular text and is fascinated by some 'persistently recurrent features'. These features may be linguistic, such as a syntactic device, may be rhetoric, such as a metaphor or an imagery. He then tries to



interpret that feature with the help of some element in the mind of the author. When he traces it he returns to the text to find out other traits that may be of similar nature, and be subjected to the same interpretation. Spitzer has very ably demonstrated his technique in his analysis of Racine<sup>23</sup> and Diderot.<sup>24</sup> Hatzfeld claims that this 'process would establish the new stylistics as an exact, controllable method'. His influence has been widely felt and the Spanish school led by Professor Damaso Alonso<sup>25</sup> has done interesting work in this line though it has made some innovations in its procedure.<sup>26</sup>

There have been several objections to Spitzer's method. Wallek and Warren<sup>27</sup> objected that 'many relationships professing to be thus established are not based on conclusions really drawn from the linguistic material but rather start with a psychological and ideological analysis and seek for confirmation in the language.' And secondly 'the assumption of a necessary relationship between certain stylistic devices and certain states of mind would appear fallacious' and, therefore, they have warned that German *stilforschung* (stil, 'style', *forsche-ung*, 'inquiry') which includes Leo Spitzer's studies, is to be treated with considerable caution. Apart from these very legitimate objections, the whole procedure followed by Spitzer is primarily subjective and intuitive, since the discovery of a stylistic trait in this method must come as a sudden flash or illumination. The method can be extremely treacherous: the conclusion of a particular study might give us more information about the mental qualities of the analyst than the author to be studied. There is another inadequacy in this method which can be noticed when we study an author whose biography is not known to us or when a work which might not have been written by one author. In such cases discovery of stylistic traits are possible but their correlation with the author's psyche is no longer possible. Leo Spitzer is not very clear on this point. Though in one of his articles<sup>28</sup> he suggests that in such cases linguistic material is the most important thing. He does not stop there. He shows that 'the rain it raineth every day' in Shakespeare, possesses the same information value as in 'it rains every day', but there is an 'irrational power' in the first one. The morphological form *raineth*, according to Spitzer, evokes 'time immemorial', the iambic rhythm suggests the monotony of perpetually falling rain. And then he recalls the ancient controversy on the nature of language and concludes, 'thus words which had meaning only by convention (θρσσει) have been made to express meaning in correspondence with their sound (φρσσει)'.<sup>29</sup> This may not be very clear. But one thing is clear that any analysis of

style has to be ultimately based on the linguistic material. That is the only tangible material.

Should we then study style from a linguistic point of view? Or to put the question differently: can linguistics provide a framework for style analysis? The answer will be obvious if we look at the approaches made from that angle. Since style is bound to the medium of language it logically follows that an analysis of style without a proper consideration of the raw language material is inadequate. And no student of style beginning from Demetrius down to our times has denied that. But the literary critic's interest in language is not enough. Modern linguistics has given us new insights into the nature and function of language and those can be extremely useful in understanding literary language which is but a part of the total linguistic activity of any particular community. Linguistics has shown that language is a system and in fact a system of systems. And that system can be understood and explained by the rules operating within the language without any reference to any extra-linguistic system. It has its own system of sounds which combines a particular way into morphemes which follow a pattern of arrangement. And the patterns of sounds, morphemes and other larger units of language can be described in a precise manner for each language. The analysis of languages follows certain strict and rigorous methods which again can be described with equal precision and rigour. A systematic linguistic analysis is, therefore, the *only* way for an objective style analysis.<sup>30</sup>

Each language has its own system or structural organization, The ordinary speaker as well as the most gifted writer operate language within its framework. None, not even the greatest writer of any community, is capable of changing that structural organization. Language is a social fact, all its symbols are arbitrary and, therefore, any individual attempt for a radical change in a language is bound to fail. To quote De Saussure, 'A particular language-state is always the product of historical forces, and these forces explain why the sign is unchangeable, i.e., why it resists any arbitrary substitution'.<sup>31</sup> The literary critic, who is eloquent about the ability of great writers to change the language, is blissfully ignorant about the nature of language. I do not mean, however, that a speaker or a writer can never deviate from the norm. He can deviate from the norm and sometimes the deviation can be very wide indeed. But a speaker or a writer cannot create a norm. What we popularly call idiosyncrasy in a writer is to be explained by the grammar of a certain discourse



within the framework of the general grammar of the language. It is to some extent similar to the study of dialects. Dialects have their own grammar and their distinctive features are recognized from their deviation from one another. Literary language can be studied in a similar manner.

A literary language may or may not be a deviation from the norm. A literary language may or may not be a deviation from the non-literary language in its function. But a literary language is necessarily a different language either in structure or in function, If there is no deviation of any kind between a literary utterance or discourse and a non-literary utterance or discourse then the question of literary style does not arise at all.

Methods of structural linguistics or the transformational grammar will, when employed in analysing a particular material, show us certain important features relevant to the study of style. But is that all? Linguistic analysis is, according to the model I am about to present, but a means to an end. Linguistic analysis, I have said, is possible without any reference to the extra-linguistic situations,<sup>32</sup> but literature is not mere language; and the meaning of language as well as literature, cannot be understood unless the world outside is taken into consideration. Language analysis is extremely important but the question of meaning becomes ultimately of greater importance. A theory of style, therefore, must provide a framework where all the constituents of style can be analysed. And as it is evident none of the existing disciplines can provide satisfactory answers to all the problems of style. There is, then, a need for a unified theory of style.

### III

None of the definitions of style are satisfactory. And I do not claim to put forward the most satisfactory definition. I simply propose to start with a working description of style.

A style is the resultant of relations and dependence between the structure and the function of the language of a given text on the, one hand, and the extra-linguistic context on the other.

The structural linguists want to describe a language as a system of a finite set of symbols. They are fully aware that language is a social fact and that the 'content' of language is deeply related to the cultural life of any community. But that does not prevent a linguist from analysing the internal system of a language without any reference to a society or a culture. Boomfield excludes *meaning* from

linguistic analysis since an analysis of meaning would involve the linguist into certain problems about which our knowledge is still not adequate.<sup>33</sup>

While linguistics can afford to speak about the language without any reference to meaning or to any extra-linguistic context, literature cannot do that. Literature draws its materials from real life and expresses them in language. In the study of style, therefore, the language has to be contextualized—that is, the linguistic material in every stage of analysis must be related to the total culture. Literature divorced from its context is a literature without any meaning and value. Figure 1 shows the relation between the language and literature and their relation to the culture of a given community. The circle *a* represents literature or any literary text. It is a part of the bigger circle *A* which represents the language. Both *A* and *a* are part of the biggest circle *C*. They are related to each other and both *A* and *a* have their own systems. Their system can be interpreted within their corpus but ultimately the meaning of *a* and *A* can be explained in terms of *C*.

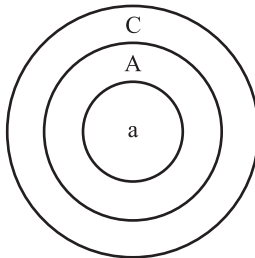


Figure 1

To a certain extent this view is similar to Firth's concept of context of situation which is again based on Malinowski's analysis<sup>34</sup> of a few languages in the Pacific islands. Firth's framework of context of situation has been used by several linguists of Great Britain in linguistic analysis and its importance is slowly being recognized in style analysis.<sup>35</sup>

An understanding of literary style presupposes a thorough analysis of the language of a given text which is to be contextualized and its linguistic features are to be recognized by a comparison with the norm in similar context. A comparison between a particular text ( $L_x$ ) and the total language ( $L$ ) is not possible.  $L_x$  in context  $x$  is to be compared with the norm ( $N$ ) in context  $x$ .

The concept of context is not self-explanatory. By context I mean

each and every non-linguistic activity of a given community. I will symbolize it with *C*. A literary discourse may not be immediately related to all the constituents of *C*: it is related to some constituents (symbolized as  $c_1, c_2, c_3$  etc.) more intimately than other constituents. So the immediate constituents of *C* in relation to  $L^1$  are to be recognized. Immediate constituents of *C* will be symbolized as *C(I)* in this method.

$L^1$  can be analysed into its basic elements: sound system and grammar and each of them are to be correlated with another level—which I call stylistic level. Stylistic level is composed of several features—euphony, assonance, alliteration, metre, word-collocation, deliberate shifting of grammatical categories, paragraphs, stanza, etc. The stylistic level is to be studied by constant reference to the linguistic level of  $L^1$ . Figure 2 shows the relations between both the levels and *C* and *C(I)*.

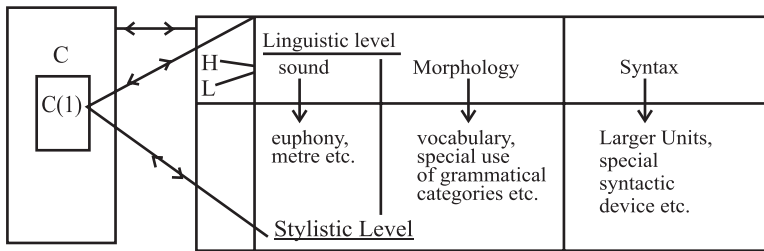


Figure 2

Now *C(I)* can be broken into several constituents.

1. *Time*: A text has to be placed in a particular time.<sup>36</sup>  
15th century, 19th century, etc.  
A consideration, of time is also essential when the text such as a historical novel describes a particular period.
2. *Place*: The place with which the text is associated. It might have direct connection with the language used in the text. *Place* also includes the *locale* used in the text.
3. *Participants*: The author and the people for whom the text is primarily written. This has direct relation to certain forms of literature. Folk Literature, Juvenile Literature etc. are to be contextualized primarily with this constituent.
4. *Form*: The form of the text. Such as a sonnet, a novel, a

- play etc.
5. *Theme*: It can be sub-divided into several sub-constituents. Such as historical, mythological, religious, social, etc. None of these sub-constituents are mutually exclusive.
  6. *Purpose*: This term includes the purpose of the author and any of the participants, The purpose can be of several kinds. Humorous, Satirical, etc. It is related to the function of the language: cognitive or expressive. The function of language in literary text is expressive or emotive.

These six constituents are inter-related: one cannot be properly recognized in isolation. Spencer and Gregory have approached this problem in a very similar manner. They have called these *field* of discourse, *mode* of discourse and *tenor* of discourse.<sup>37</sup> Several other British linguists have grouped them under a major category of *register*.<sup>38</sup>

At linguistic level the analysis of L<sup>1</sup> is made to show certain deviations from N. This analysis will take care of all problems of grammaticality in literary texts.<sup>39</sup> Some of the literary critics<sup>40</sup> have already done interesting work in this line. But the analysis of L<sup>1</sup> in isolation would yield only linguistic elements, so it has to correlate them with C(I) on the one hand and with the stylistic implication of every linguistic device on the other.<sup>41</sup> The stylistic level as postulated here embraces rhetorical categories also. They are included here to take care of certain features of a text which are not possible to analyse within a specific linguistic model. But all these categories are based on the language. I, therefore, think it is necessary to maintain a hierarchy in style analysis.

The stylistic categories are related to the sound-system of a particular language or its lexis, or grammar. It is possible to divide these categories into minute sub-categories in relation to L<sup>1</sup> and C(I). The following is an attempt to show such possibility.

1. Phonological Categories at Stylistic Level
  - 1.1. *Phonaesthetics*:<sup>42</sup> to be defined for each language of each period
  - 1.2 Sound and Rhythm
    - 1.2.1. Euphony
    - 1.2.2. Alliteration

- 1.2.3. Assonance
- 1.3. Metre and sound system
  - 1.3.1 Vowel length
  - 1.3.2 Syllables
  - 1.3.3 Stress
- 1.4. Supra-segmentals
  - 1.4.1 Intonation
  - 1.4.2 Stress
  - 1.4.3 Junctures
  - 1.4.4 Pitch
- 2. *Lexis*
  - 2.1 Native words
  - 2.2 Borrowings
  - 2.3 Archaic words (which are also borrowings from earlier stages of a language)
  - 2.4 Collocations;
  - 2.5 word semantics
- 3. *Morphological Categories*
  - 3.1 Extension of categories<sup>43</sup>
  - 3.2 Transference of categories<sup>44</sup>
  - 3.3 Borrowings
    - 3.3.1 From older stage of the language
    - 3.3.2. From another language
- 4. *Syntactical Categories*
  - 4.1. Sentence
    - 4.1.1 Sentence length
    - 4.1.2 Structural devices
      - 4.1.2.1 Inversions
      - 4.1.2.2 Periods
      - 4.1.2.3 Subordination
      - 4.1.2.4 Parallelism
  - 4.2. Larger Units
    - 4.2.1 Paragraph
    - 4.2.2 Stanza

There is no reason to suppose that this table is complete. There can be more minute and useful divisions of the categories. None of these sub-divisions should be studied in isolation. The interdependence and inter-relation between each one of them bring a unity in the total discourse. Each style is unique because each writer handles these categories in an unpredictable way. The  $L^1$  is related

to N and C(I) and the stylistic level; therefore it can be described in detail but cannot be predicted. The possibility of a description makes a comparison between two or more authors possible. Thus one can talk about an individual style, a period style or even the style of a particular genre. Certain features are more recurrent or pronounced than others and those make that distinct from the style of another form of literature.

In individual style, however, the question of choice, as described before becomes crucial. The choice is conditioned by the grammar of the language, by C(I) and finally by stylistic considerations. And thus the concept of unpredictability becomes important in the study of style, the stylistic choice varies from individual to individual. To study this individuality we have to depend on the linguistic and stylistic level and we need not go into the biography of any particular individual. The biography, however, might be of some help to check the conclusion and at times may give important clue to the study of style. Style, therefore, can be defined now in the light of the method of analysis proposed here.

Style is the unpredictable and individual manner of handling the language of a text and of relating it to the extra-linguistic situations. The literary critic, however, is not interested in a mere description of style, he must judge it. Stylistics provides a method of description and not of evaluation. A unified theory of style has to consider this point seriously and it must incorporate literary criticism as another important component in its framework. A unified theory of style will be possible when the linguistic and stylistic levels can be correlated with the ultimate literary value of a work of literature.

## NOTES

1. The term *stylistic* was first used in literary studies in the nineteenth century. See Ullmann, Stephen, *Style in the French Novel*, Cambridge, 1957, p. 3. '... the first example (of German *stilistik*) recorded by Grimm's dictionary is from Novalis. In English, the noun *stylistic* is found as early as 18461; *stylistics* is first attested in 1882-3 (*OED*). In French, the first example of *stylistique* is from 1872 when Littré included the word in his dictionary.' Stylistics as a discipline, however, emerged in the early twentieth century mainly through the efforts of Charles Bally, a distinguished pupil of De Saussure.
2. *The Rhetoric of Aristotle*, ed. E. H. Cope, Cambridge, 1877, iii, 2. There is an excellent paraphrase of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, Book III, in Cope's *An Introduction to Aristotle's Rhetoric*, 1867, pp. 277-400.
3. Isocrates is supposed to have written a formal *Rhetoric* which is lost. His ideas on the subject are to be found in his educational discourses or essays, *Against*

the *Sophists* (390 B.C.) and *Antidosis* (353 B.C.) and three letters of advice, *To Demonicus* (393 B.C.), *To Nicocles* (374 B.C.) and *Nicocles* (372 B.C.). His views on eloquence as a reflection of character and an outward image of inward virtues of soul (psuches agathes kai pistes eidolon) stated in *Nicocles*, 8, anticipates Longinus' later dictum—hupsos megalophrosunes apechema (*Peri Hupsous*, IX, 2).

4. *ibid.*
5. To gar eu metapherein to to homoion theorein estin, xxii, 17 (for good use of metaphor is detection of resemblance) also euphuia te semeion esti (it is a sign of genius). *Poetics*, xxii, 17
6. *Peri Hupsous*, lx, 2. See, *On the Sublime*, Eng. tr. H. L. Havell, 1890, p, 15.
7. Le style est Thomme meme.
8. Several critics of our times have viewed style as an expression of personality. J. A. Symonds, *Personal style*, *Several Essays* (London, 1929): 'whatever a man utters from his heart and head is the index of his character' (p. 11). B. Dobree, *Modern Prose Style* (London, 1935): 'whenever we read a book, although we do not read it aloud or even consciously . . . , we are aware of a voice. It is as though some one had been speaking to us, telling us something or working upon our feelings. It is this voice which we roughly call style' (p. 3). Manfred Sandman, *Subject and Predicate* (Edinburgh, 1954): "it (the study of style) searches for man behind language" (p. 42). See also more well-known works, for example, W. Raleigh, *Style* London, 1897; J. M. Murray, *The Problem of Style*, Oxford, 1922; Arthur Quiller-Qouch, *The Art of Writing*, Cambridge, 1920; Herbert Read, *English Prose Style*, London, 1946 and F. L. Lucas, *Style*, London, 1955.
9. Lucas, *op. cit.* p. 48.
10. *Aesthetic*, Tr. Douglas Ainslie, London, 19159, p. 53.
11. See Enkvist, N. E. et al. *Linguistics and Style*, London, 1964, pp. 12-15.
12. *Traite de Stylistique Francaise*, Heidelberg, 1921, quoted in *Linguistics and Style*. Translation mine.
13. *Linguistic Structure and Linguistic Analysis* in A. A. Hill ed. Report on the Fourth Annual Round Table Meeting on Linguistics and Language Teaching, Washington, 1953. p. 40
14. Hockett, C.F., *A Course in Modern Linguistics*, New York, 1958, p. 556.
15. I agree with A. A. Hill when he writes, 'it is possible to define the sum total of style as all the choices of equivalent items which the (language offers the users in each linguistic situation' (*Introduction to Linguistic Structures*, New York, 1958, pp. 406(-7) but the nature of the choice is to be specified in each case.
16. Factor analysis is quite common in psychology. Spearman was one of the pioneers in this field. In very simple terms, this theory claims that there is a general factor, symbolized as g, behind each mental ability.
17. *Vectors of Prose Style*, *Style in Language*, ed. T. B. Sebeok, MIT Press 1964, p. 284.
18. See J. J. Jenkins, Commonality of Association as an indicator of more general patterns of verbal behaviour, *Style in Language*, *op. cit.* p. 308.
19. For example, G. U. Yule, *The Statistical Study of Literary Vocabulary* Cambridge,



1944. Alvar Ellegard, *A Statistical Method for Determining Authorship*, Gothenburg Studies in English 13, Gothenburg, 1952, G. Herdan, *Language as Choice and Chance*, Groningen, 1956.
20. Herdan, *op. cit.* p. 12.
  21. *Ibid.*, p. 43.
  22. Hatzfeld, H., *Stylistic Criticism as Art-minded Philology*, Yale French Studies, Vol. II, 1949, pp. 1-9. also see Ullmann. *op. cit.* 28-9.
  23. *Archivum Romanicum*, xii, 1928, pp. 361-472.
  24. *Linguistics and Literary History. Essays in Stylistics*, Princeton, 1948'.
  25. The Stylistic Interpretation of Literary Texts, *Modern Language Notes*, LVII, 1942, pp. 489-96.
  26. While Spitzer starts his analysis from the text, Alonso 'will either work his way from outer form to inner meaning, or follow the reverse route'. Thus his emphasis is even more on intuition of the critic, see Ullmann, *op. cit.* p. 29.
  27. *Theory of Literature*, A Harvest Book, New York, 1956, p. 173.
  28. Language—the basis of Science, Philosophy and Poetry. First appeared in *Studies in Intellectual History*, ed. G. Boas et al., The; John Hopkins Press, 1953. Reprinted in the Bobbs Merrill Reprint series, Language, 85.
  29. *Ibid.* Bobbs Merrill Reprint, p. 87.
  30. Many linguists have emphasized this point. For example, see Robert A. Hall, *Literature, Life and Language*, *Modern Language Journal*, Vol. XLV, March 1965, pp. 124-25. Literary critics are also gradually appreciating the importance of linguistics in the study of style. For example see, Rene Wellek and Austin Warren: *op. cit.* Chap XIV.
  31. *Course in General Linguistics*, Tr. Wade Baskin, London, 1960, p. 72
  32. Several linguists, however, consider the extra-linguistic situation as important for the study of language. Among them the most noted are J. R. Firth and K. L. Pike. See J. R. Firth, *Papers in Linguistics*, London 1957 and K. L. Pike, *Language in Relation to a Unified Theory of the Structure of the Human Behavior*, (Muton), 1967.
  33. 'The statement of meanings is, therefore, the weak point in language study, and will remain so until human knowledge advances very far beyond its present state'. L. Bloomfield, *Language*, London, 1934, p. 140.
  34. B. Malinowski, The Problem of Meaning in Primitive Languages, in C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards, *The Meaning of Meaning*, London, 1952, supplement I. Also Firth, *Personality and Language in Society op. cit.* Categories of Situation as designed by Firth:
    - A. The verbal action of the participants
      1. The verbal action of the participants
      2. The non-verbal action of the participants
    - B. Relevant Objects
    - C. The effect of the verbal action.
  35. Firth's framework is meant for spoken language situations but it can be used in literary language situations also. See, M. A. K. Halliday, *The Language of the Chinese, "Secret History of the Mongols"* Oxford, 1959.
  36. Each of these constituents can have more subtle divisions and their importance can be shown in style analysis. The limitation of space prevent me from going



into detail.

37. *Linguistics and Style*, op. cit. 86-88.
38. McIntosh, Halliday and Strevents, *The Linguistic Sciences and Language Teaching*, London, 1964.
39. See Hill's *Grammaticality* and Chomsky's *Some Methodological Remarks on Generative Grammar*. Both are to be found in H. B. Allen's *Readings in Applied English Linguistics*, New York, 1964.
40. See Francis Berry, *Poet's Grammar*, London. 1958.
41. See Michael Riffaterre, Criteria For Style Analysis, *Word*, 15.1. April 1959. He talks about the dangers of applying linguistic methods to literary facts without a specific stylistic view point. Also Rene Wellek's Closing Statement, *Style*, op. cit. p. 418.
42. Firth uses this term. See *Speech*, London, 1930, pp. 49-54, also *Papers in Linguistics*, op. cit. p. 194. He has invented this term to describe the 'association of sounds and personal and social attitudes'.
43. This expression may not be very clear without a specific example. In Bengali nouns can be classified into two groups: animate and non-animate on the basis of the number of cases they have. The inanimate nouns can be further sub- divided into abstract and non-abstract. The abstract nouns do not take a plural suffix. In poetry, however, abstract nouns take a plural suffix. This will be called a case of *extension* of a grammatical category. The animate nouns do not take -ra as plural marker in N but in poetry they do. Is it a case of *transference* of category since the inanimate nouns behave like animate nouns? It can be interpreted as a personification in rhetoric.
44. *Ibid.*

S. G. TULPULE

## Classical Forms of Marathi Literature



IT is necessary to consider the general background of classical Marathi literature before attempting any enumeration of the forms prevalent in it. The primary motive behind the creation of Marathi literature at least in its earlier stages was to bring into Marathi the vast philosophical and religious lore of Sanskrit and this naturally developed a literary form like the philosophical treatise which remained popular with scholars almost throughout the whole span of classical Marathi literature. It is interesting to observe in this regard that it was almost a rule with the authors belonging to the Mahanubhava cult which has contributed considerably to Marathi literature that whatever was written was to be in Marathi, and nothing in Sanskrit. This kind of motivation along with the sectarian development of literature gave a certain pattern to the classical Marathi literature which is definitely philosophically and religiously based. Of course, Sanskrit did act as the source of inspiration; but Marathi had its own way and developed forms of literature independently of its *alma mater*. Works like Jnanesvari which is a commentary on the *Bhagavadgita*, full of literary grace, or the Gāthā of Tukarama which contains the outpourings of his devotional heart, or the Lāvanis of bards which excel in the expression of the amorous sentiment, or yet again their heroic ballads, are peculiarly Marathi both in their

spirit and in the atmosphere they create. Classical Marathi literature developed mainly at the hands of the followers of different religious sects which fact is chiefly responsible for the limited number of forms it contains. This also explains the general dearth of fiction and its allied forms in the classical Marathi literature. Maharashtra was throughout religiously, even philosophically, minded and whatever taste it had had for the fictitious element was met by the narratives from the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* and the hagiographies of its saints. Even the amorous Lāvani or the love-lyric used to culminate into some philosophical thought.

Another important factor is the medium used by the classical Marathi authors which was mainly poetry and not prose. There are of course some excellent works like the *Lila-charitra* and the various chronicles of national heroes which are in prose; but the main bulk of classical Marathi literature is in the versified form. This fact is also responsible for concentration on certain literary forms. Even the European Jesuit missionaries, whose contribution to Marathi literature is quite considerable, have followed the same pattern and created works which are purely religious in content. Fiction and drama appeared rather late, actually after the establishment of the British rule.

Classical Marathi literature began its career with a philosophical treatise by one Mukundaraja who lived in the twelfth century and his tradition continued right upto the end of the nineteenth century during which period a number of philosophical works on different topics appeared in Marathi. They can broadly be divided into two classes: Independent works, and works of commentatorial nature. The first type is well represented by works like the *Vivekasindhu* of Mukundaraja (1188 A.D.) and the *Dasabodha* of Ramadasa (1650-60 A.D.). The first is a pioneer attempt to present systematically in Marathi the principles of the Vedanta philosophy, while the second is somewhat encyclopaedic in nature, covering a variety of topics ranging from metaphysics to politics. Its author, though a philosopher-saint by nature, was well-versed in worldly matters and his work *Dasabodha* amply reflects his multicoloured intellect. The second type is represented by works like the *Jñanesvari* of Jñanesvara (1290 A.D.) and the *Bhagavata* of Ekanatha (1573 A.D.) to which may be added the *Yatharthadipika* of Vamana Pandit (17th century). The *Jñanesvari* is a commentary par excellence on the *Bhagavadgita*, as the *Yatharthadipika* of Vamana also is; but the former is far superior to the latter, both in poetic grace and in philosophical exposition. Vamana

was an erudite scholar and his work excels in intellectual acrobatics after the Sanskrit Pandits. Jnanesvara, on the other hand, though casually referring to the commentary of Sankara on the *Bhagavadgita*, followed a way all his own and without entering into the hairsplitting intricacies of philosophy he gives us in a nutshell but in an extremely poetical fashion the purport of the *Bhagavadgita* which, according to him, is purely mystical. To quote Ranade, Jnanesvara was not merely one of the greatest saints of Maharashtra, but also certainly one of the greatest interpreters of the *Bhagavadgita* that have ever lived; the most distinguishing feature of his interpretation being his unique combination of philosophy, poetry and mysticism. Jnanesvara is not far removed even in time from the great Vedantic commentators, and his interpretation, which is absolutely mystical, is in a way super-Vedantic. In fact, he laid the foundation of commentatorial composition in Marathi and his example was followed by many among whom the most prominent is Ekanatha of Paithan who has to his credit a simple yet beautiful commentary of the 11th chapter of the *Bhagavata*. Ekanatha writes in a leisurely manner and on many occasions explains the principles of Bhakti and Vedanta treated rather guardedly by his predecessor, the great Jnanesvara.

All of these treatises are in the verse form and do not attempt the Pada-paddhati or the word-to-word method of the Sanskrit commentators. They rather comment in a total manner bringing out the essence of the original work with a number of digressions which give an individuality and literary grace to them. Whether original or of a commentatorial nature, these philosophical works at the hands of saint-poets like Jnanesvara and Ramadasa gave to Marathi literature a serene glory which is all its own.

While the philosophical minds were engaged in treating metaphysical and other problems, the creative mind was at work trying to express itself through narratives borrowed from mythology. This narrative poetry branches itself into two directions: the epical, and the longer narrative. Epical compositions rallied round the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* and we have poets like Muktesvara and Moropant who devoted their lives to the task of rendering into Marathi these two great epics of Sanskrit. Being poets of imagination, however, they were not content with simple rendering, and naturally, therefore, they could build structures of their own which excel in characterization and style. The longer narrative poem, was even more popular and poets ranging from Narendra of the thirteenth century down to Raghunatha Pandit, who belonged to the times of Shivaji,

wrote on different episodes in the lives of Rama, Krishna, Dattatreya and others. The idea of Avatara or incarnation was very popular and there was no dearth of interesting and appealing episodes in the lives of mythological gods. This turned many a reader into narrative poets and we have some masterpieces like the *Rukmini-svayamvara* of Narendra and the *Sisupala-vadha* of Bhaskara, both belonging to the thirteenth century, *Nalopakhyaṇa* of Raghunatha Pandit mentioned above, another *Rukmini-svayamvara* by the veteran poet-saint Ekanatha and many more such compositions by that adept in this art, namely, Vamana Pandit. All of these poets possessed most of the requirements of a successful narrator, namely, the art of narration, ability to characterize and power of expression resulting in good style. Philosophizing, however, did not leave them and barring perhaps a poet or two like Raghunatha Pandit, most of them seem to take pleasure in garbing their narrations with philosophy. An extreme example of this tendency can be seen in the *Rukmini-svayamvara* of Ekanatha which is a sustained metaphor on the unity of the Jiva and the Siva, or the individual and the universal Atman, very skilfully and thoroughly executed. It is this spiritual mind that made different poets compose different narratives on the hackneyed episodes in the lives of Rama and Krishna and inspired Moropant, the last of the scholar-poets, to narrate the same old Ramayana in a hundred and eight different forms.

Thus, though narrative in form, most of these compositions have entered the domain of philosophy with the result that in certain cases they are neither narration nor philosophy. Of course, there are masters like the great Ekanatha, who are born story-tellers and at the same time penetrating thinkers and who, by the combination of these two faculties, have become great poets setting examples for others to follow.

Classical Marathi lyrics can be divided into two types: the devotional and the amorous. The devotional lyric, known as the Abhanga, is a short composition of four to six or eight lines, being mostly personal and bearing the name or the 'mudrikā' of the poet in the last line. The Abhanga literature corresponds closely to the religious Lyrics in English literature. We see the uprise of this kind of literature in the days of Jñanesvara and his contemporaries. The first great writer of note in the Abhanga literature is of course Jñanesvara. The Abhangas are an outpouring of the heart, especially on the matter of the relation of the soul to God, Abhangas are used, no doubt, to reflect on and criticize social customs. But the main

purpose of the Abhanga is to express the innermost feelings of the heart. Namadeva, who came immediately after Jnanesvara, brought the Abhanga to greater perfection still; while Tukarama, who lived in the seventeenth century, was the greatest composer of Abhangas, inasmuch as personal religion reached its acme with Tukarama. The composers of Abhangas ranged from a poet-philosopher like Jnanesvara down to an illiterate untouchable like Chokhā Melā and between themselves these poet-saints have produced such a vast literature of personal devotion that it would be the pride and glory of any nation that it would belong to. It is literally 'A-bhanga', i.e., imperishable or everlasting.

The amorous lyric, known as the Lāvani, flourished towards the end of the eighteenth century when the Maratha rule was fairly established and when people were generally in a happy mood to listen to the amorous outpourings of the young bards. As the Abhanga, so also the Lāvani exhibits all the doubts and the disbeliefs, the weaknesses and the sufferings, the anxieties and the uncertainties, through which one has to pass before coming into the life of light, love and harmony, the only difference being in the nature of the object of love. For the Lāvani depicts the agonies of separation and the bliss of consummation not between the devotee and God, but between two lovers. The scene is usually that of a warrior either proceeding to or returning from the battlefield and the atmosphere is that of Holi or merry-making. The emotion is generally tense and the expression vulgar, at times even indecent. But with all its vulgarity the Lāvani is a form of literature which had an appeal for the masses who in return patronized it. It can therefore fitly be called as literature of, by and for the people which developed at the master-hands like Rama Joshi, Honaji and Prabhakara all of whom were typical representatives of the people. Along with its complementary form, namely, the Povada or the Heroic Ballad, the Lāvani preserves the national memories of Maharashtra. As the late Mr Acworth says, the humble Gondhali or the rustic bard still travels over the plains of the Deccan and still to rapt and excited audiences sings of the great days when the spear of the Maratha triumphed, but which are no more.

The literary biography began in Marathi as collections of memoirs of religious heads and culminated as chronicles of national heroes. Between these two ends come the hagiographies written by persons who were themselves saintly. An early beginning was made in the direction of biography towards the end of the thirteenth century by one Mhaibhatta who was a disciple of Chakradhara, the founder

of the Mahanubhava cult. Mhaibhatta collected and edited about a thousand 'Lilas' or memoirs of his Guru, Shri Chakradhara, under the title *Lila-charitra*, which inspired quite a number of authors to write on the lives and philosophy of their masters. This work was followed by other works like the *Smritisthala* which is an account of Nagadeva, the first Acharya of this cult, and together they narrate not only the life-accounts of its luminaries but also a well-connected story of its early development. It is interesting to note that all of these works have the form of memoirs and are written in biblically simple and effective prose.

Then come the hagiographers headed by Mahipati who is also the greatest of them, both with regard to quality and quantity of his writing. An early beginning was actually made in this direction by the poet-saint Namadeva (13th century) when he wrote the life-and-death-account of his great contemporary, namely, Jnanesvara, in the Abhanga form. But Mahipati (18th century) stands supreme in this field of biography by virtue of his industry, insight and the variety of subjects he has handled. His works are in the 'Ovi' or simple verse form and his understanding of the great minds is perfect as is seen from his style which is at once simple and allusive. Mahipati had the intellectual make-up of a literary researcher which fact explains his repeated attempts at some of his favourite subjects like the great Tukarama whose life he has depicted in places more than one. Hagiographies were written by the Jesuit Missionaries also, the most prominent being the *Christian Parana* by Fr. Thoman Stephence, the first English missionary to visit India. His *Purana*, first published in 1616 A.D. in Goa, is a life-account of Jesus Christ written in Marathi but printed in the Roman script. The work is in the Ovi form, totalling to more than 10,000 verses, and enthused a number of other Jesuits to compose similar Puranas on the lives of Christian saints like St. Peter and others. Together they have enriched not only the Marathi literature but the Christian lore as well.

But as time advanced, saints became rare and Christianity faded into a convenient doctrine. This resulted in a switch-over of the subject of biography from religion to politics and we find towards the end of the 18th century 'Bakhars' or chronicles of either national heroes like Shivaji or politicians like the Peshvas. The Bakhar is a typical literary form in Marathi presenting a unique combination of history and biography. Chitnis's account of Shivaji and Krisnaji Shamrav's story of Bhausahab, the hero of the battle of Panipat, are illustrations in point.



It is interesting to note that drama appeared in Marathi as late as in the last decades of the seventeenth century and that too not in Maharashtra proper, but in a distant province like Tanjore in south India where the Marathas had established a kingdom of their own during that century. It is true, references to the staged drama do occur in the early Marathi works like the *Jñanesvari* and dramas must have been enacted long before they appeared in the literary form. In fact there was a form like the 'Lalita' which was both written and staged. Another classical literary form, namely, the Bharuda, of which the poet-saint Ekanatha was a master, also lent itself for dramatization and even today we see these Bharudas, which are in the form of dramatic monologues, freely enacted on the stage of any rustic fair. Thus, the element of drama was there right from the beginning of the Marathi literature; only it appeared in the regular form of a drama towards the close of the seventeenth century.

These dramas from Tanjore number about twenty-five and are written either by the ruling princes themselves or by their court-poets in the name of their patrons. All these plays are based on various mythological themes and their structure seems to be very loose and even crude. The length of each play varies from six to eight pages and within this small compass are crowded the stage-directions, dialogues and quite a number of songs. These latter owe their existence to the influence of the drama in Tamil which was also responsible for introducing some southern dramatic forms like the 'Kurvanji' into Marathi literature. The 'Kurvanchi' in Tamil dramatizes a Kuruva woman who acts as a fortune-teller to the heroine. These Kurvanchis influenced the Marathi playwrights of Tanjore and they produced similar pieces which are staged even today in that part of the country. Thus, one has to search for the seeds of the modern Marathi drama in a distant place like Tanjore which was the seat of all arts in those days. Except for this seedling of drama, however, classical Marathi literature which is rich otherwise, shows an acute dearth of any dramatic art.

As with drama, so with fiction, classical Marathi literature exhibits scarcity of forms, the only material available being some attempts at the *Panchatantra* from Sanskrit, and some parables narrated by Chakradhara, the founder of the Mahanubhava sect, as Dristantas or illustrations to explain his philosophical dicta. There must have been stories or Kahanis meant for the young or for the women-folk; but unfortunately they were not reduced to writing and remained only as folk-lore which is rich in fictitious narratives. It has



to be admitted, therefore, that neither drama nor fiction occupies any important position in the accepted list of forms in classical Marathi literature.

There are a few other minor forms also present in classical Marathi literature, as for example, the 'Pada' or song, 'Arati' the light-waving invocation, 'Stotra' or the hymn, 'Karunastaka' or the prayer, etc. But these need not be treated separately as most of them come under the general title of lyrics, of course, devotional lyrics. There are still other forms like the 'Tirtha-varnana' or eulogies of the sacred places; but they contain more of hero-worship than of description proper. The 'Sahyadri-varnana' of the Mahanubhava sect, for example, describes and glorifies not the Sahyadri mountain, but the god Dattatreya who lived there.

Thus, three main trends are visible in the literary forms of classical Marathi: (1) Philosophical, (2) Narrative, which covers the biographical, and (3) Lyrical. Classical Marathi excelled in three literary forms, in a way compensating for its dearth in the fields of drama and fiction.

ALOKERANJAN DASGUPTA

## East-West Colloquy and the Problem of Translation



TRADUTTORE traditore (a translator is a traitor)

—Italian Proverb

I don't like the word Orientalism—this is a kind of museum idea that the Orient is a funny old place which you have great specialists studying.

—Arnold Toynbee

Translation, or to put it loosely, adaptation, has been not only one of the most powerful media of communication, but also that of self-exploration. For communication or projection is meaningful when it goes hand in hand with a drive at identification. Sometimes this shock of self-discovery has been so rewarding that a creative work has meant much more in the receptor language than in the original one. Edward Albee, for example, properly scanned the intent of his own play, *The Zoo Story* in German and commented: 'Ever since then, to a certain extent my plays have struck me as making more sense in languages I don't understand than in English'.<sup>1</sup>

This observation has some relevance to one who has attempted to spell out the uniqueness of Indian literature in the East--West context. The initial credit obviously goes to the West for having made a series of attempts in a vigorous way. At the same time it

must be admitted that there was an element of confusion in the very first point of departure and thereafter the real image of Indianness has been blurred, if not totally lost sight of, in the Occident. The process started, in all its earnestness, with a wrong premise, by eminent Indologists like Charles Wiikins and Sir William Jones. Their translations of the *Bhagavatgita* (1785), *Hitopadesha* (1787) and *Sakuntala* (1789) sparked off a genuine interest for Indian literature in the West. This was the moment of choice for the German Orientalists who rather hastily discarded, at least for the time being, the values of the Western world and espoused the cause of India with an extraordinary love and adherence. But the angle they struck was oriented by the necessity of their own survival and transcendence, and therefore, proved only partially tenable in the long run. Their attitude was based on a dichotomy of art and religion and it was the latter that they adhered to with dogged persistence. Friedrich Schlegel's dictum that one should go to Italy and India for art and religion respectively was popular with them. Furthermore, their understanding of Indian literature was obsessed with Fichte's formula that literature is the expression of a religious idea. Herder overlooked the poetic form of *Sakuntala* and emphasized its ennobling tenor:

The Hindus are the gentlest race on earth. They dislike causing pain; they respect all living creatures, drawing their sustenance from milk, rice, fruit and health-giving herbs—the pure, undefiled food which Nature offers.<sup>2</sup> Goethe did take an intense look at the poetical form of *Sakuntala* but immediately switched to its ethical core:

When for the first time I became aware of this work of unfathomable depth, I was filled with great enthusiasm and it attracted me in such a manner that at a time when I had finally finished its reading, it goaded me towards the impossible undertaking of adapting it, even approachingly, for the German theatre. . . . Here the poet seems to be at the height of his talents in representation of the natural order, of the finest mode of life, of the purest moral endeavour, of the most worthy sovereign and: the most sober divine meditation.<sup>3</sup>

It strikes a common reader as somewhat strange that the word 'Nature' in Herder and Goethe is charged with a normative import. Similarly, their interpretation of *Humanität* or Humanism poses a sharp contrast to the meaning attached to it by European Renaissance thinkers. For one thing, the term 'Humanities' was put forward with a studied apathy towards the term 'Divinity'. The enlightened Germans charged the term again with, a divine and moralistic import which they took as Indian. Their reading

was largely accepted by the poet-translators that followed, Edwin Arnold, one of the leading artists among them, scholastically traced the roots of this hankering for maxims, at the expense of literary form, in connexion with *Hitopadesha* to the wise Emperor Akbar and said:

The emperor had also suggested the abridgement of the long series of slokas which here and there interrupt the narrative and the Vizier (Abul Fazal) found the advice sound, and followed it like the present translator. To this day, in India, the *Hitopadesha*. . . retains the delightful attention of young and old and has some representative in all the Indian vernaculars.<sup>4</sup>

This is an obviously gross misrepresentation of fact. *Hitopadesha* minus its diction is nothing but a piece of arid didacticism and it had already lost all its appeal to the contemporary audience referred to by Edwin Arnold who boisterously echoed with a good deal of complacency:

This book of Counsel read, and you shall see  
Fair speech and Sanskrit lore, and policy.

One positive thing, of course, emerged in the process. The study of Indian literature through translation reinforced the genesis of the German Romantic movement. At that time the glowing European enthusiasm for Indian wisdom started petering out. Friedrich Schlegel shifted his interest to Roman Catholicism and European architecture,<sup>6</sup> while Goethe preferred a retrospective passage to Italy. The study of Indology, of course, went unabated, but came to be reduced to a discipline chiefly devoted to studies in museum specimens.

The other side of the picture was not all that perplexing. Tagore took a cue from Herder and Goethe and stressed the texture of Indian poetry as well, while dwelling on the excellence of *Sakuntala*. Tagore's major-minor predecessors, like Rangalal Bandyopadhyay, Hemchandra Bandyopadhyay and Nabinchandra Sen, let alone the great Michael Madhusudan Datta, found their idiom and idea from German and English Romantic poetry. 'Time and again', Walter Raleigh observed, 'in the world's history, where East meets West, the spirit of Romance is born'.<sup>7</sup> This applied adequately to the most of our nineteenth century poets who transformed almost the whole gamut of the English Romantic Revival to patriotic poetry. It is a fact that our poetry of national emancipation, if any, derives from the poesy of the European masters like Goethe, Schiller, Scott, Byron and Moore. It was Colonel Tod's *Annals and Antiquities of*

*Rajasthan* that provided poets and playwrights of the last century with a tremendous urge for writing patriotic stuff. Gradually came a point when this was no more tinged with extraneous 'nationalistic' tendency. Rabindranath Tagore used the same materials to write his *Rajkahini* (The tales of the kings), an unparalleled prose saga permeated with pure romantic and symbolical spirit. One feature, furthermore, of this new inspiration is that our artists have often chosen insignificant Western authors to achieve their objective of magnifying their artistic potency. Rabindranath has re-done some of the stuff by Edmond Rostand and Selma Lagerlof in Bengali. These adaptations are regrown from their rather insipid original seeds. This proves that our problem of translation has been one of identity, or a deep mode of experience which has not waned since the beginning of the serious gropings for it.

As early as 1878 Haraprasad Sastri, an Indian Indologist of the first order, noticed, 'Shakespeare is the author that the Bengalis read most.' This is not only a Bengali phenomenon, but an Indian one too. A select Bibliography made in 1964 on Indian versions of Shakespeare puts the figure at 670.<sup>8</sup> Some of these renderings read funny because of the lack of preparedness in the diction of the receptor tongue and some are even repulsive because they Indianize Shakespeare. W. B. Yeats, with his pronounced indifference to Shakespeare, turned to the East and maintained, 'The East has its solution and therefore it knows nothing of tragedy'.<sup>9</sup> In a Marathi version we find that the translator has gone so far as to transmute a Shakespearean tragedy into an Oriental comedy. In many a Bengali version we notice that Shakespearean irony has lost all its edge and has been deliberately softened down to humour. Despite all this business of strange wish-fulfilment, the modern Indian drama has immensely benefited through these renderings. The Indian poetic drama, for that matter, owes its origin to Shakespeare.

If we compare this with the expected impact of Tagore on the West, nothing remains for us but a residue of self-pity. A survey done in the Tagore centenary year shows this awkward fact glaringly. A list of translation from Tagore's works into European and Slavonic languages totals the figure at 531.<sup>10</sup> On a closer observation one discovers that the selective criterion in most of these cases was to project Tagore the teacher and not Tagore, the artist. For this Tagore himself should be deemed responsible, because, being influenced by the Orientalists referred to before, he thrust this image of his in all his European excursions. Ezra Pound did not entirely miss the

musical genius of Tagore. But I have come across only two of these translations, namely those used by Arnold Bake and Alden Carpenter in 1935 and 1942 respectively, which took into account the musical factor of Tagore's poetry. The rest are didactically chosen, casually rendered. Tagore himself abridged most of his stuff in English. His lack of aesthetic diffidence in this matter is simply astounding. Besides, the charge labelled upon the corpora of world literature in Indian translation 'that they have been done via English, is equally and unfortunately, true of Tagore literature available in European languages. The nearly representative translation of Tagore's *Sheser Kavita* (The last poem) in German is in fact from English (aus dem englischen uberzeizi, as the translator confesses) bearing the remote title 'Lebwoh, main Freunc' which literally means 'Live well, my friend!' This is one of the reasons why Tagore's once-honoured image has been severely bruised in the West. It was at one peak point in 1921 that Tagore addressed an audience at Darmstadt, 'When Count Keyserling wanted to translate his words, the whole crowd cried out: Don't translate, we have understood everything'.<sup>11</sup> The very next point shows the crazy curve on the wane. Before the wane set in, Paul Klee, the painter, summarily dismissed Tagore, the poet by a one-line comment: 'Tagore is not very heavy reading',<sup>12</sup> Claudel, the poet, rebuked Andre Gide, the novelist, for having wrongly been fascinated by Tagore, and laconically commented: 'What I read of him is rather disgusting'.

These reactions adequately substantiate that Tagore's works have been translated mostly with an ideational bias without slightest regard to the formal attributes. But what is idea without form in literature? If we accept the verdict of the anti-translation school that any piece of translation whatsoever is, because of the lingual bar, already removed from the original, then it has to be recognized that Tagore's Western versions are twice so removed. First, they have been done in a hurry to convey the relevant message that temporarily healed, to an extent, the nervous uneasiness, if not disease, of the pre-Second World War Europe. Secondly, and accordingly, the form was adjusted to that message. When the passion to be cured subsided, and moreover the psychic ailment was taken for granted, the physician was allowed to walk out on them. But the fact remains that the physician himself felt uneasy at times and particularly in the last decade of his career he gave us some gems of his troubled psyche. Rendered in a friendly spirit, these could again enhance his position in the Occident. Whatever may be the future prospects, Tagore in the

West has repeated the fallacy celebrated by the Western Indologists, i.e., the fallacy of treating an Indian poet not on the literary ground.

A section of Western critics have attempted to popularize Tagore's cause by labelling some European brand which was not there. For example, his plays are still branded as 'rather Maeterlinckian'.<sup>13</sup> Here the critics are far from meaning any kind of damage, although actually it amounts to a harm. Tagore's symbolism had nothing to do, barring accidental resemblances, with Maeterlinck. But this tendency of branding proves that the West has offered its terms to us so that we could fit in its frame. In accordance with this expectation, two schools of Indian scholars-cum-writers have desperately attempted to bring our heritage close to the Western terms. This can be shown by excerpts from two illustrious translations of the *Swapna Vasavadatta* attributed to Bhasa. While doing it in English, an Indologist claims: A play like the *Swapna Vasavadatta*, it may be said without fear of contradiction, is the glorious heritage of the whole civilized world . . . the romance of Udayana and Vasavadatta was at one time as popular a theme of fiction in India as those of Tristan and Isolde, Romeo and Juliet, and Paolo and Francesca in the West.<sup>14</sup> The prelude of the play starts with the ambiguous prayer of the stage-director:

May the arms of Baladeva protect thee,—the arms which are of the colour of the new-risen moon, languid from the effects of wine, resplendent with manifest beauty, thrilled with the joy of spring.<sup>13</sup>

The editor, finding this rendering verbose, apologetically adds in the ex-planatory note:

This stanza combines a benediction with a word-play on the names of the four dramatis personae: Udayana, Vasavadatta, Padma-vati, and Vasantataka. Its meaning is obscure, but is immaterial to the context.<sup>16</sup>

To be frank, this submission is not convincing. The portion is very much of a key-statement as regards the main direction of interest of the play. The editor deems it 'immaterial to the context', which it is not. But this contention has been held with an eye on the western reader who might think this reference esoteric, and, therefore, unnecessary. P. Lal, one of the top-ranking poets of the group of Indian writers in English, seems to agree with him on this point, and takes a refreshing plunge in the play, skipping this portion altogether.<sup>17</sup> Judging by the course of action of the play, which is causally thought out by Bhasa step by step, one could safely call this a grave omission. This is a representative case of our yielding to the



western terms. Sri Lai would call it 'transcreation', a term coined by T. S. Eliot, which is slackened here to omit what is to be omitted, or retained, in conformity with the occidental taste.

With due apology, one is impelled to lay a substantial load of blame on the school of Indian writers in English. An anthology, recently published, announces its Indian credo and covers an exhaustive list of names ranging from Sri Aurobindo and Sarojini Naidu to Dom Moraes and Pritish Nandy. But its apparent commitment to Indianness loses its meaning when we listen to one of its spokesmen:

I am an Indian writing in English. . . I write in English because there is always a consistency between a particular ethos and the language it produces. The Indian ethos is alien to me and so are the languages which express it.<sup>18</sup>

No comment is needed here. Anyone acquainted with the background of Indian literature can assess whether it is Indian in any sense of the term. One inference is quite obvious that this sort of gesture confuses the image of Indian literature here and elsewhere.

We have to confront the fact that there is a factor, which could be termed 'temperamental' and to elude it would be a sure case of betrayal to the cause of Indian literature. This can be amplified by a much abused example. One, we have to take into account also the scale of associations that has stayed with us from the emanation of the Oriental culture. It may look smart, but tends to be risky, to sacrifice this imagery to the exigencies of the modern European apparatus. Take, for instance, the frequently used moon-image in Indian poetry, classical and modern alike. It should not be preconceived that the mere mention of this image in literature would amount to a romantic cliché. The synonyms for moon in Indian languages are euphonious and varied. The moon in German is masculine (*der mond*), and yet abandoned in modern literature, while it may suggest inexhaustible resources of masculine and female associations even to a modern Indian reader. For instance, Manik Bandyopadhyaya has used it and charged the same with an eerie sensation at the denouement of his short story 'Prehistoric':

Panchi put her arms around Bhiku's neck and clung to his back. Bending forward under her weight, Bhikhu stepped on briskly.

A half-moon arose from behind the trees and touched the paddy fields with a faint grey light. On God's earth there was profound quiet.<sup>19</sup>

The author, a thorough anti-romantic in his literary stance, implies the contrary meaning by a prevalent set of love-nature

imagery here. The modern sensibility is there, but not in a showy way.

The translator, in view of this, should not delocalize what is typically indigenous, by way of dropping the local terms (names of places, birds, flowers, herbs and so on) or transplanting them to their Latin equivalents. T. W. Clark and Tarapada Mukherji have taken note of this feature in their commendable rendering of *Pather Panchali* by Bibhutibhusan Bandyopadhyay.<sup>20</sup> The French rendering by Madam France Bhattacharya also deserves special mention.<sup>21</sup> Indian literature, from its very beginning, has handed down a literary legacy which juxtaposes the secular and the spiritual, the folk and the sophisticated, the personal and the desubjectivized. Yet this variety is held together by a sense of reverence for what has been profoundly experienced. Coming back to the moon-scape-motif here we present three illustrations from three distinctively different phases:

1. Your right eye is the sun  
opening out the day  
Your left eye is the moon  
unfolding the night  
Your third eye is a lotus  
scenting the golden evening  
with twilight.<sup>22</sup>
2. the moon seen in the water  
is neither false nor true  
even what is around me  
I cannot understand,<sup>23</sup>
3. Mohin's horses have not returned to Mohin's home,  
They are grazing beside the zebras. Twenty-two zebras.  
And the horses arc swaying the dark frenzied sea.  
Like the ring of fate, those horse-zebras  
Like enchanted ghosts in the moonlit night  
They graze, talk, but who really knows anything?  
They will never return to men, true.  
And many other secrets dawn, I can't express.  
Twenty-two zebras—are they really zebras, couldn't  
they be 'Mayurpankhi' in the ghostly sea-like moonlight?  
The dwarf's sorrow is being rowed, is that a coconut tree?  
Are those gliding images which will leap and go  
Are those Mohin's horses? Are those not our zebras?  
—Near the supernatural, all our forms dissolve.<sup>24</sup>

The first poem is by Sankaracharya, a staunch Monist. The second one is by Kanha, a poet of the Sahajiya Buddhistic order. The third poem, a modern one, is by a non-believer poet, Sakti Chattopadhyay. Each poet uses the moonscape as a literary, though varied, device. Despite the gaping gulf of time between the dates of their composition, a unifying trend of Indianness runs through them, which is a tapestry of elemental innocence and stylized attitude towards life. To overlook or to blur this texture would definitely mean something anti-Indian or pseudo-Indian. It would not be difficult enough to prune the details to appease the western reader, which would not lead us anywhere.

That as yet there stands a deafening barrier of communication has been admitted by serious scholars in the field of international understanding. Raghavan Iyer calls it a 'glass curtain' between the East and the West, while William Auld mentions it as a 'translation curtain'. Auld, quotes from 'The Unesco Courier' to point out that this basically stems from the hitherto exclusive attitude of the West towards the East.:

'How many publishers in England or the United States (or France, or Germany, or any of the other big book-publishing countries, for that matter) have three professional readers of Punjabi to report on manuscripts in this language, or even one such reader? Obviously very few indeed. Unesco's annual publication, *Index Translationum* shows. that of the 21, 667 translations published throughout the world in 1954, 7,498 were from English. 3,874 from Russian, 2,870 from French—and none from Punjabi.

'And yet, as is true of many languages of India and indeed many of the world's so-called languages of diffusion, the Punjabi tongue has a literature which can add enrichment to the world's common culture and thus merits translation into the more widely spoken languages.'<sup>25</sup>

Attempts since then, have been made to effect a break through to do away with the translation curtain, but still they have not gathered the requisite momentum. The fulfilment of this programme will be feasible only when a consensus regarding the common terms of reference will emerge. The western neighbour will have to renew the game with his Indian collaborator, and not with an interpreter, as E. B. Havell would have put it. But, till then, the attempts from the Indian side should not cease in the interim. For one thing, translation from Indian literature into European languages, howsoever haphazardly done, will help us to define the specific area of Indian literature, its drawbacks and its positive virtues. This being

a creative enterprise, would gain more and more experiences from its Western counterpart, with an ever enlarging heritage that is Indian !

## NOTES

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4. Edwin Arnold, *Indian Poetry*, London, 1881, preface to Hitopadesha.
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7. *The English Novel*, p. 1.
8. The language-wise break-up of the entires is as follows: Assamese 15 | Bengali 128 | Gujarati 34 | Hindi 70 | Kannada 66 | Malayalam 40 | Marathi 97 | Oriya 7 | Panjabi 13 | Sanskrit 7 | Tamil 83 | Telugu 62 | Urdu 48.
9. Letters on Poetry from W. B. Yeats to Dorothy Wellesly. London, 1964.
10. Language-wise break-up is as follows: Armenian 2 | Azerbaizanian 3 | Bashkirian 1 | Bulgarian 6 | Byelo-Russian 1 | Czech 271 | Danish 9 | Dutch 18 | English 98 | Esperanto 1 | Estorian 3 | Finnish 8 | French 341 | Georgian 2 | German 441 | Greek 8 | Hebrew 18 | Hungarian 19 | Italian 291 | Karkalpak 1 | Kajaks 1 | Kirghiz | Letuan 14 | Moldavian 1 | Norweigan 2 | Polish 2 | Portuguese 71 | Rumanian 141 | Russian 371 | Serbo-croatian 6 | Slovak 2 | Slove 8 | Spanish 46 | Swedish 19 | Tadjik 3 | Tartar 1 | Turkish 12 | Turkmenia 1 | Uzbek 2 | Yiddish 1.
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23. Kanha–Sahaja Buddhistic poem [ about X-XII centuries A.D] tr. Roland Hindmarsh and Alokeranjan Dasgupta. *Brahma and Grass*, p. 38.
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SISIR KUMAR DAS

## Language and Literature



THE TASK of a linguist and of a literary critic is to talk about a language. The linguist finds the 'whole' language as his corpus of study while the critic concentrates on a special kind of language that constitutes a literary work. And each has to distinguish between his object of study and his terminology—both of which are *language*. The similarity in their tasks ends here. Their purpose is different and methods are unrelated to each other. Linguistics and literary studies for the last two centuries have followed different lines of growth; they have responded to new social and psychological researches in different manner, employed different methodologies and used terminologies which are not mutually understandable. They are different disciplines in their own right.

In the beginning, however, linguistics, or it is better to use the term *philology*, and literary studies were inseparable. The study of literature was essentially a part of the investigation of language and its relation to the physical world. The student of language—whether he is an etymologist, or a lexicographer, or a grammarian or a rhetorician could not be indifferent to literature. The controversy amongst the Greeks about the nature of language—whether words have meanings only by convention (*thesei*) or they have a natural meaning (*physei*) made an impact on all the great scholars of Greece. Aristotle's *Poetics*, the most influential work on western literary criticism, is but a

derivation from his linguistic thought. Aristotle's description of *logos*, in contrast to *onoma* and *rhemata*, is not proposition which can be either false or true but a special kind of speech to be dealt with in rhetoric or in poetry. This concept did not originate independently of the study of language or the nature of language. The study of style, the most favourite topic amongst the ancient Greeks and Romans, is another example of the close relationship between the study of language and literature. Chapter XX of the *Poetics*, though its authorship has been disputed by some, uses certain units of description which fit in with modern terminologies, phonological, lexical, morphological and stylistic. Demetrius, in his *Peri Erneneias* (On Expression/Style) finds linguistic categories no less important than the rhetorical categories. The controversy between *thesei* and *Physeis* centred round isolated words but when the scholars in Alexandria started studying ancient Greek literature it sparked off again. The study of literature brought this old question again into focus. It raised two questions : one, the nature of the universe, and another, how the workings of nature are manifested in language. One group found there, were no laws or regularities in nature, the other group, the Alexandrians, found the universe regulated by laws. The Alexandrians constructed the *kanones*, the list of regularities in the Greek language and the controversy between *analogy* and *anomaly* culminated in the writing of a grammar by Dionysius Thrax (100 B.C.). This grammar was translated into Latin as the *Ars Grammatica* by Remmius Palaemon in the first century A.D. and served as a model for all grammars in European languages till very recent times. The ancient grammarians collected their material in most of the cases from literature because probably it enjoyed certain prestige and in western culture (as it is now in our culture) it was probably believed that written language was a 'better' language than the spoken language. So literature supplied material for grammatical studies. It is no wonder then that a number of Sapho's lyrics were discovered from grammars.

Grammatical studies, on the other hand, influenced literary studies. They made it possible to understand the proper meaning of older texts in several languages and to appreciate their literary quality. It has been possible to study ancient texts, to decipher, to edit and to arrange them. Who can read his Chaucer, not to speak of Homer, without help from philological research? In fact, literary study has emerged as a discipline only because of the very substantial aid it received from philology. Till the nineteenth century the



philologist was interested in both language and literature. Since the nineteenth century, language has become the primary concern of linguists who could no more devote their time and attention to literature. While many literary critics are aware of the great debt of literary studies to linguistic studies many consider linguistic investigations as unedifying if not disdainful. Their primary interest is in the aesthetic pleasure, the *rasa* and they find in a philologist a dull man deaf to aesthetic values. The popular image of a philologist is an expression of disapproval of linguistic investigation in literary studies. In Europe a Croce sees the importance of such work, and a Browning writes,

So, with throttling hands of death at strife  
     Ground he at grammar;  
 Still, though the rattle, parts of speech were rife;  
     While he could stammer  
 He settled *hoti's* business—let it be  
     Properly based *oun*—  
 Gave us the doctrine of the enclitic *De*  
     Dead from the waist down.  
 Well, here's the platform, here's the proper place :

But in India, the land of Panini, such a scholar would be known as an *arasika*. I am not really worried about the popular image of a literary scholar or a linguist in our country—be he Browning's Grammarian or Professor Higgins of *My Fair Lady*, if not of *Pygmalion*—the image has grown from ignorance and indifference. While it has been widely acknowledged all the world over that language teaching can be most effectively done through the help of applied linguistics, in India, it is believed that any educated native speaker is capable of teaching his language at any level. The teaching of English as well as the modern Indian languages in India is so poor because our teachers do not know how linguistics could be helpful and effective in our study of language and literature. Seymour B. Chatman has ably shown in his paper *Linguistics and Teaching Introductory Literature* (*Applied English Linguistics*, H. B. Allen ed., New York, 1964) how a knowledge of it can be helpful in explaining the difference between the everyday language and the language of literature which is infinitely more subtle in lexical distinction and more complex in structure. Linguistics can be usefully employed in teaching language, studying old texts/analysing style and metre and also in our understanding of

the nature of language which no critic can afford to ignore.

The neo-grammarians of the last century brought a revolution in the methodology of linguistic studies. Darwin's theory of evolution offered them a model of organism developing and changing: they viewed language like a natural phenomenon subject to laws of growth and decay. And also Newtonian physics provided them with a model of closed system where nothing could operate without a law. The neo-grammarians with their laws of sound-shift and their notions about analogy developed a discipline which, they thought, should rank among the natural sciences. Their approach was naturally to treat language as a constantly changing phenomenon. Historical linguistics, as it is well known, made a tremendous contribution towards our understanding of older literatures. The neo-grammarians' greatest feat was their ability to construct the sound system of the earlier stage of a group of related languages. Today one can talk about the pronunciation system at the time of Chaucer or Shakespeare with greater competence and precision and thus it has made a historical study of prosody possible.

Linguistic studies took a sharp turn towards the beginning of this century when De Saussure, who was fascinated by Emile Durkheim's *Rules of Sociological Method*, emphasized the synchronic study of language. He observed that languages change and yet it is possible to study it as a stable system where the consideration of past and future could be eliminated. He found *la langue*, which is a 'social product of the faculty of language and an ensemble of the necessary conventions adopted by the social body to permit the exercise of that faculty', and forms a corpus of such study. It is inherited from the past and 'at every moment solidarity with the past checks freedom of choice' and on the other hand, 'time, which insures the continuity of language, wields another influence apparently contradictory to the first: the more or less rapid change of linguistic signs. In a certain sense, therefore, we can speak of both the immutability and mutability of the sign'. And this necessitates the study of language both synchronically as well as diachronically, though a diachronic study pre-supposes a synchronic description. De Saussure's conception of language as structure forms the basis of structuralists, who gained further insights from psychology, as in the case of Bloomfield, or from anthropology, as in the case of Boas and Sapir.

The structuralist view of language has shattered several traditional thoughts—mainly the mentalistic position of language,

the search for a universal 'parts of speech', the notions of 'advanced' or 'primitive language', notions of 'correctness' in terms of historical reason or due to imposition of grammatical system of a 'superior' language on another language. Naturally, the structuralists became targets of attacks not only from the old generation of philologists, but from language teachers and literary scholars of their generation. Nida in his delightful book *Linguistic Inter-ludes* (California, 1947) has put some of the objections in the mouth of Dr Zilach who thought modern linguistics was a wastage of time since it deals with aboriginal languages which have no script, no literature, not a Shakespeare. In the long run reason has dawned on Dr Zilach of Europe and America, In the words of Hockett, in the years around 1940 the battle to render descriptivism respectable has been won. It has become safe to politely ignore the protests of a few disgruntled but feeble oldsters; (*The State of Art*, Moulton, 1968). Bloomfield, the real founder of modern structural linguistics, established the new discipline on a firm basis. He insists that language is one of the physical behaviours and thus rejects the *mentalist* approach to language which believes in 'the interference of some non-physical factor, a *spirit* or *will* or mind' and found the *mechanistic* approach superior because it 'supposes that the variability of human conduct, including speech, is due only to the fact that the human body is a very complex system'. (Language, 1933) Secondly, Bloomfield maintained that scientific analysis of language should be based on formal criteria and it is neither desirable nor necessary to resort to the criteria of criteria of meaning. The accusation that linguists are not interested in meaning is, however, not true. Since Bloomfield there has been several advances in linguistics. The tools of analysis have become more refined and our knowledge about the nature and functions of language teaching has been extremely successful. Several other disciplines such as anthropology, psychology have also found in it a useful tool. The literary scholar, however, is still doubtful about help to the study of old literature but structural description is yet to find its place in literary scholarship.

Sapir says that language forms can be studied for its own sake and that meaning must be considered since the whole purpose of language is to communicate meaning. The literary scholar cannot be happy with the scientific study of the linguistic system without a literary purpose. He cannot appreciate a work of literature without going into the problems of meaning and the problem of meaning are interrelated with the real world. He would find support from

Sapir when he writes “The world of linguistic forms held within the frame work of a given language is a complete system of reference, very much as a number system is a complete system of a quantitative reference or as a set of geometrical axes of co-ordinates is a complete system of reference to all points of a given space.” (Selected writings of Edward Sapir, ed. D.G. Mandelbaum, Berkeley, 1949). In fact a literary scholar has as much to gain, if not more from the method of modern linguistic analysis. I will try to show how the methods of linguistic description can be useful in certain fields of literary studies and can ultimately show how linguistics can throw light on the nature of language.

In recent years, specifically after the publication of Trager and Smith’s *An Outline of English Structure* (Washington, 1952) several American linguists have shown interest in the study of metre. Rene Wellek and Austin Warren emphasized very strongly the function of sound structure in literary art and asserted the dependence of the study of metre on phonological studies. Literary critics talk of euphony and rhythm not always in clear term. And metre though studied through the centuries, is often dependent on the subjective criteria, Wellek and Austin even have charged that Saintsbury’s *History of English prosody* is based on ‘Completely undefined and vague theoretical foundations’. They have examined three different metrical theories current in the western world—the graphic, the musical and the acoustic. The graphic theory attempt ‘which the poet is assumed to observe exactly’. It can only tell us whether the poet has observed the pattern but cannot account for the different forms of metre, nor can it explain the change in metre. The musical theory assumes that ‘metre in poetry is analogous to rhythm in music and thus best represented by musical notation’. It stresses the tendency of verse towards subjectively felt isochronism. This theory, however, is inadequate for certain types of verses which are not isochronic. The acoustic theory depends entirely on instruments. It can very well distinguish pitch, loudness, stress and junctures but does not care for meaning at all. It treats verse as a continuum of sounds without meaning and therefore it does not worry about word or phrase boundary. This has been criticised by many including Wellek and Warren who write ‘if we ignore meaning, we give up the concept of word and phrase and thus give up the possibility of analysing the differences between the verse of different authors.’

Smith and Trager’s analysis of English sound system gave an opportunity to the linguists to explore the metrical system of the

English language. Harold Whitehall in his criticism of the book (*From Linguistics to Criticism, The Kenyon Review*, XVIII, iii, 1956) wrote that ‘the interconnections between stress, pitch and transition analysed so carefully in the *outline* allow us to envisage for the first time a really objective and fully descriptive English metre, with a vertical as well as a horizontal dimension’. Whitehall in this paper, and both Hill and Whitehall in another paper (a Report on the Language-Literature Seminar, H. B. Allen, ed. *Applied English linguistics*) demonstrate how stress, terminal junctures and the feature of isochronism noticed by Pike can be helpful in the analysis of English metre. The types of verses can be several. There is the simple *syllabic* type (for example, the Hungarian Folk poems), the quantitative verse (as in Sanskrit, Greek and Latin), the isotonic verse (as in Chinese) which depend on the position of tones, the isochronic as in English and isosyntactic as in free verse. Probably this completes the inventory of prosodic types known to us. Whatever type of metre is accepted in a language it is conditioned by the phonological system of that language. The only point is that one has to consider which linguistic facts are relevant to metrical studies in a given language. While Smith and Trager distinguish four stresses in English—loud, secondary, tertiary and weak—metrically only two stresses are relevant. That is to say, every feature of the poem sound is not a metrical feature. And there is no universal feature in metre at least to our knowledge. I am not suggesting that only phonological analysis will be able to solve all problems of metrics and in fact the linguistic approach has been criticised by the students of classical prosody. What I want to emphasize is that a proper metrical study without linguistics is not possible. Phonology alone can provide us with a frame-work for historical and comparative metrics. The poet has to work within the existing system of a language, he may deviate from metrical norm and innovate new metrical patterns but he has to do it, without violating the rules of the language. This rules out the possibility of metrical borrowing from one language to another. In Bengali, for example, there have been attempts to write quantitative verse. Either that is impossible and not acceptable, or one has to recognize a phonological system in Bengali which has been super-imposed by metrical patterns. Similarly languages where we can establish a phenomenon of diglossia, and I think Bengali is one of them, where you have two styles of prose writing. Is it possible to notice any interference between these two systems in metrical patterns? Prosodists in our country, I think, have followed a rather mechanical approach to

metrical analysis, which is the graphic pattern as described by Wellek and Warren. It is not possible, for example, to describe the free-verse within their framework. What is the difference between prose, and prose-poems? Is it the manner of reading? the intonation? the isosyntactic features? or the typographical arrangement? How to describe the rhythm of prose? And how to differentiate between ordinary prose and rhythmic prose? Prosodists with their classical frame-work cannot answer these questions at all. To give a specific example, let us take Bengali. Prosodists talk about two types of metrical patterns, both non-syllabic—in one type the distinction between a closed syllable and an open syllable is neutralized but in another type the quantitative value of a closed syllable is twice that of an open syllable. There are several cases in a verse when one cannot tell the specific pattern of the metre if it is written entirely with open syllables. Such cases are rare no doubt but a metrical theory should be considered inadequate unless it can account for such a case. One might like to know how the metre of such verses is to be determined. There might be other significant features : may be either linguistic or paralinguistic. Whatever that may be the metrical theory must provide an answer to such problems. And these are the regions where a close relationship between linguistics and literary criticism can shed much light.

Another such phenomenon where linguistics can be helpful to literary criticism is style. In recent years much work has been done on style where linguistic methods have been successfully used. It is also refreshing to notice that linguists are becoming more conscious of this. Gleason's *Linguistics and English Grammar*, (New York, 1965), Paul L. Garvin's edition of *A Prague School Reader on Esthetics, Literary Structure, and Style* (1964) and *Style in Language* (1960) edited by Thomas E. Sebeok are examples of growing interest by linguists in literature. I have already stressed the necessity for a unified theory of style which should incorporate the insights of linguistics, semantics, and literature to understand and appreciate style. Here I would concentrate on a few selected features of literary languages where a contact between linguistics and literature would be useful. Many literary critics have used certain criteria, such as clarity, brevity, ambiguity, etc., in their evaluation of styles. Certainly clarity depends on the meaning of the text but it is also related to the language construction, Carnap formulated the condition of clarity in very simple words : 'We must become clear as to what is the subject of our talking and thinking'. It is so commonplace and



accepted by all that it seems it has no value. Carnap's point was a logician's point. He found that in language certain expressions are cognitive in function and certain others have an expressive function. Clarity suffers when 'sentences are uttered which are taken to assert something, although in fact nothing is asserted, whether truly or falsely' (The Condition of Clarity, *The Language of Wisdom and Folly*, ed. Irving J. Lee, New York, 1949). I do not know whether that is also a source of non-clarity in non-logical language. But the main source of that is in the construction of sentences. It is the arrangement of words, clauses and phrases, embedding sentences within sentence, and the device of joining or shunting the clauses that give a speciality in certain style, Ullmann's study of *Style in French Novel* (Cambridge, 1957) devotes three chapters on reported speech in Flaubert, sentence-structure in the Goncourts and word-order as a device of style. And clarity of a text depends on these devices. Similarly the question of brevity can be better appreciated from the concept of redundancy in language. The *redundancy* in linguistics is a measure of excess of linguistic signals above the minimum sufficient to carry information. In a system where all elements would be constituent of the total message the redundancy would be nil. In natural languages we always have redundancy. In literature as in our every day discourse this is defined as saying something more than once. As redundancy is necessary to make the communication possible it may be equally necessary in literature. Language of love and language of devotion are essentially tautologous but tautology is not necessarily undesirable. The content puts restriction on different structures and helps to produce redundancy. Language of literature is always redundant and in certain forms the language is deliberately repetitive. Brevity, therefore, in literature is to be understood from these standards.

Ambiguity is another problem which has been widely discussed by the semiologists and philosophers. We all notice that sentences can be ambiguous in our everyday discourse as well as in literature. Is it due to the fault of the speaker or the hearer or of both? Is it inherent in the language itself? Or is it due to wrong manipulation of the grammatical rules of a language? Ambiguity, like redundancy, is another characteristic of language. I am not referring to the 'seven types of ambiguity', so elaborately discussed by William Empson (London 1956) but speaking only about those which come through linguistic structures. The ambiguities occur at the level of vocabulary which takes one to the problem of synonyms, polysemes and homonyms; and also at the level of syntax (classic



examples are *old men and women*, flying planes can be dangerous, etc.). For the resolution of linguistic ambiguities one has to resort to linguistic as well as paralinguistic criteria. The deep structure and surface structure grammars are powerful devices of analysing such sentences which can be interpreted differently. A grammatically ambiguous sentence is a sentence where the strings of linguistic elements at the surface structure have more than one different order at the deep structure. In literature ambiguity can be used and is used as a device as redundancy is exploited for literary effect. The rules of transformation by which we explain the syntax of everyday language cannot explain all constructions in a literary work, particularly in poetic language. The syntax of poetry or the poetic syntax is a deliberate deviation from the normal syntax. Like redundancy and ambiguity which are characteristics of natural language the syntax, too, plays a part in building up poetic effect. Mr Donald Davie (*Articulate Energy*, London, 1955) has shown how syntax itself can be a source of poetic pleasure. Whether or not one agrees with his fivefold classification of poetic syntax as subjective, dramatic, objective, syntax like music and syntax like mathematics, is a different matter. But syntax gives one a powerful device of distinguishing not only style but also poetry of one period from another. Mr Davie finds 'what is common to all modern poetry is the assertion or the assumption (most often the latter) that syntax in poetry is wholly different from syntax as understood by logicians and grammarians', (p. 148). The syntax as understood by logicians is always different from that of grammarians. The poetic syntax is not different from the syntax as understood by grammarians since grammarians do not have a preconceived notion of syntax. Syntactical rules differ from one language to another and it is not possible to talk about a universal syntax. And any grammatical theory of a language must account for the total linguistic data. The poetical syntax may be different from the non-poetical syntax but it is still accountable by the grammatical theory of a given language. Unlike ordinary language which is a means of expression where syntax is to some extent neutral in literary language it does not remain as a mere means but it becomes a constituent which gives a literary work a particular form. This literature is based on language but it is not identical with the language but builds up a new structure on the language. In oral literature one would notice that the texture of that structure changes with the change of the language. There is replacement of words, grammatical forms and syntactic pattern to

keep pace with the change of time which changes the language. After the invention of writing, literature in many communities has become fixed and thus the modern emphasis is more on the individual style or language or treatment of the theme than on the theme or the commonness of a structure.

One question may be asked at this point: Since literature manipulates language and builds a super-structure on it, is it possible then to say that a language is also influenced by literature? The answer is *no*. The great writers, we are told, give new direction to their languages. Such statements probably mean that a writer introduces new words in a language. But a writer introduces new words within the framework of the phonological system of a particular language. An addition in vocabulary does not bring a change in the linguistic system. Even syntactic innovations do not bring any fundamental change in the language but in a particular style of the language. If modern poetry is different from non-modern poetry in its syntax, it does not mean that it is going to play any role in the changing of the general syntax of the language—it is simply exploiting the syntactic possibilities of the language. In fact at the linguistic level a writer is completely imprisoned by language. In every age a writer has to struggle with the language and his strategy in this struggle, to overcome the limitations that language sets for him, makes him either a modern or a conventional author.

If it is the writer's problem *how to work* within the limitations of his language, the critic's problem is to find out *how he works* within his own language. It is not implied, however, that an artist may find difficulty with one language but he may be perfectly happy with another language. Since each language has its own rule and its writer has to move within that language every language will put some constraints on the artist and he has to face it. The question of obscurity in modern literature can be understood from this perspective: an artist becomes obscure only when he talks with signs whose values are personal and not a social property and when those signs interfere with the linguistic signs whose values are determined for a society. Communication is possible when the receiver and the sender are familiar with the code through which the message is being sent. When the code is unfamiliar to the receiver he cannot decode it or in other words it has no information value. In great works of art, however, there is always an illusion of absolute freedom on the part of the writer though in reality he is just like any other prisoner of his medium. Sapir puts it beautifully: 'The artist has intuitively

surrendered to the inescapable tyranny of the material, made its brute nature fuse easily with his conception. The material disappears precisely because there is nothing in the artist's conception to indicate that any other material exists. For the time being, he and we, with him, move in the artistic medium as a fish moves in the water, oblivious of the existence of an alien atmosphere. No sooner, however, does the artist transgress the law of his medium than we realise with a start that there is a medium to obey'. (*Language* New York 1921),

I was talking about the relationship between literature and the system of language. I like to devote the rest of my time to the relation between literature and the 'latent content of language—our intuitive record of experience'. Language is not only a system or a structure: it is the 'collective art of expression, a summary of thousands upon thousands of individual intuitions'. Some scholars have claimed that language and the world-view of any given community are deeply related. When a child learns words he is not only adding a few symbols to those which he has already acquired but he learns to form concepts of those objects referred to by those symbols and to come to terms with the objective world. 'And language, taken as a whole', writes Ernst Cassirer, 'becomes the gateway to a new world. All progress here opens a new perspective and widens and enriches our concrete experience' (*An Essay on Man*, -New Haven, 1944). This thing is evident again when we learn a foreign language. We are learning not only a new code of communication but also to look at the real world from another point of view. It is more imperceptible there, because to an adult the world of reality has already taken a different shape as a result of his native language activity. When we read a literary work in another language or we study a different language we enter into a world which is not identical with our world view. It is seldom that we find exact equivalents in two languages. Cognates or corresponding terms seldom represent the same shade of our experience. And that is the reason why it is difficult to translate literary works, Cassirer gives an example of the cognates for *moon* in Greek and Latin. Greek *men* and Latin *Luna* signify the same object but *men* denotes the function of the moon to 'measure' time and Latin *tuna* denotes the moon's brightness.

Sapir expressed this view strongly. He wrote that 'language is not merely a more or less systematic inventory of the various items of experience which seem relevant to the individual, as is so often naively assumed, but is also a self-contained creative symbolic

organization, which not only refers to experience for us by reason of its formal completeness and because of our unconscious projection of its implicit expectations into the field of experience' (*Conceptual Categories of Primitive Languages, Science*, 1931 (74)). Benjamin Lee Whorf substantiated Sapir's formulation with great wealth of material and later their views came to be known as Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. Whorf culled his examples from Hopi, an American Indian language, to show that a language provides a general framework of reference and thus moulds the world view of its users. Sapir wrote that 'the real world' is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group' (*Selected Writings of Edward Sapir* ed. D.G. Mandelbaum, California, 1949, p. 162). This statement does not imply in any way that there is any relation between the 'content' of the language and structure of the language. If there is any relationship between language and the environment it is only at the level of vocabulary. The Eskimo has a large range of words for *snow* while English has one, Malto has several words for successive stages of growth of mangoes while the more prestigious Indo-Aryan dialects have one. It is true that the complete vocabulary of a language would be 'a complex inventory of all Ideas, interests, and occupations that take up the attention of the community' (Sapir, *Language and Environment, The American Anthropologist*, vol. 14, 1912).

Language is a means of categorizing of experience also. The community does not do it consciously; rather it inherits the historical experience of their ancestors. Clyde Kluckhohn and Dorothea Leighton (*Language and the Categorizing of Experience, The Language of Wisdom and Folly*, ed. I. J Lee, New York, 1949) point out that while the English verb 'to go' is used regardless of whether one goes, walks or is transported by a train or other agency, a German distinguishes two types of motion : *gohen* and *fahren*. Navaho makes four types of distinction in physical events which is peculiarly its own. While English makes three kinds of distinction between to eat, to drink and to smoke, Hindi makes two. Malto has two verbs to denote 'to eat'—*lape* 'to eat rice' and *moqe* 'to eat anything other than rice'. Sapir-Whorf hypothesis would suggest that such distinction is related to the particular world-view of a particular community. It would also suggest that every man is his own metaphysician, as Max Black puts it, since language 'conceals a METAPHYSICS' (*Language, Thought and Reality : Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf*. ed. John B. Carrell, New York, 1958, p. 58). Whorf concludes that since Hopi

does not distinguish between time the way an Indo-European does, Hopi looks at the world comprising 'two grand cosmic forms, which as a first approximation in terminology we may call MANIFESTED and MANIFESTING (or, UNMANIFEST)' (p. 59),

Sapir-Whorf hypothesis has been criticized by several authors—for example Paul Henle (*Language, Thought, Culture*, Ann Arbor 1965, pp. 23-24), Joseph Church (*Languages and the Discovery of Reality*, New York, 1961, pp. 132-36) and very severely by Max Black (*Models and Metaphors*, Ithaca, 1962, pp. 244-57). The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis cannot be accepted when it is pushed too far. Language is not the sole means of Categorizing experience. This is a doctrine of determinism which advocates that thought and perceptions are completely dictated by the language one speaks. It would be too sweeping a generalization to say that. Black has rightly pointed out that the distinction of manifested and unmanifest which Whorf sees in Hopi is not relevant to the average Hopi. He asks "how much of all this would the average Hopi recognize? Perhaps it might leave him as dumbfounded as a Greek peasant reading Aristotle". (Black, p. 251). Whorf being not a Hopi, and being not a speaker of Hopi had no difficulty in explaining their view in English. That indicates that language does not find one completely. It would be too much to say that the way of thinking would be necessarily different if the grammar is different. English has two verbs to eat and to kiss while a Bengali has no verb similar to kiss—it is 'to eat kiss'. But that does not mean that Bengalis think 'kiss' an edible material. When a Bengali speaks of 'eating' a kiss he is speaking Bengali and speaking it grammatically but there is no reason to suppose that he is thinking differently. In Malto the word for 'marriage' is *pelbede* which would etymologically mean 'searching a woman' but any student of Malto would find that a Male, i.e., a man who speaks Malto would not take it literally. His conception of marriage is not different from that of an Indo-Aryan speaker. Black calls it the 'linguist's fallacy' when Whorf assumes that 'to speak grammatically is to 'mould' reality into a structure isomorphic with the grammar' (p. 250). One need not accept the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis blindly but there is no reason to suppose that categorization of experiences in all languages is the same. Even those words which are etymologically far away from their current usage are important clues to the literary artist to understand how the world was viewed by the early users of that language. *Hippopotamus* may not mean anything more than a huge animal to a Greek of Aristotle's time but to a writer that animal

is also a *river-horse*. We talk of dead metaphors in language, that is whose metaphorical implications are lost in ordinary discourse. But for a literary artist no metaphor is dead: they are like 'Sleeping Beauty'. The artist knows how to awaken her because he knows the potentiality of his language. Similarly each language categorizes certain experiences of a particular community which may not mould their view of reality but makes subtle distinctions in their way of looking at the world of human experience. The word *piriti* to sixteenth century Bengali Vaishnava or *obhiman* to a modern Bengali suggests a unique concept which may be shared but are not so distinguished by other communities in the world. All natural languages not only derive this semantic content from the 'real' world but they also create a 'fictional world' which becomes a part of the 'real' world, One can talk about a fairy or a winged horse and they are part of our experiences. Language thus reflects reality and extends the frontier of reality. Literature, too, because it is a verbal expression of reality and creates a parallel world of reality which underlies its relation with real world but itself is not 'real' in that sense. The literary artist knows it intuitively and the literary critic must know it. The artist exploits not only the resources of human experience but also the resources of the language. An understanding of the language is, therefore, a prerequisite to the appreciation of literature.

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## Western Forms in Modern Marathi Literature



EVEN PRIOR to the founding of the Bombay University in 1857, schools imparting instruction on Western lines, were established in Bombay and Poona and students in higher classes were introduced to classics in English literature. With the advent of the printing press, periodicals appeared on the literary scene in the thirties and forties of the last century and their number swelled rapidly as time passed. In addition to dramatists like Shakespeare, Goldsmith and Sheridan and novelists like Dickens, Thackeray, Jane Austen and a few others, essayists like Johnson, Addison, Steele and Macaulay were studied in schools and, therefore, with the appearance of the periodicals the essay was the first form that took shape in Marathi and almost perfected itself before the nineties. These were the times of a new awakening and a new upsurge, especially in the fields of religious and social reform, and the controversies that were fought in the pages of periodicals helped the shaping of the essay. Vishnu Shastri Chiplunkar was mainly responsible for giving a proper literary status to the form in the pages of his 'Nibandhamala' (1874-1882) (A Garland of Essays.) The essay came to attain its full glory in the hands of great ideologues like Tilak, Agarkar, Shivram Pant and a host of others who happened also to be editor-writers connected with important periodicals that debated problems of



politics, religion, and social reform. But it was N. C. Kelkar who practised the form for the sheer delight of it and revealed its full potentialities in his prodigious writings.

Professor N. S. Phadke, the renowned novelist, in the twenties, gave the essay a personal touch and wrote personal essays on the lines of Alpha of the Plough, Robert Lynd, Charles Lamb and other practitioners of the form. The personal essay became very popular in the thirties and was practised by many, among whom mention may be made of Kanekar and V. S. Khandekar who gave it a new lustre; but the lustre did not last long and the form could not keep itself alive for long. It became rapidly stylized and lifeless and both readers and writers lost interest in it in the forties. Of late there have been some attempts to revitalize the form but there is now discernable a tendency among the Marathi literary critics to treat all imaginative prose other than fiction, with a personal element in its make-up as a separate category and discuss it accordingly. The personal essay-type of writing has, therefore, now become broad-based enough to include travelogues, character-sketches, humorous pieces, and several other miscellaneous kinds of writing.

The novel was the second Western form to appear on the literary horizon. Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* came to be translated as early as 1841 and *Yamuna-paryatan*, which is considered as the first conscious attempt at original novelwriting, appeared in 1857. It narrates the vicissitudes in the fortunes of a young Hindu widow, Yamuna, who in the end finds solace in embracing Christianity. A significant attempt at writing a historical novel was made in 1867 (Mochangad), but in spite of these attempts, the novel, though popular both with readers and writers, remained till the eighteen-eighties just a tale of young romantic handsome men and women, usually princes and princesses, undergoing a series of false adventures only to unite ultimately in happy wedlock. The form attained its full height and revealed its full potentiality only towards the end of the eighties in the novels of the great H. N. Apte. He wrote from 1885 till his death in 1918, a number of social and historical novels. He not only caught the spirit of his age in his novels, but also demonstrated in full what the form was capable of depicting. His canvas was wide, and he had such a fine sense of the human drama that he could reveal through his writings the ever-changing and the changeless aspects of life. He came from an upper middle-class Brahmin family and his novels wove the intricate pattern of relationships and tensions in a joint family. He also wrote historical novels mainly to instill in his

readers a love for their country and hatred of the foreign rule.

With the advent of H.N. Apte on the literary scene readership of the novel increased by leaps and bounds and a number of newly started publishing houses tried their best to meet the demand. The new band of writers that sprang up did not, however, have the vision and imagination of Apte. They, therefore, took to easy adaptations of second rate English novels. . . . Thus, side by side with the novels of H. N. Apte, a new type of Marathi novel with slick dialogues, a well-constructed plot, and the love theme, emerged and became very popular. The new type was perfected by Professor N.S. Phadke, a master craftsman. In the middle of the first decade of the twentieth century Waman Malhar Joshi tried to give a philosophical content to the novel, but though his attempts were praised by critics and the discerning reader, he was not accepted by the general reader. Professor Phadke wrote of youth—the romance of youth in all its rainbow colours, The novel in his hands became a structurally beautiful thing though modelled on those of James Hilton, Vicki Baum and a few others. The main interest in his novels was love, and though he often changed the locale and also used the backdrop of current political movements, his novels remained primarily love-stories. Phadke perfected what may be called the novel of escape.

V. S. Khandekar, another great name in the field of the Marathi novel, with his romantic idealism, thought always about life situations in terms of a metaphor and created idealized characters to fit into the metaphor. There is a seriousness of purpose in all his writing but it suffers from an idealized vision of life. As in Phadke's novels, the love-motive plays an important role in Khandekar's novels too—the only difference is that Phadke's heroes are usually elegant, clever, given to amusements and with an artistic bent of mind, while Khandekar's are self-sacrificing, idealistic, patriotic and with a mission.

The thirties attracted a number of young men in Maharashtra to Marxism and the new psychology brought in by Freud, and this had its echo in the Marathi novel. The Marxist hero did not merely care for the poor and the down-trodden but was also a political agitator, and along-side Professor Phadke's hero, this new young man came to have a place of importance in the Marathi novel. Khandekar and Madkholkar idea-lized this young man in their novels. Madkholkar, who also introduced a lot of sex in the Marathi novel, was interested in the current political scene and wove his plots around real happenings and personalities in the political field.

The new outlook born out of Marxism also found expression in the writings of P. Y. Deshpande, who also wrote some symbolic novels with a poetic touch. The 'novmatwad' (modernism) born out of the awareness of new psychology emboldened some of the writers, the most prominent among them being Vibhawari Shirurkar, to unfold the emotional agonies and problems that beset unmarried and forsaken women. Mention must be made here also of Dr Ketkar, the Marathi encyclopaedist, who used the novel as an instrument to make the reader aware of social evils and, who, even at the cost of artistic values, enriched the content of the Marathi novel.

But the most significant creation towards the end of the thirties was the outstanding novel *Ranangari* by Visram Bedekar. Though apparently a love story, it very easily transgressed the bounds of a narrow plot and became the eternal tragicomic tale of human relationship. Bedekar had the sensibility of a great artist whose presentation of the concrete easily reveals the universal. *Ranangan* reached the peak in novel-writing which Marathi creative imagination seldom reached again.

The Marathi novel after the Second World War has been undergoing a rapid change. The first noteworthy break-through appeared in the novels of S. N. Pendse, who shifted the locale of the Marathi novel to the Konkan and allowed the characters to naturally grow out of the soil of Konkan. In his fictional attempts Nature became a part and parcel of the human drama. It almost shaped the human destiny. Pendse was the first to realise the vital relationship of man and his natural environment and, therefore, his novels were hailed as a welcome departure from the sophisticated writing of the thirties and forties. The same peculiar relationship of man and his environment has been brought out with artistic excellence by Vyankatesh Madgular in his *Bangarwadi* and by Dandekar in his *Padghavli* and *Machivarla Budha*. The cult of the hero is slowly but steadily disappearing from the recent Marathi novel. *Kosla* by Nemade is a tale told by a young man who sees the world around him falling apart. There have been in recent years some brilliant attempts to depict the violent life of the Bombay slums, wherein the traditional hero does not find place. Instead, the entire life of the settlement, in all its weird aspects, is brought into focus, which leaves a rather bizarre impression.

It was in the forties that Mardhekar had attempted a psychological novel on the Joycean technique but it was artistically a failure. Of late C. T. Khanolkar has produced a deeply penetrating

psychological study of a few white-collared chawl-dwellers, called *Ajgar* (boa) which brings out the most ugly and the most beautiful in the human mind at one and the same time. Another noteworthy name among present-day Marathi novelists is that of A. V. Joshi. He has written what can be called an intellectual novel without in any way compromising the artistic values. *Kalokhache Aang* (The Aspects of Darkness) is a superb study of the sophisticated modern mind with its dreams, fears, joys, frustrations, taboos, aspirations and mirages. In its pages characters and situations, without in any way losing their identity, quite easily become symbolic.

The historical novel was nurtured by H. N. Apte and reached in his *Vajraghat* (1918) (The fall of the Vijayanager Empire) the level of a great work of art, But with later writers it turned into purely romantic tales. Recently, it has not only been revived but also shows a good deal of better understanding of the function.

Along with history Marathi novelists are showing a keen interest, in recent years, in the epics and the lives of Yayati, Kama and other epic characters have become the central theme of some brilliant fictional studies. The Marathi novel is thus gaining new dimensions. It is no longer merely an instrument for entertainment or edification, It has a serious artistic purpose. It has out-grown the narrow concept of form, and is gauging its newly acquired strength.

Modern Marathi drama is almost as old as the Marathi novel. Though it dates back to 1843 when Vishnudas Bhave staged his first puranic musicals at Sangli, its real origin is to be traced to the eighteen fifties and sixties when Shakespeare began to attract the newly educated, and Kalidas, Bhavbhuti, Shudrak and other Sanskrit dramatists come to be studied with a new outlook in the colleges. The sixties, seventies and eighties saw a number of translations and adaptations of Shakespeare's plays. Along with Shakespeare, Kalidas, Bhavbhuti, Shudrak and a few other Sanskrit playwrights came to be translated in the same period. These were called 'Bookish plays' and came to exercise a good deal of influence in shaping the Marathi play. The first important play in Marathi modelled on Shakespeare was *Thorie Madharao Peshwe* by V.J. Kirtane. This was written in 1861 and staged in 1862. In 1880 Annasaheb Kirloskar wrote and staged his famous translation of Kalidas's *Abhijnan Sakuntala*. It was a musical and an instantaneous success. This was followed by his *Soubhadra*, another musical, a mythological comedy, not a translation but a piece of original writing, which is still very popular with Marathi theatre-goers. Annasaheb Kirloskar

had modelled his plays mainly on the Sanskrit pattern without in any way owing anything to Shakespeare. G. B. Deval, who followed him, had a wonderful sense of the dramatic—both tragic and comic and his plays *Sharada* and *Sanshaya-Kallol* of which the latter is a very free adaptation of a not wellknown English play and a play by Moliere, still are a draw on the the Marathi stage. In the last decade of the last century Shripad Krishna Kolhatkar appeared on the literary scene, who was influenced by both Shakespeare and Moliere, Kolhatkar, who had a sense of the ludicrous and who was more of a wit than a poet, was drawn more to Moliere than to Shakespeare, but Shakespeare's dramatic technique and tricks attracted Kolhatkar and he wrote his plays embodying those tricks. His plays were not a success on the Marathi stage, though he won great contemporary reputation and influenced current play-writing. Kakasaheb Khadilkar was a dramatist of rare quality. He, was by nature an artist with a very serious purpose and the impact of Shakespeare on his dramatic imagination resulted in the writing of plays which many times reminded the audiences of the essential Shakespeare.

The very first play that Khadilkar wrote was a historical play. *Sawai Madhavrao Yancha Mrutyu* which had something of both Hamlet and Othello in it. He was a staunch nationalist and a keen student of current politics, (being the editor of a powerful nationalist daily), and fully exploited both history and mythology for his dramatic purpose. Though he adopted the Shakespearean technique of the plot and the sub-plot as his contemporary Kolhatkar did, unlike Kolhatkar but like Shakespeare he created a galaxy of characters that Marathi theatre audiences will ever remember. He presented mythology and history in such a way that it had a special meaning to the modern times. His *Keechak* reminded the audiences of Lord Curzon and of the partition of Bengal and naturally his plays came under the British axe.

Ram Ganesh Gadkari, who called himself a disciple of S. K. Kolhatkar, but who very swiftly outgrew the weaknesses of his guru, was a poet-dramatist gifted with a brilliant imagination matched by an equally brilliant mastery over the word. His plays, mostly social, are modelled on Shakespeare and contain some scenes and speeches that certainly evince that quality of imagination which can be called Shakespearean, lacking of course the sense of artistic propriety. But his *Ekach Pyala*, produced in 1919, stands apart from the rest of his plays and achieves a tragic height that has seldom been achieved by a Marathi play.

As has been suggested above Kolhatkar, who was a great humorist, came under the influence of Moliere but the dramatist who really absorbed the best of Moliere and combined it with the rather crude but vigorous rural Tamasha (the Marathi indigenous theatre) was Madharao N. Joshi. In the second and third decades of the present century, he wrote some brilliant satirical comedies which both shocked and entertained the Marathi theatre-goer. His *Sangeet Municipality*, written and staged in 1925, a scintillating satire on the municipal administration, still draws crowded houses if staged by a dramatic group,

The next playwright of note was B. V. alias Mama Warerkar. Warerkar, who has a number of plays to his credit, always rode the tide of public controversy and based his plays on current social or political problems. His were well made plays which lacked intensity and seriousness of purpose. It was he who introduced the one-act one-scene technique for the first time on the Marathi stage. Though he could never master the Ibsenian method, the influence of the Norwegian dramatist was noticeable in his writings.

With the cinema gradually but surely establishing its supremacy since the thirties of this century, the Marathi stage suffered a terrible reverse. An attempt was made by a group of Ibsen enthusiasts to bring about a revolution in Marathi playwriting and play-production. They called themselves Natya-Manvantar Ltd. and staged a Marathi adaptation of Bjournson's *Gauntlet*. The attempt did attract attention for some time but failed to catch on, The only dramatist who fought through these times was P. K. Atre. He wrote a brilliant satirical comedy, *Sastang Namaskar* in 1933 whose form owed nothing either to Shakespeare or to Moliere but was altogether a new creation and it became and still is a great stage-success. This was followed by two melodramatic plays, modelled on the Ibsenian technique, *Udyacha Sansar* and *Gharababer*.

Another playwright who tried to keep the Marathi stage alive during these difficult times was M.G. Rangnekar, who also followed to some extent the Ibsenian technique, wrote competent plays in the tradition of Warerkar, but more polished and stagy. His *Kula-vadhu* which reminded one of Ibsen's *The Doll's House* was a great success on the Marathi stage.

In 1943 the Marathi theatre celebrated its birth-centenary on a large scale first at Sangli, the birth-place of modern Marathi stage and then in Bombay with a revival of many old stage-successes. The Mumbai Marathi Sahitya Sangh arranged Drama Festivals practically



every year after the event and this revived a reassuring interest in theatre activity all over Maharashtra. The Government abolished the entertainment tax levied on drama-productions, instituted handsome cash prizes for play-writing and best play-production and thus helped in giving a pep to the theatre-movement.

The last twenty-five years have witnessed considerable theatrical activity in Maharashtra, especially in Bombay and Poona. Practically every fortnight a new play appears on the Bombay Marathi stage. Not all these attempts are artistically commendable, but it must be said that there is a general rise in the art of play-writing and play-production. Though a number of adaptation of Western plays have appeared on the Marathi stage in recent years, original play-writing of a pretty high standard is also not negligible. Vijay Tendulkar, C. T. Khanolkar, P. L. Deshpande, S. G. Sathe, Vishram Bedekar, V. V. Shirwadkar, Vasant Kanetkar have contributed some of the best plays produced recently on the Marathi stage.

Of late, there has been a revival of the indigenous rural theatre, called the Tamasha, which does not require any stage-property, which does not believe in the unity of time and place, and which stays simultaneously on two levels, one level being that of the conventional plot and the other of contemporary relevance. This is done through satirical comment on recent happenings in the fields of politics, social and religious reform, literature, etc., and it has some wonderful conventions of make-believe. There have been in recent years some noteworthy attempts to exploit the conventions of this theatre to write serious plays on topical themes. One of the stage-hits in this genre is *Vichha Mazhi Puri Kara* by Vasant Sabnis. This theatre is gaining in popularity as, in addition to ribaldry, sparkling wit and satirical thrusts, it also provides some vigorous dance and music. Some of the experimentalists like Khanolkar and Tendulkar are trying to infuse this theatre with a serious content,

It is very difficult to give a fair idea within the compass of this paper of all that is happening in the fields of Marathi drama today: but mention must be made of a number of excellent one-act plays, mostly produced on the amateur stage, that have been written in recent years. They are not merely technically flawless but thematically noteworthy. P. L. Deshpande, Vijay Tendulkar, Padmakar Davre, Yelkunchwar, Ratankar Matkari and a number of young writers have contributed to the rise of the one-act play. In sum, the Marathi play that has evolved during the last one hundred years is but a curiously mixed product of the East and the West. It is as much indigenous



as it is Western. The Marathi Sangeet Natak, which can be a farce, a comedy, a melodrama, a serious problem play or a Shakespearean tragedy is a peculiar genre forged by the Marathi mind. It has a long tradition, perhaps an equally bright future. Along with the most modern, experimental plays which sometimes baffle theatre-audiences, this Marathi Sangeet Natak is very much alive on the present-day Marathi stage. Marathi drama is trying to retain the best that past has to offer and imbibe the best that the present western theatre is trying to do.

The foundations of modern Marathi poetry were laid in the class rooms of schools and colleges in the middle of the twentieth century when students were first introduced to English poetry. Vishnu Moreshwar Mahajani, a graduate of the Bombay University, translated about 41 poems, mostly from the romantic poets and published them serially in 'Vividhadyana-Vistar', a literary journal between 1883 and 1885. He brought out a collection of these translated pieces in 1885 called *Kavya-Kusumanjali*. Prior to Mahajani's attempt in making the lyrics of the romantic poets available to Marathi readers, B. R. Pradhan had published his *Daiwaseni*, a Marathi rendering of Scott's *Lady of the Lake* in 1867. One year prior to the publication of *Kavya-Kusumanjali* in 1884, R. B. Kirtikar had brought out his translation of Tennyson's *The Princess*, called *Indira*. Another significant literary event in the field of poetry was M. M. Kunte's attempt to imitate the English heroic couplet for his epic *Raja Shivaji*, in 1869. Other contemporaries of these poets like Kanitkar, Bhandare and others had also rendered English lyrics into, Marathi. Thus these pioneering attempts had created a congenial atmosphere for the advent of a new outlook on poetry, and when Keshavasut, the father of modern Marathi poetry, began to publish his poems in 1885, he could attract to himself quite a few kindred minds. He wrote the first sonnet in Marathi called 'Mayyursinhasan ani Tajmahal' which was published by H. N. Apte in his 'Karamenook' in 1892. He was a deep thinker and naturally the odes of Wordsworth, Shelley and other romantic poets attracted him most. He wrote some of the best odes in Marathi. Keshavasut was a pioneer in many respects. He not only introduced the lyrical element in all its variety into Marathi poetry but wrote a number of poems in which he thought deeply about the nature and function of poetry. Keshavasut died in 1906 but left behind him a rich legacy which brought him a number of followers. Of these mention must be made of two, who called themselves the disciples of Keshavasut: one

was Gadkari who wrote poetry under the pen-name of Govindaraj and the other was Thombre who wrote under the pseudonym of Balkavi. Govindaraj wrote some of the best love lyrics in Marathi and some sonnets and odes. Balkavi was an excellent lyricist. His was a mind completely in tune with Nature and he made Nature alive in his poems. Marathi poetry has taken immense strides during the last sixty years, but there is no poet who can hold his own against Balkavi in his portrayal of Nature. Another important poet of the period was Bee who composed a number of sonnets and odes equal in poetic beauty and strength to those of Keshavasut.

For a time there was a stalemate in the field of Marathi poetry. This was broken by the publication of Bhaskarrao Tambe's poems in 1920. Tambe introduced what may be called the song in all its dramatic intensity and variety to Marathi poets and readers. His influence was instantaneous, a group of poets formed an association called Ravi-Kiran Mandal in 1923 and wrote poems almost on the lines of Tambe, From 1925 to the starting of Second World War the most predominant note in Marathi poetry was that of the song. But the only poet that stood out from among the Ravi-Kiran Mandal group is Madhav Julian, who wrote with an easy abandon and broke down some of the taboos on expression. He experimented with the sonnet as with other forms and wrote his *Tutlele Duve* (Broken Links), in the form of a narrative consisting of interdependent sonnets.

The Second World War witnessed a change in the nature of Marathi poetry. As suggested above, poetry during the twenties and thirties had lost much of its vigour and strength and had become almost a formal exercise. The emphasis had shifted from what it expressed to how it expressed it and as such it became highly stylized. There was a movement to slacken the metrical restrictions on poetic expression and poetry was written in free verse, some of which was of a declamatory type. Mardhekar and Rege, two poets who had begun to write in the thirties, reacted sharply against this state of affairs. P. S. Rege trod a lone path. He was an aesthete in a sense and he always tried to picturize very suggestively and precisely his experiences derived especially through sensuous perception. Mardhekar was an aesthete as well as a social thinker. His pieces were sometimes biting satirical but full of rich imagery, often written in the traditional 'Ovi' metre.

Mardhekar's was the poetry of a mind that valued the world, exercised thought-discipline and avoided mere ornamentation. The change in human relationships, human dignity, human values that

the machine age has brought about stirred Mardhekar to write, and he naturally had no sympathy for the poets of the twenties and thirties who lacked high seriousness.

It was Mardhekar and P. S. Rege who were mainly responsible in bringing about a change in the poetic sensibility during the last quarter century. A number of new names have come up, each having his own individuality. Sonnet, a form that was rather over-played in the twenties and the thirties, had ceased to interest the poet and the reader in the forties. But of late Vinda Karandikar, a prominent poet, has written a number of what he calls 'Mukta-Suneete' or free-sonnets. Karandikar who writes with an easy abandon is a vigorous thinker and his poetry, rich in both theme and expression, has carved a path of its own, Mangesh Padgaonkar is a lyricist of a very high order. Another poet of note who belongs to the generation of Padgaonkar and Karandikar is Sadanand Rege, a great experimentalist, with a capacity to probe deeply into the human mind and write poetry which many times baffles the reader.

But a new generation of poets is now crowding the Marathi literary horizon. This is a generation of angry young men who are against the 'establishment'. They write in a language with which the reader is not familiar. Theirs is an exclusive world and it is very difficult for the uninitiated to enter it. They publish their attempts in little reviews which are for private circulation and which have a very short existence. It is very difficult to gauge the poetic strength of these attempts as they are not available in collected editions.

Marathi poetry is at present in a state of turmoil. But it is hoped that the present state of unrest, revolt and exclusiveness will soon disappear and Marathi poetry will take a step forward in the right direction.

It was in the mid-nineteenth century that stories began to appear in the literary periodicals like *Marathi Dynanprasarak*, *Vividha Dynan Vistar* and others. But these were really tales with a moral content. It was H. N. Apte, the novelist, who consciously wrote some stories which he called 'Sphuta Gosthi' and published them serially in his periodical, *Karamnook* (1890). Apte's short stories lacked, on the whole, brevity and pointedness.

In 1895 Kashinath Raghunath Mitra started his *Masik Manoranjan* which gave the short-story a place of importance in its pages. V. S. Gurjar, who assisted Mitra in his editorial work, was a prolific short story writer. His stories, modelled on English short stories, were in most cases adaptations as well as translations of the stories of

Prabhatkumar Mukherjee and other Bengali writers. It was due to the efforts of V. S. Gurjar that the form attracted a number of writers; Gokhale, Sahakari Krishna, Anandibai Shirke, Sharadastramvasi, K. R. Mitra, G. G. Limaye and others began to write short-stories in the pages of *Manoranjan*, other literary periodicals of the time, like *Uddyan* and *Navyug*, also threw their pages open to short stories. The short story, thus became a very popular form in the twenties with the monthly magazine reader.

It was in the pages of *Manoranjan* that Diwaker Krishna wrote his short stories in the twenties with a psychological depth hitherto unknown to the Marathi short story. After the death of Mitra in 1920 the influence of *Manoranjan* declined. But fortunately for the short story its place was soon taken in 1925 by *Ratnakar* edited by the reputed novelist N. S. Phadke. Phadke, then a very young man with ideas, not only wrote some of his best short stories in the pages of *Ratnakar* but also attracted a band of new writers to it. The Marathi short story, which was now slowly becoming form-conscious almost perfected itself technically under the stewardship of N. S. Phadke. Kamalabai Tilak, Krishnabai, Diwakar Manjrekar, Diwakar Krishna are some of the writers who helped Phadke in his attempts to give the form an artistic perfection.

*Ratnakar* was followed in 1928 by *Yeshwant*, a magazine almost entirely given to short story-writing. The thirties saw the birth of a number of literary magazines, the most noted among them being, *Pragati* a weekly, *Pratibha*, a fortnightly, and *Paijat Vageeshwari*, *Vihangama*, *Jyotsna*, all monthlies. All these magazines, most of which were short-lived, were very ably edited and along with other shorter forms of literature, gave the pride of place to the short story in their pages. It was in the pages of the weekly *Pragati* that Kumar Raghuvir serially published his urban character-studies, the first of their kind in Marathi, which he called 'word-pictures' (Shabda-Chitra). Khandekar, Kanekar, R. B. Joshi, Gangal, Chorghade, Kusumavati Deshpande, Doundkar, Y. G. Shirwadkar, Prabhakar Padhya and a host of new writers sprang up in the field of the short story in the thirties and publishers ventured to bring out their collections.

The thirties was a period in modern Marathi literature when there was a lot of form-consciousness among writers; this naturally led to an over-emphasis on the technical aspect of short story-writing and the Marathi short story gradually became an artificially finished product, a specimen of competent craftsmanship lacking in vitality. Writers vied with one another in exhibiting technical excellence in

their writing. Some of them even wrote what they called 'Lughuttam Katha' (a very short story) with an altogether unexpected but deliberate turn at the end.

Thus towards the end of the thirties the Marathi short story became lifeless and ceased to attract the reader, and its progress seemed arrested. The stalemate continued till the end of the second world war, when along with poetry, the Marathi short story had a rebirth. A band of young writers sprang up and the new Marathi short story began to appear in all its variety and vigour first in the pages of *Sammekshaka* and *Abhiruchi* literary magazines started at the beginning of the forties, and later in *Satyakatha*, a magazine that changed its policy and transformed itself into a little review sometimes in the middle of the forties. The new writers headed by Gangadhar Gadgil, Arvind Gokhale, Vyankatesh Madgulakar, P. B. Bhavne and Sadanand Rege freed the short story from the shackles of what was till then called 'the plot'. It ceased to look for suitable 'plots' in life, but realized that all deeply felt meaningful experiences were worthy of expression. Of all these writers, Gangadhar Gadgil was the foremost. His story could be poetic, satirical, whimsical, deeply psychological, child-like, ferocious and could be on several levels at the same time.

The number of writers who are now practising the art of the short story has increased immensely. The Marathi short story has gained in both strength and dimension in the last twenty five years, and is slowly undergoing a change which will bring out its full potentiality in the years to come.

This paper cannot be concluded without at least a passing reference to the excellent traditions of humorous writing that modern Marathi literature can boast of. S. K. Kolhatkar, the pioneer of modern Marathi humorous writing, was greatly influenced by Cervantes, Moliere, Voltaire, Mark Twain, and others. He wrote his first humorous essay in 1903 and followed it by a series of essays in which, through a fictitious character called Sudama, he satirized the religious and social conventions that had become meaningless in the course of time. Kolhatkar, an excellent wit and a master of epigram, perfected what can be called the antithetical construction in Marathi.

Ram Ganesh Gadkari, a dramatist and poet of repute, wrote his humorous essays and skits under the pen-name of Balakram, and had more of wit than satire in his writings, and exploited in full the language's capacities for all kinds of 'Vakrokti'.

Professor C. V. Joshi, was a humorist in the right sense of the word. He created a number of characters, as his guru Kolhatkar did, and wove stories around them which, though satirical in intent, dealt principally with human folly. He was not a wit, but his unpretentious prose was full of wily suggestions. A clever but sympathetic observer of men and manners, he had thrown a good deal of light in his writings on the weaknesses of the Marathi mind.

P. K. Atre was a master wit, who as editor of his daily *Maratha*, had acquired a very large readership chiefly through the quality of his playful and often biting pen. There is not a form of humorous writing which he did not practise and did not adorn.

P. L. Deshpande, the most popular humorist of the present day, has enriched considerably this glorious tradition of humorous writing started by Kolhatkar. His prose, which is very imaginative, sparkles with wit, humour and satire. He has a wonderful sense of the ludicrous and the absurd and his expression is inimitable.

Marathi humorous writing today is having a very good run. There are magazines that are exclusively given to humorous writings. But the most surprising thing is that Marathi has so far not produced what can be called a comic novel.

The present paper has given an outline of the development of major Western forms in Marathi literature. Along with those mentioned above, biography, autobiography, reminiscences and travelogues are some of the forms that have also been developed during the last hundred years. Marathi biographical writing still concerns itself more with the public than with the private life of an individual. The human interest, in the right sense of the word, is still lacking, but the case is different with autobiographical writing. Some excellent autobiographical writing has been done during the last sixty years, the best being by women who never received any formal schooling.

R.K. DASGUPTA

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## Literary Historiography



'HISTORY is natural, civil, ecclesiastical, and literary; whereof the three first I allow as extant, the fourth I note as deficient. For no man hath propounded to himself the general state of learning to be described and represented from age to age, as many have done the works of nature, and the state civil and ecclesiastical; without which the history of the world seemeth to me as the status of Polyphemus with his eye out; that part being wanting which doth most show the spirit and life of the person,' Francis Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning*, Book ii, 1605.

Some thirty years ago there was an exciting critical skirmish between two distinguished English scholars who held sharply opposed views on the whole business of literary history. F. W. Bateson's *English Poetry and the English Language: An Essay on Literary History* provoked F. R. Leavis to challenge, in his review of the book in *Scrutiny*, the distinction it had proposed between literary history and literary criticism. Leavis contended that the 'kind of history that he (Bateson) undertakes could be successfully attempted only by a critic and would then be essentially literary criticism'. Bateson replied to say that the function of the historian is to show how A derives from B while the function of the literary critic is to show how A is better than B. 'The labels' he added 'are less important than a realization that the two types of proposition represent two different orders of truth'. 'The intuitions of the critic' he affirmed 'emerge from a



temperament worlds away from the sober evidence-weighting of the historian'. Leavis did not agree and quickly rejoined that Bateson 'as a literary historian can have access to the works he proposes to deal with . . . only if he is sufficiently a critic, only by an appropriate and discriminating response to them; a response, that is, involving the kind of activity that produces value-judgements.'

Perhaps the most important consequence of this dispute was not a fresh delimitation of frontiers between literary criticism and literary history but a fresh awareness of the close link between the two. And here Bateson had the last word. 'Though I think' he said 'nothing is gained by denying that literary history and literary disciplines, employing different aptitudes in their exponents, I shall be the last to agree to a total divorce between the two activities. On the contrary, I believe, that criticism and scholarship are both suffering today from their ignorance and suspicion of each other'.

Of this divorce there has been none in the Indian literary scene if only for the reason that a true marriage between the two had never taken place. In the West literary history grew out of an intense critical activity and its major motivation has been to be an aid to that activity. The literary historian takes the field when the critic has already produced judgements and perspectives to direct his labours within the framework of a given standard. The literary historian may not be a creative critic in the sense in which Spingarn has used the term, but he must, nevertheless, be endowed with a capacity for judgement as he must have a capacity for collecting and digesting a large mass of relevant information. Benedetto Croce has done a great deal to define the function and qualification of the literary historian by relating his work to the scholar and the man of taste. The true difference lies between the scholar, the man of taste and the historian of arts, These words designate three successive stages of work, each one independent relatively to one that follows, but not to that which precedes, the true and complete historian, while containing in himself both the scholar and the man of taste as necessary pre-requisites, must add to their qualities the gift of historical comprehension and representation'.

Croce has warned us against the danger of conceiving literary history as the story of literary progress and in doing it, has incidentally spelt out its real use. 'There is no such thing as an aesthetic progress of humanity' he says and from this he proceeds to question the 'division into oriental art, representing imperfection of

form; classical, perfection of form; romantic or modern, perfection of content and form'. He, however, agrees that there can be progress in a particular type of literary creation, for example, 'Dante represents an advance on the visionaries of the Middle Ages, Shakespeare on the Elizabethan dramatists, Goethe, with *Werther* and the first part of *Faust*, on the writers of the Sturm and Drang period'. This is important as a recognition of the value of absolute judgment for the literary historian. In the eighteenth century, this negation of the idea of progress in literature would have been an intellectual sin for even Warton, the Poet Laureate and Professor of Poetry at Oxford claimed in his *History of English Poetry* that it exhibits 'the progress of our national poetry from a rude origin and obscure beginnings to its perfection in a polished age'. In the nineteenth century the increasing influence of criticism on literary history made this idea of progress less important and in this century it is relevant only to the enquirer into the growth and development of particular literary genres.

But still more important is Croce's idea of the use of literary history as a literary discipline. The fruit of the literary historian's labours in the 'ever-increasing accumulation of our historical knowledge, which makes us able to sympathize with all the artistic products of all peoples and of all times, or as they say, makes our taste more catholic'. Croce thus views literary history as an instrument of the education and enlargement of taste. What Helen Gardner has called the 'historical apprehension' of literature is an aid to literary understanding and enjoyment and the aid comes from the exertions of the literary historian.

But this historical sense is important not for an understanding of the literature of the past alone. It is equally important for our criticism of the literature of our own times. The continuing process of revaluation which marks a vigorous critical activity involves a historical perspective of literature as a whole. 'To see European literature as a whole', says Curtius, 'is possible only after one has acquired citizenship in every period from Homer to Goethe'. The exercise is essential for the critical act when its purpose is, in the words of T. S. Eliot, the 'elucidation of a work of art and correction of taste'. The business of the literary historian, then, is to project the literature of the past into the present and in the process to create an unified field of taste, the literary universe which is perpetually contemporary. In fact, what T. S. Eliot has said about the historical sense of the writer is no less important for the critic: 'the historical

sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence; the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of one's own country, has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order'. The literary historian can do a great deal to produce this sense of simultaneity, which alone can give what Eliot calls the 'conception of poetry as a living whole of all the poetry that has ever been written'.

This relevance of literary history to criticism, has been, on the whole, realized by its distinguished exponents since the nineteenth century. Taine is perhaps the first great literary historian of the nineteenth century to claim the importance of his labours in the field of criticism. 'Let us make the past present', he says in order to judge of a thing, it must be before us; there is no experience in respect of what is absent'. A quarter of a century later George Saintsbury said in the preface to his *A Short History of English Literature* that his object was to 'supply something approaching that solid platform, or at least framework, of critical learning without which all critical opinion is worthless, and upon which such opinion can be more easily built or hung afterwards'. About forty years later a distinguished American scholar summed up the issue in a brief sentence: 'The literary historian must be a critic even in order to be a historian'.

The critic, on the other hand, must depend a great deal on what he can learn from the literary historian. Austin Warren and Rene Wellek have explained the nature of this dependence in their *Theory of Literature*: 'literary history is also highly important for literary criticism as soon as the latter goes beyond the most subjective pronouncement of likes and dislikes. A critic who is content to be ignorant of all historical relationships would constantly go astray in his judgements. He could not know which work was original and which derivative; and through his ignorance of historical conditions, he would constantly blunder in his understanding of specific works of art. The critic possessed of little or no history is inclined to make slipshod guesses, or to indulge in autobiographical 'adventures among masterpieces', and on the whole, will avoid concern with the more remote past, content to hand that over to the antiquarian and the 'philologist'.

It must, however, be admitted that literary history is a modern science. It may not be a minor misfortune of literary scholarship that the Greeks never wrote a history of literature, not even a history of

their own literature. If there were a Thucydides of Hellenic literature the writing of literary history would have been a respectable occupation among the Romans. Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria* is little more than a catalogue of authors. The Renaissance gave a new direction to criticism but did not produce literary history worth the name. Conrad Gesner's *Bibliotheca Universalis* is little more than an alphabetical catalogue of authors and Possevin's *Bibliotheca Selecta* published in Rome in 1593 is more encyclopaedic than historical. In 1659 a distinguished German scholar, Lambecius, published his *Prodromus Historiae Literariae* in which he could not bring his account of world literature later than the times of Moses. But more substantial even as an account of universal literature was the *Origine, Progressoe Stato annuale d'ogni Literature* by Andres, a Spanish Jesuit who covered in the five volumes of his work, published between 1782 and 1799, both ancient and modern literature. An edition of the work in twenty volumes appeared in 1806. Eichorn's *History of Literature* published in six volumes between 1805 and 1811 was intended to be a universal history of literature from the earliest times to his own days.

But all these works were just accounts of authors and their works and offered very little of a general critical scheme.

The critical element entered into literary history when the historian limited his attention to his national literature and of this an early example is Tiraboschi's history of Italian literature which, though mainly a history of learning, has a streak of literary criticism. There is, however, a much larger measure of criticism in Corniani's *Secoli della letteratura italiana dopo il suo risorgimento* published in nine volumes between 1804 and 1813.

Literary history as we understand it today, that is, history which being critical itself is also an aid to criticism emerged out of the labours of these pioneers in the second half of the nineteenth century. It is, in fact, a feature of the latest phase of literary studies where to the Renaissance concern with literary theory was added the critical duty of judging individual authors and their works. In the literary scene today the theorist, the historian and the critic co-exist and there are instances of their co-existing in one person. But till the end of the seventeenth century the literary scholar was on the whole the literary theorist, concerned with general principles of literature and taste. When criticism became an expression of personal response and a statement of personal judgement, it began to be realized that a literary history was as important to the task as

literary theory. The historical work in the field in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries which, as we have seen is mostly of an encyclopaedic nature, represents the crude beginning of a discipline which matured in the second half of the nineteenth century.

In India, literary history of any sort is younger than that of Europe by about three centuries. The concern of the literary scholar in ancient and medieval India was essentially speculative or technical. Of what Spingarn has called creative criticism there is none in Sanskrit or in Pali. In Greek and Latin criticism too there is not a page of perceptive criticism such as Coleridge's writings on Shakespeare or Pater's on Coleridge. But it is important to notice that in the entire range of classical Sanskrit literature there is nothing like the Books III to VI of the *Saturnalia* of Macrobius where he discusses Virgil's knowledge, his powers of expression, his debt to Homer and other Greek authors, his debt to Ennius and other Roman authors. This is important if only as an instance of critical writing in the classical literature of Europe. That it is not an accident is shown by the fact that as early as the first half of the first century A.D. Paternus, the Roman historian, deals with literature in his *Historia Romana* (A.D. 30)

It may not, however, be true to say that there is no literary history in Sanskrit because there is no political history either written in that language. But while it is arguable that there were not too many Kalhans in India because somehow not too many were born, the absence of literary history may be due to causes to be found in the very nature of literary studies in Sanskrit. *Alankarashastra* is too deeply concerned with the philosophy or the technique of poetry to turn its attention to either practical criticism or literary history.

Secondly, when the literature in the modern Indian languages produced enough literature to deserve serious critical attention the Sanskrit *Pandit*, still the most respectable judge of letters, would scarcely give it that status. During the European Renaissance the literary man of affairs made ancient poetics, the principles of Aristotle and Horace, the framework of his critical ideas and later in the seventeenth century criticism itself derived a good deal from those principles. In fact, the sway of the *Poetics* of Aristotle since the Renaissance gave the literary scholar a sense of continuity in literature which encouraged him to survey it as a whole. Our modern literature had emerged in the middle ages and at least in the north it remained a medieval devotional literature at a time when the European had made its highest achievements in creative writing.

The medieval literature scholar in India handling his Alankara texts did not think of applying their *sutras* to his appreciation of the medieval poet. This produced a sense of discontinuity in literature and consequently discouraged the historical approach.

When early in the nineteenth century the Western Indologist gave a new dimension to our literary scholarship the art of literary history soon became an important occupation of its ablest exponents, But the Western Indologist was primarily concerned with ancient literature and when he turned his attention to the modern languages, his interest in the field was confined to philology, grammar and lexicography and not to literature. And even the European scholar's historical survey of Sanskrit literature was in its motivation and procedure more an archaeological enterprise than an expression of critical responses. In his introduction to his *History of Ancient Sanskrits Literature*, Max Mueller remarked: 'if, then, it is the aim of Sanskrit philology to supply one of the earliest and most important links in the history of mankind we must go to it historically; that is, we must begin, as far as we can, with the beginning, and then trace gradually the growth of the Indian mind, in its various manifestations, as far as the remaining, literary monuments allow this course.' So Indian literary history was conceived as an important branch of philology in its more comprehensive sense. It is significant that Albercht. Weber, another historian of Sanskrit literature, confesses in the preface to the second edition of his work that the 'obtaining of critical data from the contents of Indian literature, with a view to the establishment of its internal chronology and history, not the setting forth in detail of the subject matter of the different works, was from the beginning the object I had before me in these lectures.' Chronology is certainly an essential matter for the literary historian and it is an absorbing enquiry for the student of an ancient literature. Yet it is important to realize that the work of Weber and Max Mueller in the field of literary history was not the fulfilment of critical urges that promoted comparable work by European scholars in Greek and Latin.

While Grierson's *Linguistic Survey of India* is an outstanding work in the field of our modern languages, it is certainly one of the major misfortunes of Indian literary scholarship in the nineteenth century that there was no comparable work on our literature. Grierson himself had a measure of literary interest and his *Modern Vernacular Literature of Hindustan* is an important work of literary history. But as you read through its pages you begin to discover that it is more of the nature of an account than a critical history and I do not



know how many of our scholars would today find Garcin De Tassy's *History of Hindi and Hindustani--Literature* relevant to our response to poets it deals with. How the philologist is not necessarily a judge of literature we can see from the work of both John Beames and Grierson. In his *Comparative Grammar of the Aryan Languages* Beames pays an excellent tribute to Panjabi and Sindhi as languages and the tribute is certainly well deserved: 'There is a flavour of wheaten flour and a reek of cottage smoke about Punjabi and Sindhi', he says, which 'is infinitely more natural and captivating than anything which the hide-bound Pandit-ridden languages of the eastern parts of India can show us'. This was said in 1872 when Michael's blank verse was twelve years old and Bengali had developed a colloquial prose style. Grierson too was a great admirer of the Panjabi language but it is strange that he should remark in his introduction to the Panjabi volume of his survey that it 'has hardly any literature'. Perhaps no less strange is the fact that when the Language Department of the Government of Panjab reprinted the volume it passed it on to the reader without an editorial comment.

The first mentionable attempt at an outline history of Indian literature as a whole is R. W. Frazer's *A Literary History of India* published in 1897. It is in the series called The Library of Literary History in which Douglas Hyde writes on Irish literature and Barrett Wendell on the literature of the United States. Robert Watson Frazer joined the Madras Civil Service in 1877 after the completion of his studies in Trinity College, Dublin. An illness cut short his career as a civilian and after his retirement in 1886 he devoted most of his time to studies in Indian history, languages and literature. As the Principal Librarian and Secretary of the London Institution and Lecturer in Tamil and Telugu in the University of London Frazer lectured on Indian architecture and literature. His *British India* is, however less known than his *Literary History of India*, amongst our languages Frazer knew Sanskrit, Tamil, Telugu and Oriya very well and had just a reading knowledge of a few others. On the whole he is knowledgeable and at places his criticisms are fairly perceptive. But the medieval and modern literature of the country is covered in less than hundred pages of this work of about four hundred and fifty pages. Obviously to survey Indian literature from the Rigveda to Bankimchandra Chatterjee is not the work of a single scholar, howsoever gifted. And Frazer had no predecessors in the field to direct his labours. But even as a design for later and more comprehensive surveys the work could have been a little more satisfactory if its



author had confined himself to modern literature alone. An excellent scheme for an account of modern and Indian literature is Professor Suniti Kumar Chatterji's *Languages and Literatures of Modern India* and K. R. Kripalanfs *Modern Indian Literature* is important as a brief introduction to the subject.

What we must regret today is not that a scholar like Frazer failed to accomplish the task, but that it was not undertaken by Indian scholars themselves as a corporate venture in literary scholarship and criticism. That they have not come to this task even so long after the institution of Master's courses in modern Indian languages in a large number of our universities is a major drawback of humane learning in the country. Perhaps nowhere is such a comprehensive literary history more of a pressing intellectual need than in India where a true image of its literary life as a whole is yet to emerge. It may not emerge very clearly because our literary ideas are likely to be warped by extra-literary considerations which may ultimately make our literary scene a battle-ground for contending muses; To set up and maintain a republic of letters may be a harder task than to sustain our political cohesion. For to arrive at a conception of Indian literature as one literature is required a degree of critical refinement and sophistication for which we do not seem to have the appropriate intellectual climate. But when we begin our effort in the field we will discover that the discipline of a literary history can do a great deal to educate our literary opinion and refine our literary standards. It may emancipate literary scholarship from all forms of parochialism and produce a critical temper which will subordinate an understandable love of one's own language to the more important task of understanding and evaluating our total literary inheritance. In the last century Matthew Arnold rebuked the provincial spirit of England which 'exaggerates the value of its idea for want of a high standard at hand by which to try them'. In France Sainte-Beuve said that 'the temple of taste is to be rebuilt' and 'its construction is merely a matter of enlargement'. But who can build a temple of taste on a foundation of an unenlightened and provincial outlook.

But it is not our provinciality alone that we must deplore. The whole trend of literary scholarship in this country for the last twenty years has very little to show that it has any vital links with the intellectual aspirations of the age, A great deal of it is stimulated by urges which may not be purely intellectual and the resulting mass of critical writings has done little either to refine or to enlarge taste. Literary history emerges out of a continuous and intense critical

activity at the highest level and in a sense it is an organization of criticism on a wide scale. We are poor in literary history because we are poor in criticism. Those who would add that we are poor in literature itself may be a little too cynical. Need we admit poverty in any field at a time when it is gainful in many ways to claim that we are rich ?

But must the literary historian wait till our society integrates itself and discovers its basis for disinterested intellectual pursuit? It may be, rather a part of the scholar's task to create that kingdom of reason where values are never subverted by interests. One of the finest intellectuals of our times asked the very important question—For whom does one write ? and in giving his own answer to it he said: 'literature will be a synthesis of Negativity, as a power of uprooting from the given and a Project, as an outline of a future order; it will be the Festival, the flaming mirror which burns everything reflected in it, and generosity, that is, a free invention, a gift'. This was said about creative literature. But the literary scholar too has his role in this renewal of the social mind. He can present the history of that mind unfolding itself throughout the ages, not as a stock-book of our ideas, but as a vivid image of our very being.

But the accomplishment of this task demands a degree of learning, in depth and in a range, which our universities have yet to promote amongst their scholars. While knowledge of languages is important and difficult to acquire the other intellectual equipment, the capacity to marshal literary facts within a framework of literary judgement, is equally important and no less difficult to acquire. Perhaps such equipment is a gift rather than an acquired skill and a rare gift. Moreover, our literature on the allied disciplines of social history, cultural anthropology, history of religion and philosophy is not rich enough to be useful for the literary historian.

How great is the danger of depending on secondary sources for the historian of Indian literature we can see in the work of Dr Herbert H. Gowen who as Professor of Oriental Studies in the University of Washington specialized in Asian history and literature. His *History of Indian Literature from the Vedic Times to the Present Day* published in 1931 has a workable scheme of presentation of his material but is marred by too many howlers. It mentions Michael's *Meghnadbadhkavya* as a Christian epic and Bankimchandra's *Krishnacharitra* as a good novel. Yet Gowen realized the importance of a literary history of India although he was not successful in his own effort in the field. 'India needs to become self-conscious culturally as well as politically', he

says at the end of his survey of 570 pages, 'and not least of all through her varied and yet continuous literature. There will surely not be for ever the sense of a lost Sarasvati. Rather will all the racial, linguistic, religious, and cultural interminglings, which have been, as it were, the web and woof of Indian history during the past three thousand years, be felt the prophecy of a truly unified literature which shall have its Kalidasas and its Tagores in abundance in the days to come'. Of this abundance one may not be certain. But the need for what Gowen calls a truly unified literature must now be recognized and it is literary history as an exercise in disinterested judgement which can vivify our conception of that literature.

About sixty years ago Rabindranath Tagore explained his conception of a universal literature in an article in *Bangadarshan* with a view to showing that fragmentation of that literature into territorial bits was a great danger both to taste and to criticism. How far the poet was influenced in this by the idea of world literature defined by Goethe and Carlyle in the twenties of the last century, one cannot say. But when Rabindranath spoke about it Europe had done a great deal more to arrive at a conception of European literature as a whole than what we have done today for the idea of an Indian literature as one literature. And if we are to value this idea of a universal literature as something relevant to the intellectual life of the modern man, our first effort should be to achieve a conception of Indian literature. The whole idea of a universal literature is founded on the belief that there could be a unified critical universe in which a literary creation of any age or country would be judged by a universally valid standard. It contemplates the ending of all forms of critical enclosures in the conviction that the finest taste is at its finest when it is most catholic. But to enter that larger universe of letters we must first endeavour to gain a unified view of our own literature.

When our literary historians come to this task of viewing our modern literature as one literature they have to be more cautious about the choice of their procedure than the western scholar who has already understood the limitations of the sociological approach. For young critics and literary historians, a Marxist study of literary movements is an exciting experiment. Since Christopher Caudwells formulation of this principle in his *Illusion and Reality* (1937) not a few of our literary scholars have been seriously concerned with showing that the criticism of art differs from pure enjoyment or creation in that it contains a sociological component. It is a parti-

cularly attractive formula for the literary historian for it offers a neat scheme for the presentation of his material. None of us can deny that there can be a sociology of taste and that the nature of man's creative genius in poetry and art can be studied with reference to social conditions. Still, it is important to be sure that the business of interpreting our response to literature is not warped by an excessive preoccupation with its sociological background. Commenting on Cazamian's concern with movements and tendencies in his history of English literature Arthur Quiller-Couch remarked: 'Cazamian has been forced back upon his Gallic instinct for logical neatness, to overstrain it somewhat: he is driven to classify our authors by movements and tendencies rather than by individual merit, even as his predecessor M. Taine, generalized them by environment'. Perhaps Quiller-Couch errs on the other side and the Gallic instinct for logical neatness may not mar criticism in the work of men like Taine or Cazamian. But there is danger to literary history from facile application of Marxian schemes to literary history. When George Thomson wrote his *Aeschylus and Athens* as a study of the social origins of drama, his approach appealed to many of us as strikingly original. But we nevertheless asked ourselves the plain question—how relevant was this original approach to our understanding and appreciation of the Greek dramatist. Thomson mentions Engels' *Origin of the Family* as one of his sources and what he says about the universe of Aeschylus by making use of the ideas in that book may be useless for criticism even when it is very revealing as a sociological study. Gilbert Murray utilizes the findings of the anthropologist in his fine book on Aeschylus, but his work is criticism and not anthropology. When Rabindranath Tagore wrote on Dinesh Chandra Sen's history of Bengali literature, *Banga Bhasha O Sahitya*, he spoke of the social world of Vaishnava poetry as something different from that of Shakta poetry, but the point that he made was relevant to his perspective of the two ages of Bengali poetry.

About half a century before the sociological approach to literature became fashionable in Europe, Bankimchandra said in an article on Vidyapati and Jayadeva that the nature of literature was determined by social condition and regretted that a science of literature was yet to be developed on the lines of Comtean positivism. He thought that there was the need for a Buckle amongst the historians of literature. But there is not a page in Bankim's critical essays in which this idea of a sociological scheme of literary studies takes him beyond the immediate task of appreciation and judgement.

The historian of Indian literature must not, however, be indifferent to the social background of literature, but he must not commit himself to any doctrinaire scheme. To comprehend a literature produced in many languages and shaped by a wide range of social experiences would certainly require a profound knowledge of social history and a capacity to make use of that knowledge for an appropriate scheme for literary history. To show the relevance of social processes to an understanding of the process of literature must be understood as a critical task and not as an exercise in social history. It is a task which at this stage of our literary scholarship can be accomplished only by a team of scholars working with a common objective and following a common procedure.

NILRATAN SEN

## Bengali Literary Historiography



BENGALI literary historiography does not go back earlier than the second half of the nineteenth century, when desultory attempts without adequate planning and collection of materials were made by distinguished litteratures to write a history of Bengali literature. If these are left aside, the first distinguished and highly commendable work towards that end was made in 1896 by Dinesh Chandra Sen in his *Bangabhasa O Sahitya*, which was followed, a few years later, by a more elaborate English version entitled *History of Bengali Language and Literature*. Dinesh Chandra tried to give a structural shape to the historical growth of Bengali literature, and it was mainly through his attempts and devotion that scholars in and outside India came to know of the rich cultural and literary heritage of Bengal.

But modern critics have reason to find fault with his perspective and also treatment which appears to be biased, emotion-surcharged, and even unbalanced in the declaration of preference. During the last fifty years or so, a good number of books on the subject have been written of various sizes and volumes, but the quality is anything but satisfactory. Some are nothing but camouflaged bazar-notes.

Some basic questions in respect of literary historiography have

to be resolved. These, as I see them, are as follows:

(a) In writing a history of literature how one is to arrange one's materials, on the broad basis of Old, Medieval and Modern periods, as suggested by Dinesh Chandra Sen, or century-wise as arranged by Sukumar Sen, or on the basis of fundamental events, political and/or social, as partially suggested by Dinesh Chandra, or, centring round places where such events occurred, as has been done by J. C. Ghosh, or on the basis of some amalgam of all these methods.

(b) Secondly, what the criterion of selecting the materials from the heaps collected indiscriminately from all available sources should be. Whether all the works available, irrespective of their subject matters, written in the language should be taken up, or the works having some literary values should only be considered. Whether written standard manuscripts only should be included, or folk-songs, rhymes, tales, and fables, etc., still in vogue in rural societies in oral form, also should be considered as relevant.

(c) Thirdly, what standard the historian should adopt in writing a history of literature. Whether he should maintain a purely objective view in presenting the literary events, or he should offer some critical evaluation of such events; whether he should judge the events on the socio-economic background of respective periods, or he should keep himself aloof from such currents. Or he should seek a *via media*.

(d) Fourthly, in writing such a history should the writer concentrate on his own literature, or make a comparative analysis keeping in view the neighbouring literatures; or should the perspective be still more widened to include world literature.

On the whole, since Indian literature is now being taught in most of our universities, a serious view regarding the compilation of histories of our important literatures, should be adopted. My own suggestion on (his point is that central boards on state basis should be constituted, and that either the U. G. C. Sahitya Akademi, the universities themselves, or the Education Directorates of the States should take the initiative in this matter. These boards should take necessary steps for the writing of comprehensive histories of the respective vernacular literatures. Men of eminence and clarity of vision should head these boards, and talented young scholars from respective fields, should be invited to work as members. The first task of these boards should be to formulate some norms, keeping all the problems in view, which will guide them in their



work. Then with proper division of work and mutual cooperation it may not be a very difficult task to bring out some comprehensive, and at the same time authentic, editions of the History of Indian Literature, within a specified period, say five to seven years.



*Section F: Indian Literature as an  
Academic Discipline*

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K.R. SRINIVASA IYENGAR

## Indian Literature as an Academic Discipline



IT WOULD be pertinent to ask at the outset what should be the ingredients or requirements of an 'academic discipline'. It may be desirable to know many things, to be able to do many things, yet all these need not be—all these may not permit themselves to be—cultivated as 'academic disciplines'. For a subject to find a place in an academy (school, college or university), it should in the first place be capable of being studied extensively and also in some depth; in the second place, it should conveniently submit to the critical categories of survey, sampling, analysis, comparison and generalisation; in the third place, substantial authoritative work should already have been done on the subject to provide the base-plank of the course, and avenues should be open for further research on the subject; in the fourth place, the subject should provoke in a diversity of students reasonably predictable or uniform responses, either in the form of quantitative results or as qualitative value-judgements; and, in the fifth place, and following from the above, it should be possible to examine the students upon the training they have received in the subject, award marks, and rank the students' performances.

Broadly speaking, academic courses have been either humanistic (philosophy, history, literature) or scientific (mathematics, and the physical and biological sciences). Where logical processes are

paramount (as in mathematics) or where there is abundant room for precise observation, tabulation, hypothesis, experiment and verification (as in the sciences), the subject readily meets the needs of an 'academic discipline'. Increasing specialization has, however, led to the multiplication of the sciences, and such fission has also been followed by fusion of different disciplines as in Geo-Physics. Bio-Chemistry or Nuclear Biology. At one time, theology, medicine and law figured centrally in the European universities, and now-a-days other professional courses—education, engineering, technology, banking, commerce, public relations, business administration, town-planning, diplomacy, naval architecture, military science—have also been admitted into the university. Not everyone is happy about this, however, for the admission into the university of all conceivable technical and professional courses (and a technological society needs increasing numbers of such specialists) must gradually push into a corner, if not actually crowd out, the less immediately 'utilitarian' disciplines, thereby almost emptying the university of its traditional 'liberal' content.

Doubts have also been expressed as to whether the humanities could really be called academic 'disciplines'. It is no doubt true that civilized life involves education, not for children alone, but equally for men and women throughout their lives; and history, philosophy and literature have a humanizing and civilizing influence on people in all the stages of their lives. Certainly, people should be exposed to the humanizing influence of the humanities—they are a form of spiritual food—but are they "disciplines" also at the same time? Is History a science? Is Philosophy a rigorous 'discipline'? As academic subjects, there are facts and dates and names to memorize in History, there are theories to discuss in Philosophy, there are propositions to debate, but one may do all this efficiently and yet miss the sense of history—history as something living, history as a progressive manifestation—and one may miss the true philosophic temper and one may fail to undergo the kind of spiritual experience on which philosophies are ultimately reared. The position with regard to literature is even more ambiguous and frustrating. We know little—we know practically nothing—about the mystery of poetic (or artistic) creation; and hardly anything more about the way a work of art affects us in the unplumbed infinitudes of the mind, heart and soul. The aesthetic triad—poet-poem-reader—is as little amenable to logical differentiation and analysis as the mystic trinity of religion and philosophy. When the academies taught Greek and Latin in

Europe, or Sanskrit, Arabic or Persian in India, the 'discipline' part was in the mastery of a classical language, its grammar, its prosody; conjugation and declension could be laboriously memorized; rhetoric, style, *alankaras* could be studied with painstaking attention; and translation from one's mother-tongue into the classical language (or vice versa) was another incidental 'discipline'. All this systematic exercising came to be applied also to the study of a language and literature other than one's own. As for 'poetic appreciation', it had to come (if at all) only peripherally, for when one's energies were largely consumed by trying to master the language itself—its vocabulary, its accident and syntax, its prosody—there was little time left for losing oneself in the poetry or organizing one's responses to it. In England's ancient universities (Oxford and Cambridge), the study of English language and literature was not admitted as a viable academic 'discipline' till the twentieth century. Even then, the emphasis at first was on teachable and examinable subjects like Indo-Germanic philosophy, Old Norse, Gothic, Anglo-Saxon and Middle English rather than on modern English literature from Shakespeare to the present day. Popular extension courses by enthusiasts like Churton Collins were all right, but it was hardly proper to stretch the literature of a living language on the Procrustes' Bed of an academic curriculum with its 'set books', its formal categories and its soulless examinations!

In most 'disciplines', logic lays down the law, the technical terms are units of abstract meaning, and patterns and propositions and conclusions create at least the illusion of clarity. Formulas, equations, diagrams, graphs and models give the impression of scientific exactitude and universal applicability. But in literature generally (and in poetry particularly), words are not scientific terms—words are charged with diverse intensities of feeling, words become images and metaphors and myths, and rhythm and music inject imponderable elements of power into language; and defying logic, defying commonsense, words become magic casements, and one sees much or little according to one's range of vision. 'Works of art are of an infinite loneliness', said Rilke, 'and with nothing so little to be reached as criticism'. Poetry (or art) is concerned essentially with the psychic reality behind the physical reality, it is ideal (not everyday) experience that is the stuff of literature and art, and most of our prim evaluative categories become irrelevant in this context. If you need exercise, discuss irregular verbs with mathematical symbols, codify variant readings, look for literary echoes, but leave



poetry alone!

Nevertheless, most universities today—even Institutes of Technology—have courses in modern literatures, including literature in the mother-tongue of the students. Since comprehension itself cannot be much of a problem (except when one is dealing with impressionistic, obscure or experimental writers), the “discipline” of the course will have to be somehow related to literary appreciation, the exercising of sensibility, and the formulation of value-judgements. Poetic truth, said Wordsworth, is ‘operative’; it works upon the reader, it does something to him. Can we not accurately register or record these reactions—these caressings, these illuminations, these shocks of transcendence? Can we not expose a group of students (as I. A. Richards did) to the impact of a particular poem— a lyric or a short passage of poetry—and thereby give them training in literary sensibility and taste? Since there are different modes of literature, and since literature has been produced at different times by different people, the readers need to get familiar with the convention of the time or of the ‘school’ that particular writers may be using. There are certain kinds of aesthetic satisfaction that one may legitimately expect in a sonnet, a romantic tragedy, or in the theatre of the absurd. ‘This is how you should make your approach, this is where you should laugh, this is where *katharsis* trickles out, this is the *rasa* of the situation!’ Is it right to put the would-be *rasika* through such a regimen of aesthetic *asanas* and appropriate responses? A mathematical problem is usually solved in the same way by all the pupils. Experiments in science yield more or less the same results and support the same conclusions. . . . But if a group of ten students are asked to attempt an appreciation of a given poem, how tantalizingly varied are the responses! I have known a dozen or more seasoned university professors of English throw up a bewildering variety of aesthetic responses while discussing a poem set for comment and appreciation at the I.A.S. examination. What is meat to Dr Tillyard may be wormwood to Dr Leavis. Literary appreciation, then, cannot have the reliability—the mathematical precision—of scientific experiments. In literary appreciation there is neither universality nor repeatability, for even the same person may not react to the same poem in identically the same manner on two different occasions. Of course in India, we have been able to computerize poetic appreciation. The tutorial colleges, the bazar guides and the teachers’ own dictions have standardized and tabloidized literary appreciation and criticism. Questions are anticipated, and even as

there are master-keys to fit many locks, there are master-answers that seem to fit any question almost emanating out of the paper-setter's ingenuity. But there is no 'academic discipline' in all this: only a shoddy kind of marketing, or even black-marketing. It is no doubt open to the earnest teacher of contemporary literature to try to initiate his pupils into the art of discriminating between good and bad, between the genuine and the spurious, through the close examination of language—and the use of images and symbols and myths—and it may seem sophisticated to employ terms like 'negative capability', 'objective correlative', 'dissociation of sensibility', 'catalytic agent' and 'contemporaneous relevance', and the teacher may advise pupils, in the name of 'catholicity of taste', to admire an odd assortment of 'set books' covering four centuries and illustrating many a 'literary form'. But no reader, not even a submissive student, can be argued or brow-beaten or lectured into really appreciating something that doesn't click for him at the first encounter.

Although the ultimate secret—why or how poetry is written, and how poetry unpredictably sets the *sabridaya's* heart aflame—must defy unravelment, most universities provide courses in literature, literary history, criticism and appreciation, and even in 'creative writing'. Literary history with its chronological arrangement, its division into 'periods', its sleuthing of trends, tendencies and influences, its display of biographical matter, its magisterial census-operations and impressive cram-performances—literary history gives the necessary ballast to any literature course. A map—the more accurately detailed the better—is a very useful thing to have, and it is an indispensable guide to the tourist, but a map cannot provide bed and breakfast nor can it light up the inner flame in the presence of beauty or in the holy of holies. Literary biography—that of a poet like Byron or Emily Bronte or Dylan Thomas—can be very interesting indeed, yet 'poetolatry' is no substitute for poetry. What a piece of poetry gives is not the record of the poet's actual experience but of his imaginative experience—a very different thing altogether. . . . Again, it could be stimulating to read works like Leslie Stephen's *English Literature and Society in the Eighteenth Century* (1903), L. C. Knights' *Drama and Society in the Age of Johnson* (1937), John Loftis's *The Politics of Drama in Augustan England* (1963), Geoffrey Bullough's *Mirror of Minds: Changing Psychological Beliefs in English Poetry* (1962) and Basil Willey's *The Seventeenth Century Background* (1934) and its successors, that survey literature in relation to the age, its political, economic and social conditions, its climate of thought and opinion,

its changing religious temper. There are the various 'approaches' to literature—linguistic, moralistic, psychological, psycho-analytic, sociological, formalistic, symbolistic, archetypal—and these have their uses certainly, but if one were not careful one could easily find oneself sidetracked. It would be good, therefore, to bear in mind the caution uttered by Mr. R. P. Blackmur:

'The approaches to—or the escapes from—the central work of criticism are as various as the heresies of the Christian church, and like them testify to occasional needs, fanatic emphasis, special interest, or intellectual pride, all flowing from and even the worst of them enlightening the same body of insight'.

One way of looking at literature would be to treat each poem, each drama, each novel, as something autonomous and unique, defying our propensity for pigeon-holing, our itch for regimentation, our mechanistic systems of causality and correspondence. Another way would be to view literature as the product of the tildes, the writer being largely conditioned by his age. The truth must be somewhere between these extremes, and might vary from author to author, from poem to poem. The writer, like any other, is a creature of his age; yet when he is a poet, he somehow transcends his age as well. There is a mingling of the local and the temporal as also the universal and the timeless in great literature. Valmiki and Vyasa still speak to *us* across the centuries. 'Hindu' India, 'Muslim' India, 'British' India—the classic divisions of Indian history—are all gathered into the past but Valmiki and Vyasa are contemporaneous still, and so are Homer, Dante and Shakespeare. The literature of the past doubtless reflects in some measure the ages in which it was written. But if that were all, the literature of yesterday would be no more than coloured history or cultural anthropology. Likewise, although current literature can hardly avoid some political, religious or sociological content, or even commitment, yet literature is much more than a critique of contemporary society delivered by sleight of hand, as it were. The problem before the literary critic is to suggest the flow of tradition, the sense of continuity, the impression of change and growth, in a living literature, but without dehydrating the individuality or uniqueness of the different writers and their several creations. A work like Gilbert Highet's *The Classical Background: Greek and Roman Influences on Western Literature* (1949) is European literary history, but with a significant difference. 'We are Greeks', said Shelley, and H. A. L. Fisher declared, 'We Europeans are children

of Hellas'. In different centuries, in different countries and in varying intensities, the classical influence has inspired, shaped or tempered Western literature, the three main channels of influence being translation, imitation and emulation. Like the classical, the Christian background is equally important. And to study literature against these backgrounds and also against the shifting background of social and political life, and the changing background of ideas, can be very rewarding. If, as Dr Leavis says, 'the business of the literary critic is to attain a peculiar completeness of response and to observe a peculiarly strict relevance in developing his response into commentary', if in F. W. Bateson's words the critic's superiority 'can only be in the greater completeness of his response to the stimulus of a poem', the critic should be both the ideal reader of the poet's time and the ideal *sahridaya* of all time. Perhaps the more important thing (and "this alas! cannot be taught) is to be the ideal *sahridaya*, to be able to re-enact in his mind and soul the heaven or hell projected in the poem.

Since an intelligent awareness of the backgrounds can promote a completeness of response to literature and facilitate the translation of this response into commentary, in the Indian context too it must be helpful to cultivate such a sense of awareness of the backgrounds. It is not of course easy to form a clear picture of 'Indian Literature', which is almost a blanket term like, say, European or African literature. In contemporary India, literary activity is going on in fifteen or more languages: Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Malayalam, Marathi, Oriya, Panjabi, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu and Urdu, And among the other languages and literatures that claim—or have won—an independent status are Dogri, Maithili, Magadhi, Rajasthani, Manipuri and Konkani. There is, besides, Sanskrit, now actually spoken by only a few thousands, but of supreme relevance as the classical language of India in which so much of our sacred and secular literature has come down to us: and there is also considerable new writing in Sanskrit testifying to its continued vitality. As for English, it is now both a spoken and a written language in India—no mere 'library language', not as yet!—with a steadily growing literature of its own.

Although the existence of so many languages, each with its own distinctive or distinguished literary tradition, may appear to deny an identity or personality to Indian Literature', a more understanding look at the phenomenon will reveal a different complexion altogether. The geographical clarity and cohesion of the Indian subcontinent is

there for all to see. Equally noticeable are the underlying uniformity of life and thought and the hard core of common behaviour and attitudes that have persisted through the ages. The country and its peoples have known vicissitudes and met challenges from time to time, and have not failed to respond purposefully to outside influences. Winds and cyclones of change have come and gone, and India and her peoples have preserved till the present time their native soul and hue of character, In which ever part of India a movement—religious, social, political, literary—may have started, it has always proliferated sooner or later over the whole country; and creative new thought has followed certain recognizable travel-routes, and India's great thinkers and teachers—men like Sankara, Ramanuja, Nanak and Vivekananda—have known how to give a general diffusion to their ideas. Again, although some ten or more scripts are current in India, almost all of them are descended from the Brahmi—a simple parent form of writing—and the scripts are as a rule phonetic. 'Indian Literature', then, comprises literature in fifteen or more languages with their unquestionable consanguinity, written in a diversity of scripts that most of them derived from a common source. Under the surface, the modern Indian literatures (whether of Indo-Aryan or of Dravidian origin) show certain parallel lines of development. Local differences in emphasis notwithstanding, the following four layers or divisions in the literary heritage may be clearly noticed:

*firstly*, local matter, reflecting the life of the rural people, their customs, beliefs, recreations, etc.;

*secondly*, Sanskritic matter, the literary tradition from the Vedas to the epics, Puranas, kavyas, dramas, the Brahmanical and the Buddhistic and Jaina streams of religious and ethical thought;

*thirdly*, matter imported from the Islamic world of Persia and Arabia, as a result of the Muslim incursions beginning in the eleventh century and

*fourthly*, matter imported from the western world from the seventeenth century onwards in the wake of the coming of Christianity, the British impact and the introduction of English, modern science and representative government, and the more recent impact of Marxism, Leninism and Maoism.

There may be some overlapping, but in the main these four streams are doubtless there, one or two running dry sometimes, and sometimes the old and the new, native and foreign, fusing meaningfully. In the folk-tales, songs and ballads, certain motifs—relevant to agricultural occupations, local marriage customs, or local

deities personifying river, hill or legendary hero—tend to recur, and these again have a certain basic pattern of uniformity all over India. The Sanskrit influence spread in recognizable waves, and so did the Persian-Arabic and later the Christian-European influence. To the indigenous literary genres of epic, drama, lyric, “romance, didactic and devotional poetry, ballad and folk tale were added the imported literary forms of tragic drama, the novel, the short story, sonnet, satire, the light essay, literary journalism and political oratory.

However dazzling in its variety or baffling in its complexity, it may thus be claimed that modern Indian literature is but the outcome of a long process of evolution, mutual influence and accommodation, and steady growth in volume, variegated richness, vitality and authentic quality. Without affirming a bold philosophy of languages and literatures, it would perhaps be difficult to view the literary scene in India as anything but distracting. We should firmly hold fast to the faith that the existence of some fifteen or more languages and literatures needn't necessarily make India a Tower of Babel, but can be really a blessing, contributing to the many-sided opulence of the Indian literary and cultural scene. So long as we do not allow the cultural or political unity of India to be adversely affected, these several sister languages and literatures are like so many lamps, no light interfering with another or the others, but all cumulatively giving brilliant illumination to the great Hall where they are installed.

While a course in ‘Indian Literature’ may be neither possible nor desirable as an independent and full-fledged ‘academic discipline’, such a course can still serve as a useful adjunct to the detailed study of any of the Indian regional literatures. Indian history is sometimes studied region-wise, but India as a whole has its history too arid children all over India are (or should be) familiar with the broad outlines of this history, into which are dovetailed the several regional histories. In like manner, it should be instructive to study a regional literature in the wider context of Indian literature with its great arching movements from the Vedic age to the present day. Perhaps, within the larger national background, the more immediate regional background—the Dravidian comprising the four southern literatures, the literature of the northern region (comprising Kashmiri, Panjabi, Hindi and Urdu), of the Western region (comprising Marathi, Gujarati, Sindhi, Rajasthani) or of the eastern (comprising Assamese, Bengali and Oriya)—may be given a somewhat closer attention. It should be interesting as well as enlightening to study the language



and kinship of the Indian languages and literatures, going back to a 'period three of four thousand years ago, marking the movement of Vedic to classical Sanskrit, Dravidian *into* Tamil and its sister languages, the rise of the prakrits and apabhramsa, the mingling of foreign elements, the cross-fertilization, the emergence of the fifteen or more modern languages and literatures. It is a fascinating story, and one may follow its main lines of development in Dr Suniti Kumar Chatterji's monumental *Languages and Literatures of Modern India* (1963) and Krishna Kripalani's *Modern Indian Literature: A Panoramic Glimpse* (1968). Quite obviously, "Indian Literature<sup>5</sup> is no monolithic unity like, say, Marathi or Bengali or Tamil literature. But neither is 'Indian Literature' a mere conglomeration of wholly independent literatures. It was possible for the Tamil poet, Subramania Bharati, to sing:

The mighty Himavant is ours—  
     There is no equal anywhere on earth;  
 The generous Ganga is ours—  
     Which other river can match her grace?  
 The sacred Upanishads are ours—  
     What scriptures else to name with them? . . .  
 Here Brahma-knowledge has taken root,  
     And the Buddha preached his *dhamma* here;  
 Of hoary antiquity is Bharat,  
     She's peerless, let us praise her!

*Translation by Prema Nandakumar*

The *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata* and the *Bhagavata* have all been transplanted into most of the modern Indian languages. They are not just translations, nor are they mere rehashes or summaries; rather, are they indubitable masterpieces in their own right, although deriving their primary inspiration from the original Sanskrit. The Oriya *Mahabharata* of Sarala Dasa, Rama Saraswati's Assamese *Mahabharata*, Kashiramdas's Bengali *Mahabharata*, Villiputturar's *Bharatam* in Tamil, the Telugu *Maha bharata* of Nannayya-Tikkana-Yellapragada, *Pampa Bharata* and *Gada Yuddha* in Kannada, Ezhuthachchan's in Malayalam, Sridhara's in Marathi—it is truly astonishing that Vyasa should have inspired these and many other regional versions, each holding a position of importance if not pre-eminence in the respective languages. Again, *Kamba Ramayanam* in Tamil, Tulsidasa's *Ramacharit Manas* in Hindi, Kritivasa's in Bengali, Balarania Dasa's in Oriya, Pbtana's *Bhagavata* in Telugu, Bhatta Deva's in Assamese and Jagahnatha Dasa's *Bhagavata* in Oriya are original poems more



than translations, and they have served as the oxygen of the popular religious culture of the respective peoples. The affinities between, say, Tamil and the other three Dravidian languages, or between Assamese, Bengali and Oriya; or Hindi, Urdu and Panjabi, and indeed the filiations between the several Indian literatures are much closer—in linguistic organization, in intellectual and emotional content, in the evocation of the physical landscape of India and, above all, in their spiritual impulsions—than between the literatures of the European or African continent. An outline course in Indian literature—one paper out of eight or ten in an advanced course in one or two Indian literatures—should help to emphasize these close affinities, these intricate filiations, between the literatures now flourishing in India. Necessarily, much of the information will be second-hand, for the student of one literature (his own) will have to depend on translations for his knowledge of other Indian literatures. But even the awareness of the other literatures and the awareness too of the common denominator between them should condition the student's mind towards an integral understanding of the total literary heritage of India. The pioneers and path-finders of the contemporary phase of the Indian literatures—a Bankim Chandra, a Lakshminath Bezbarua, a Fakirmohan Senapati, a Subramania Bharati, a Gurdas Apparao, a Kailasam, a Vallathol, an Iqbal, a Premchand a Hari Narayan Apte, a Munshi, a Bhai Vir Singh—have significance for all India. A student would be able to achieve a fuller response to his own literature if he also acquired some familiarity, some intimacy, with Indian literature as a whole. It should thus be not difficult to devise a course on 'Indian Literature' that makes an agreeable impact on the students of any of the individual regional literatures. Such a course must, of course, avoid becoming a catalogue of names and dates for it is not cram that should be the aim but organic relevance to the particular literature *on* which the student is engaged. Some tape-recorded readings from the several literatures might help the student to get the feel of the different literatures, and Assamese or Bengali or Hindi or Gujarati or Panjabi or Kannada poetry might—leaping over the barrier of mere language—sink into the profundities of the soul. Rather greater emphasis may be given to the regionally contiguous than to the more distant literatures, but there need be no principle of exclusion. A Kannada student might find it easier to follow Telugu or Tamil than Assamese, but the lyric muse might ignore the barrier of distance, and poets like Nanak, Tukaram, Kabir, Mira, Tagore, Bharati, Bendre and Umashankar

may speak or whisper directly to almost anyone in India. Eschewing rigidity but boldly embarking upon adventurous experiment, courses in 'Indian Literature' as auxiliaries to the comprehensive courses in particular Indian literatures might prove fruitfully exciting. Almost any university in India has more than one modern Indian language department, and most universities have departments in Sanskrit and English as well. Planned cooperation between all these language departments would facilitate a healthy spread of interests, and the services of the teachers in all the departments could be pooled together to offer courses in the several languages and literatures in the broader context of Indian literature. At any rate, the attempt is worth making.

R.K. DAS GUPTA

## Research in Modern Indian Languages



A DISTINGUISHED British educationist has a word of rebuke for the young research students whom he exhorts: 'For God's sake, stop researching for a while and begin to think'. For the researcher in modern Indian languages the need for such exhortation may not be less. On the whole, the state of research in Indian languages is far from cheering. We must find a way of testing the worth of our academic learning in the languages. *Robins Report on Higher Education in Great Britain* warns that 'any decline or weakening in the study of the humanities would impoverish the intellectual and spiritual life of the country', Perhaps we do not generally recognize the relevance of literary discipline to our higher life.

Some of the drawbacks of research in our languages are common to research in any modern language anywhere. But when the English scholar wanted to initiate researches in his own literature he could use the tools and procedures of classical learning. But the Indian scholar in a modern Indian language was not substantially tutored by the Sanskrit Pandit. The heritage of Sanskrit poetics, etc., was not preserved in a living tradition of literary scholarship. Later, an attempt to produce a unified critical universe by integrating Sanskrit poetics with European criticism was made. But the task yet remains unaccomplished.

Secondly, the English scholar worked in a larger field of European literature and thus gained a large perspective. The Indian scholar's concentration on his own language and indifference to any other restricted his horizon and encouraged a parochial literary standard. Our third drawback is due to the fact that higher courses in modern Indian languages are yet to attract a large number of gifted students. The universal shift of talent towards science and technology and to professionally useful disciplines has been a great hindrance. A fourth drawback of research in modern Indian languages is our difficulty in maintaining standards. Our literary scholarship is very largely influenced by western models. But the Western scholar has cared more for Sanskrit literature than for our modern literatures, and has often been guilty of a dangerous) superficiality in handling literature at the lowest level of scholarship.

While reflecting on these drawbacks I suggest that the University Grants Commission appoint a committee of experts, which would also include a few first rate scholars from some western universities, to make a survey of the state of researches in modern Indian languages in our universities and make recommendations for its improvement. Reorganization of research will necessarily involve a reorganization of the entire system of higher learning in our languages. The standard of our researches is linked up with the standards of our teaching in our Postgraduate and Honours courses and we cannot raise the one without raising the other.

The quality of our literary research will, of course, ultimately depend upon the quality of our mind and a society lacking in intellectual fineness is not likely to achieve a great deal in this field. Still our universities must find a way of achieving quality for re-defining the whole purpose of our literary research, and for fulfilling that purpose. Let us first decide that our primary purpose is not to produce Ph. D. but to produce learning. Secondly, let us decide that the learning we produce does not take us away from the substance of literature but brings us closer to it.

Perhaps the first item in our programme of reform should be to establish a living link between teaching and research. We must now shed the idea that research was necessary only for a doctoral degree. It may be necessary for a good classroom lecture, for a short paper in a journal and even for a civilized conversation at the dinner table. The Committee of University Teaching Methods under the Chairmanship of Sir Edward Hael (Great Britain) disclosed on the basis of a survey made in February, 1962, that while the ratio between

teaching and research in science was 50:50, that in humanities was about 65:35, If we want to make the ratio even in our disciplines we must not admit students who are not shaped for our higher courses.

We should then proceed to reform our research degree courses in modern Indian languages. It may be worthwhile to consider if our Master's course should not be reformed to bring it nearer to the Ph. D. course. For a broad intellectual horizon and general ability we ought to depend on our Honours course which may now be a four-year course after school. This would permit us to introduce an element of specialization in our M.A. course. But when we raise the standard of Ph. D. course we must introduce a research degree of an intermediate standard, like the M. Litt. of Cambridge and Madras, and make it a desirable qualification for our university teachers. We should make this a course in modern Indian Languages and give it an orientation towards comparative literature. The minimum qualification for admission to this M. Litt, research degree should be a Master's degree in one of the Indian languages, a reading knowledge of two languages, none of which being the candidate's own and one belonging to a group of languages different from his own, such a training would ensure a measure of scholarly ability. In fact, the kind of training which this course is intended to offer will require a very large measure of inter disciplinary cooperation.

The medium of these higher courses in modern Indian languages in respect of both lectures and examination should be English for many years to come, we cannot shed English without losing a good deal in standard. But we should encourage Ph. D. students to produce work of quality in their own language, each department should publish a proportion of its work as papers, monographs or books, and should have at least an annual bulletin to preserve its best results, all to be published in English so that we may affiliate ourselves to the finest systems of literary scholar ships in the world.

While keeping all this work of reorganization in view, we must also remain aware of our intellectual responsibility of arriving at a conception of Indian literature as a whole and comprehend its nature and quality in the background of world standards.

V.K. GOKAK

## Post-Graduate Course in Indian Literature for our Universities



THE UNIVERSITY Grants Commission approved of a summer course in Indian Literature in 1969 for lecturers and post-graduate students selected from our universities. Bangalore University was permitted to organize this course. As one who was in charge of the University at that time and took an initiative in shaping the course and securing a faculty for teaching it from all over the country, I would like to share a few of my thoughts with you regarding a regular course in Indian Literature to be taught in our universities. The summer course mentioned above was the first of its kind to be organized in the country and a few ideas based on the experience obtained while running it may be useful in planning a regular course in Indian Literature.

It may be somewhat premature now to plan an honours course of this kind for undergraduates. Outstanding literary works from the modern Indian languages are not always available in translation. Only a few such books have been translated into English or into Hindi. Undergraduates may be given the opportunity to study a modern Indian novel, play or collection of stories or essays, translated ably into their language, by way of general reading, in lieu of or in addition to a regional text. This will make all undergraduates aware of the need to scan horizons larger than regional ones. Instead of

planning it as an honours course, we may have a course in Indian literature at the post-graduate level to begin with.

The reality, unity, variety and continuity of Indian literature have naturally not been envisaged outside India because we in India have not ourselves experienced it intimately as yet. In an anthology of Commonwealth Poetry published in the United Kingdom a few years ago, India was represented by two or three Indo-Anglian lyrics, like Uganda or Kenya. The vast mass of distinguished poetry in the modern Indian languages was completely ignored in the pages of that anthology, This would have been understandable if the anthologist had announced that his intention was only to select from poetry written in English in the commonwealth countries. But the apparent intention was to prepare a representative volume of selections from contemporary commonwealth poetry.

As Dr Radhakrishnan said, Indian literature is one though written in many languages, But how many languages has a student, who chooses to study this course, to be familiar with? The contemporary literature in Sanskrit may be set apart for study by the student of Sanskrit literature. It is living literature in a dead language and, therefore, not part of the main stream. Similarly, the Prakrits, which were used as mediums for our early literature, may be reserved for the specialist. They may be taken up for study, at a later stage, by students of certain optional courses in the history of Indian literature when the principal course in Indian literature is well established. It may then branch out into optional courses of intensive study in early literary history. Indo-Anglian literature has only a modern phase and it has already been included for study under the English literature course at the post-graduate level. But the study of another modern Indian language for a student of this course may be regarded as almost essential. He should have the opportunity to feel the impact of the unity of Indian literature through a medium other than his own regional language. Bilingualism of this kind is, besides, a necessity in a multi-lingual nation like ours.

A proliferation of optional courses under the principal course in Indian literature, or its culmination in the establishment of Indian literature as a major or complete discipline like the course we have today, may be planned in many ways. A century-wise period study may cut across the literary history of the modern Indian languages, as a course unit, and serve to highlight the underlying unity of our literature and our culture. Another course unit may be devoted to a comparison of some of the great writers in our languages, writers



who invite such a comparison either because of their contemporary affinities or the universality of their attainment. A third course unit could also be planned for tracing the impact of a great writer like Valmiki, Vyasa, Kalidasa, Shakespeare, Shaw or Tagore on all the regional literatures. This will demonstrate how the same influences or movements have been at work simultaneously in all the modern Indian languages. In a fourth course unit, we could work out the ramifications of a particular myth or legend in all the literatures or the treatment meted out to a particular theme like Nature, Nationalism or Socialism. It should be possible to study the impact of special movements like Buddhism, Jainism, Islam, the revival of Bhakti, or the impact of Western culture, on our literatures, in a fifth paper. A detailed survey of a group of literatures and their action and interaction will be another fascinating undertaking as a last or sixth course unit. Modern Indian literatures can be divided into the eastern, western, northern and southern zones for this purpose. But there are interesting traces of significant mutual impact even between languages that cut beyond these zones like Kannada and Marathi, Oriya and Telugu, Kannada and Assamese and Tamil and Hindi. Those interested in philological and linguistic study will find it fascinating: to trace the fortunes of Kashmiri or Urdu or ponder over periods of arrested growth when literature suddenly ceased to be produced for a time, as in Bengali and Gujarati, due to political upheavals.

I have tried to outline some of the contents of a comprehensive course in Indian literature in the foregoing paragraph. But it would be desirable to initiate and stabilize a subsidiary course in Indian literature in order to pave the way for a comprehensive course. The subsidiary course may consist of two course units, one in a general study of the history of Indian literature and another course unit for the study of a regional literature other than the student's own, but only in its modern phase with a few illustrative-texts.

What students do we have in view when we think of a post-graduate course in Indian literature? Since we are thinking of a course consisting of two course units, it can be taken up only as a subsidiary or minor subject. This means that students specializing in a subject like English literature, Sanskrit, Pali, Ardhamagadhi, a modern Indian literature or Linguistics as their major assignment, generally in six course units, can opt for the two course units in Indian literature in lieu of two more in their own subject of specialization. Our universities may also consider whether such

an option should be extended to students of some of the social sciences. I think that for students specializing in one modern Indian literature or the other, the two course units in Indian literature should be compulsory. The study of a modern Indian literature in isolation, without the national background and the setting of sister literatures, has generally produced an insularity of outlook and promoted an academic discipline which is somewhat sub-standard, when compared with other disciplines obtaining in our universities.

As for the type of teacher who should teach this course, it is obvious that this is a new subject and candidates with the usual qualifications will not be available for teaching it. Even when this course becomes established and M.A.s with Indian literature are in the field, they should not be preferred for promotion and such other purposes to those who have taught them the course. The selection of teachers for the course will have to be governed by one important requirement. They should have specialized, at the Hons. and M.A. courses, in two literatures—English literature and a modern Indian literature, Sanskrit or Arabic and a modern Indian literature, one of the Prakrits and a modern Indian literature, or two modern Indian literatures. Some of these combinations do not obtain in our universities at present. Even if the candidate has specialized only in one literature, he should have produced scholarly and critical work on another literature, work which is adequate in volume and reveals an awareness of the historical, sociological, psychological and aesthetic approaches to literature. It is only then that the teacher can carve out an honourable place for Indian literature in the family of academic disciplines in a university.

Coming to the course itself, we may begin with defining the objectives of the course. The main idea, behind the course is to bring home to students of Indian literature its reality, unity, variety and continuity. The reality of 'Indian Literature', as distinguished from the multiplicity of the literatures in the modern Indian languages, can be experienced by studying deeply the historical, social, political and cultural background which is exactly the same for all those literatures but for a few natural and regional variations. The regional variations themselves emphasize the fact of the profound reality of Indian literature. Again, the unity of Indian literature can be envisaged clearly when we study the surprising uniformity that exists, from period to period, in the matter of the choice and treatment of themes, the impact of the literary and cultural movements that impress themselves on this multi-lingual literature and the fashions

that arise, from time to time, in the cultivation of language, style and metre and in the use of imagery and the adoption of literary forms. Unlike Europe, which is a family of nations, India is a confederation of States with a strong centre. Though a continent, Europe itself has a literature which coheres well and which can be distinguished from, say, Asian literature. Whether it is the Renaissance or the Reformation, Romanticism or Socialism, these large movements in the sphere of life and thought permeate European literature as a whole and have been studied by scholars as such. Naturally, there will be national variations as to the timing of these movements a little this way or that and in the degree of emphasis on the one or the other of the elements that constitute each movement. For example, Romanticism started on its career in Germany and spread later to other countries. There are also some especial features that distinguish German from, say, English Romanticism. But there is unquestionable unity in the sum and substance of these movements that affect the literatures of Europe. Our study of the literature of any European country will be casual and superficial if we do not study it against its European background. If this is what we can say about European literature, it is easy to see that the unity that holds Indian literature together is a much closer and more intimate unity. The feudal structure of society and of government prevailed both in Europe and in India. Feudalism had a more prolonged sway in India than in Europe. By the time that Democracy arrived, the linguistic units in Europe developed, or had already developed into independent nations. The advent of modernism and democracy in India, on the other hand, saw the States held together firmly under a Central Government. When modern India grew conscious of herself in a world setting, she knew that she was a nation. That is why the unity of Indian literature is a more radiant and much closer unity. Apart from the Indian heritage, which is a common linguistic, social and cultural heritage, like the European heritage, India has a history, going back to a century and a half or more, of an utterly identical aspiration, governance, struggle and fulfilment. That is why we speak of the unity of Indian literature.

Thirdly, we have to realize that this unity is no dull and drab uniformity. A colourful and life-giving variety permeates this unity and prevents it from degenerating into mere uniformity. The unique genius of each linguistic unit in the country makes its own characteristic contribution to the symphony of the national literature. To take an example or two, most of the modern Indian languages took

over their literary forms and even metres from Sanskrit when they commenced their literary career. But new developments took place as each language grew and prospered. Assamese had its tradition of play-writing and of *buranjis* or prose chronicles much earlier than any other modern Indian language, Kannada and Malayalam have had their *yakshagana* and *kathakali* cycles of folk plays. Kannada developed in the twelfth century the unique form of the *vachana* or prose-lyric. Kannada developed its indigenous metres called *ragale*, *shatpadi*, *kanda* and *sangatya* and Marathi its *ovi* and *abhangas*. Even a survey of what has been done with the *Ramayana* in the various languages will bring out the unity in conception and in execution in each one of these literatures. Another proof of this enrichment and variety is found in the history of the action and interaction among these literatures. The early poetic activity in Marathi and Telugu began under the stimulus received from Kannada poetry. Modern Marathi and Telugu drama also began under similar auspices. But modern Kannada fiction drew a good part of its inspiration from Marathi and Bengali. A new literary movement began in Assamese when Sankara Deva took with him from the Deccan a number of song-patterns and melodies. The history of literary give-and-take between the modern Indian languages has resulted in a great enrichment of the national literature and it shows how various threads are woven together to form a common literary pattern. Kamban's *Ramayana* and the *Ramayana* of Tulsidas come from two extreme ends of India and are separated from each other in time by several centuries. But tradition has it that it was the recital of Kamban's Tamil *Ramayana* in Banaras by Kumara Guruparar that inspired Tulsidas to write his *Ramayana* in Hindi.

As for the continuity of Indian literature, it would be fascinating to study in some detail its early, medieval and modern phases of development. I have attempted an outline of this aspect of Indian literary history in my introduction to *Literatures in the Modern Languages* published by the Ministry of Broadcasting and Information, Government of India, in 1957. I think that a perusal of that introduction will enable the reader to realize what undetected treasures lie hidden in Indian literature. First-rate academic and critical work is possible in this field at least for the next half century.

A study of the unity and variety of Indian literature can be achieved better by introducing in our course the study of a modern Indian literature other than the one with which the student is familiar. This will enable the student to see how Indian literature

follows its own curve and law of development, whatever the medium through which it has to seek expression. This will also bring vividly home to him the interesting variations that exist within the national pattern. But the study should be restricted only to contemporary writing in the language so selected. In a subsidiary or minor course, it will be unfair to expect the student to tackle points of linguistic difficulty or recondite usage that may arise in a study of the earlier phases of such a literature.

How shall we devise a syllabus for such a course? The first requirement will be that the student must be familiar with the forces and movements that have shaped Indian history down the centuries. (The student should also be familiar with general surveys of European literature and world literature on similar lines.) This will enable him to go into greater detail over the literary movements, themes and styles and the unity they reveal, as well as the variety. He will be able to see how, for example, the *manipravala* style dominated poetic activity in the whole of south India for a certain period. Again, a survey of the three phases; of Indian literature, concentrating on essentials and on a few outstanding names taken from each language and probably a little more familiarity with the Modern Indian Renaissance and the course it took in each regional literature, will have to be an integral part of the course. The first course unit may comprise all these topics, with the study of some illustrative texts. The second course unit may be confined to the additional language and literature chosen by the student, through the study of a representative collection of modern poetry, a book of essays and a novel or play in that language.

A bibliography of books about Indian literature and of Indian literary works available in English translation and in Hindi and the other modern Indian languages has yet to be compiled. This spade-work may as well be undertaken immediately by the relevant departments in our universities. Quite a few books may also have to be prepared specially for introducing this course. But I think a beginning could be made with such material as is available already. The accounts of Indian history by K. M. Panikkar and S. R. Sharma can provide the background material, not to speak of the more ambitious efforts in this field. The volume of radio talks on the literatures in the modern Indian languages, referred to above, will have to be reprinted for this purpose if the course is to be implemented. Till other books are produced on the subject, that book remains the only one-volume study covering the entire period

and the literary activity in all the modern Indian languages. The literary histories published by the Sahitya Akademi and its journal *Indian Literature* will be invaluable aids for such a course of study,

Each one of the three phases of Indian literature will have to be studied under the first course unit, in the light of a few illustrative texts in translation. Two or three texts illustrating each phase can be prescribed, taking care to see that the widest possible representation is given to all parts of the country. If nine books are prescribed, each one could be picked up from the literature of a different region. Since the early phase is in evidence only in the Prakrits, except in a modern Indian language or two, textual study may even be confined to the medieval and modern phases.

The course should be taught, not merely through lectures, but through tutorial essays written by students on various topics and through seminars in which all of them should participate. The practice regarding internal assessment has not yet taken a definite shape in our universities. We should at least see to it that a student does not get a good class or distinction unless he has done satisfactory work in all the seminars and tutorials.

As for the scheme of examination, each of the two course units should carry a hundred marks where the system of awarding marks is current. The course unit on an additional language and literature should carry 25 marks for a viva in the language and 75 marks for the written examination. The other course unit should carry a hundred marks for the written examination. But the question paper should be so framed that questions on all the leading topics are compulsory. The options given under each question should be restricted to areas related to the topic on which the question has been set. It would also be necessary to make sure that general topics and texts are dovetailed and drawn upon simultaneously for each question so that the student is not encouraged to omit the study of large portions from the prescribed course. If nine questions are asked on nine texts, the examinee will be in a position to skip all but two or three of them. But if each question set on a general topic involved one of the prescribed texts in some way, he will have to do justice to five or six of them along with the general topics.

In what has been said so far, I have offered a few suggestions regarding what can be done in this field. These ideas will necessarily have to be tested and modified in the light of experience.





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PART THREE

DISCUSSIONS

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*Chairmen*

Dr V. Raghavan  
Dr Mrs Margaret Chatterjee  
Dr Umashankar Joshi  
Prof. A. K. Ramanujan  
Dr V. I. Subramoniam  
Prof. R. K. Das Gupta  
Prof. Masud Husan Khan  
Prof. K. Kunjanni Raja  
Dr M. Varadarajan  
Sri Krishna R. Kripalani  
Prof. Suniti Kumar Chatterjee

*Rapporteurs*

Dr Nilratan Sen  
Dr Arabinda Poddar  
Dr A. N. Kaul  
Dr Mrs Mythili Kaul  
Dr Sisir Kumar Das

## SECTION A

### *Heritage and Background of Indian Literature* (Classical and medieval)

DR V. RAGHAVAN, Chairman of the session, opened the proceedings by chanting the following verses from the Rigveda:

*Devim vacam ajanayanta devah  
ta visvarupam pusavo vadanti.  
Sa no mandresam urjam duhana  
dhenur vag asman upasustha taitu*

(The divine speech the gods created is of many forms and manifested in the living beings; not merely the human beings speak Her; may She, the gladdening cow of speech, yielding the milk of nourishment and strength, cherished by us properly, come to us.)

### VARADARAJAN, M., *Sangham Literature*

## DISCUSSION

DR V. RAGHAVAN—I would request Dr Varadarajan to elaborate the thematic side of the religious poems known as *padipadal*.

DR VARADARAJAN then elucidated with proper citations the Krishna legends, Ramayana-Katha and Mahabharata stories of Perudevanar.

DR N. R. RAY—I think that it would not be proper to equate the Ramayana-Kavya and the Rama legends.

DR A. N. KAUL—To my mind the love theme of the Sangam poetry is rather idealized. In this connection I would like to know if it would be wrong to discover implicit sexual imagery in it.

DR VARADARAJAN—I do not share this view. These poems are above any direct sex appeal, and that is why they have come down to us as idealized love poems.

DR S. K. DAS—I would like to know what really is the classical element in Tamil literature, Undoubtedly, it is a very ancient literature, but only being ancient Sangam literature cannot also claim to be classical.

DR R. K. DAS GUPTA—I would also repeat the same question. Did Sangam literature derive any inspiration from any more ancient sources? I think the conception of the classical background of Tamil literature should be clarified. Would the speaker mean that there are two classical backgrounds, native Tamil and Sanskrit? If so, how did they unite and become a single tradition?

DR S. K. CHATTERJEE—My reading of Tamil literature reveals that Tamil classics are a two-fold thing; originally Tamil literature had only a native heritage, subsequently the Sanskrit infusion made it much richer.

DR M. H. KHAN—The identity of Tamil classical tradition may be established through its metrical tradition, and in this respect, I think, Tamil classics may be compared with Urdu literature.

DR VARADARAJAN—Excepting the slight influence of the Sanskrit vritta metre, Tamil poetry is still free from Sanskrit metrical influences. As to the Brahminical influence on Sangam literature, I would like to inform Sri Kripalani that though a large number of composers of this period were Brahmins by caste, their literary creations were secular in content. As to the meaning of the word Sangam, I would like to point out that it had nothing to do with the cultural union of the south and the north. It has been discovered that during the vast span of five hundred years some contacts and infusion took place, the infusion of the older culture with the new. Regarding the use of Sanskrit words in Sangam literature I would like to inform Dr Mrs. M. Kaul that it is considerably less than in other writings.

DR MRS M. CHATTERJEE—One of the striking characteristics of the Indian heritage, the classificatory spirit, has ably been illustrated in the present paper. Similar philosophical treatises are available on Sanskrit *rasa* theory, on Buddhist philosophy, on the technique of dances, and so on. In Tamil poetry it has been well classified through various moods, with vivid geographical and different seasonal descriptions.

DR B. D. CHATTOPADHYAY—To my mind the socio-political

references found in Sangam literature should be properly explored, Such a study would throw a flood of light on the civilization of the period, the extent of urbanization achieved, in one word, on the culture of the Tamil people.

RAJA, K.K., *The Influence of Sanskrit on the Dravidian Literatures with special reference to Malayalam*

DISCUSSION

DR U. S. JOSHI—I think the contention that the *campu* in Sanskrit probably came from Malayalam is not correct, since it is one of the earliest forms in Gujarati.

PROF. K. B. DAS—This is also true of Oriya.

DR R. K. DAS GUPTA—I have two questions to put to the speaker: would the speaker identify the Sanskrit background with the classical background? In western literary criticism, the classical has different meanings: as great literature, as literature read in schools, literature prompting thematic imitation of classical models, literature opposing the romantic literature, and finally as the literature of a particular period in literary history. In which sense has the speaker used this term while showing the influence of Sanskrit on south Indian literature? Again, would the speaker compare the Dravidian-Indo Aryan synthesis in south Indian literature with the synthesis of the Hellenic and the Hebraic in the literature of the European Renaissance?

DR K. K. RAJA—I discard the idea of qualifying any borrowings from Sanskrit as classical influence. Dravidian literature has its own classical heritage; the infusion of Sanskrit was a later phenomenon.

DR K. M. GEORGE—I like to point out that the *manipravala* as used in Malayalam is a blending of Sanskrit and Malayalam. The Sanskrit words used in *manipravala* are declined and conjugated according to the Sanskrit grammar and not in accordance to the Malayalam grammar. I wonder if such structural infusion was possible in any other Indian language.

DR V. RAGHAVAN—I fully endorse this view. Let me cite two lines of verses, (cited), where the first words are Malayalam and the rest Sanskrit.

DR A. K. RAMANUJAN—My contention is that such generalizations are not desirable on the point of phonetic influence of one language on another. It needs a deeper study from different levels, concerning society, time, region, etc.

DR O. M. ANUJAN—I would like to point out that most of the translations from Sanskrit into Malayalam are modern, and so these should not be taken as the result of Sanskrit influence.

DR S. K. DAS—I have two questions to be clarified:

1. When the speaker makes a statement that Malayalam accepted all the non-Dravidian phonemes from Sanskrit, does he mean that Sanskrit exerted a great influence on Malayalam phonology, at all levels, or at the literary or stylistic level?

2. When the speaker talks about translation of Sanskrit literature, imitation of Sanskrit forms, and adaptation of Sanskrit stories, should we consider those features as Sanskrit influences? General themes and myths are pan-Indian in character and poets are free to draw their materials from that inexhaustible source and those elements should not be pointed out as instances of Sanskrit influence. He should enlighten us about the thematic and structural influences of Sanskrit literature on Malayalam.

DR A. R. DAS GUPTA—I like to refer to the speaker's reference to the translations from Sanskrit as the impact of western influence. Does he mean to say that the western impact has resulted in the introduction of a Sanskrit bias in Malayalam literature?

DR M. H. KHAN—To my mind the question of infusion is an inevitable phenomenon in all the languages facing confrontation of a language belonging to a different family. Urdu also is a mixed language and has absorbed Persian and Arabic grammatical forms and words.

## KARANDIKAR, MRS S., *Classical Influence on Marathi Literature*

### DISCUSSION

DR N. R. RAY—I would request the speaker to elucidate whether the classical characters taken into the Marathi literature have been given any new interpretation by the Marathi authors. If so, what is the

nature of this neo-classicism?

DR MRS KARANDIKAR—Stray instances of such new interpretations are available, but a whole book like the Bengali epic, *Meghnadbadh Kavya* of Madhusudan has not been written in such a new light. Sita, the daughter of the Earth, has been newly interpreted in Marathi Ramayana.

DR R. K. DAS GUPTA—I have to make several points:

1. Would the speaker identify the corpus of our classical literature? As her paper mentions the entire range of Sanskrit literature, from the Rigveda to the Puranas, obviously including the epics, the Upanisadas, and all the literatures mentioned as classical, how can such a vast and miscellaneous mass of writings illustrate well-defined norms of composition, in respect of style, form or metre.

2. While the speaker said that classical influence is mostly an influence on the manner of writing and not on the choice of the theme, in citing instances from Jnanadeva she has concentrated on the theme of *Bhagavat Gita*; what would be the formal influence of the *Gita* or *Jnaneswari* on later Marathi literature?

3. What is her idea of the nature of a classical influence on later writings? About the classical or Senecan influence on Elizabethan tragedy Granville Barker remarked that Elizabethan tragedy really became Elizabethan and tragic when it ceased to be Senecan. Can the influence of classical literature on Marathi be interpreted in this way?

4. The speaker mentioned the Bible as 'Classic'. It is classic only in the sense of a great book. In Western literary criticism, the Bible represents what is identified as the Hebraic ideal, and is distinguished from classical literature, that is Greek and Latin or Hellenic or Hellenistic ideal. We should not confuse between these two concepts.

DR MRS KARANDIKAR—Classical Marathi literature should be classified in two groups: the artistic and natural. The *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* should be considered as the artistic classical type. *Jnaneswari* or the *Gita* should be judged in this context. As to Dr Das's query about the source of the Marathi *baramasi*, I would like to say that it has come from the Ramayana stories.

DR M. VARADARAJAN—I like to point out that Tanjore has taken more from Marathi than she had given to her culture. This point needs to be properly explored.

DR A. K. RAMANUJAN—I would repeat what I have stated earlier



that proper connotation should be given to the term classical, and that this classical influence should be analysed at various levels.

DR V. RAGHAVAN—We have had a very fruitful day's discussion but I am also of opinion that a full session should be devoted to the question 'what is classical in literature.' Correct definition would clarify a lot of misunderstanding.

## SECTION A

### *Heritage and Background of Indian Literature* (Modern Tendencies)

MEHTA, C.H., *Modern Gujarati Literature*

## DISCUSSION

DR O. M. ANUJAN—I would like to know about Gandhi's influence on post-Independence Gujarati literature.

DR C. H. MEHTA—It is gradually but steadily declining.

DR A. N. KAUL—The passages quoted from Umashankar in the present paper give the impression of a split personality. Yet, the poems themselves, their language, seem to be unfragmented, coherent. The poet may write about chaos and confusion, and yet remain unfragmented; on the other hand, he himself may be confused and write chaotically. What actually is happening in Gujarati?

DR U. S. JOSHI—The poets have the option to adopt new forms, and apparently, some of them may be taken as 'fragmented'; but the poem itself is always a whole, an integral creation. Apparent confusion very often has some deeper coherence which should not escape the eyes of a keen lover of poetry. So, a real piece of literature can never be fragmented.

DR N. G. JOSHI—I endorse what Umashankar has said. In his later poetry he himself had changed forms, but the basic outlook remained unchanged.

DR N. R. RAY—I would like to remind ourselves the real aim of literature. In this world, nothing is orderly. It is the duty of the artist

to bring order out of this chaos, So, art cannot be a mere imitation of nature; and poetry, which is a piece of art, cannot be fragmented.

PROF W. L. KULKARNI—Who is to judge whether a piece of literature is real art or not?

DR N. R. RAY—The real appreciation of literature requires training, in the same way as training is needed for an understanding of classical music or abstract art.

DR R. K. DASGUPTA—I very much doubt whether modern sensibility, as it is understood in Western literature, is present in Gujarati literature. Western society experienced both the Renaissance and the Industrial Revolution, whereas the people of a backward economy had no scope to have such a life-transforming experience.

DR J. K. MISHRA—I would like to know if there is any existence of class conflict in modern Gujarati literature.

DR C.H. MEHTRA—Class-conflict is not a new element in our literature, it had been there from a much earlier period.

SRI ATTAR SINGH—My question is about the social reality of Gujarati literature as referred to in the present paper, How has this phenomenon been reflected in literature? I would also ask the speaker to elucidate on the point of non-communistic Gujarati literature.

DR U. S. JOSHI—On the request of the participants, gave a vivid description of the literary scene in Gujarat down from the thirties of this century upto the post-Independence period.

DR A. K. RAMANUJAN—I find that the modern critics of Indian literatures have a tendency to apply blindly the western definitions on Indian writings. In fairness to our literatures, this is not at all desirable.

### DAS, K.B., *The Impact of the West on Oriya Literature*

#### DISCUSSION

DR S. K. DAS—I would like to know from the speaker if the works of Beames and Grierson should be considered as Western influence. Such works should be taken as the contribution of Western scholars to Oriya language. I further contend that adaptation and translation

should not be considered as Western influence, unless the writers drew inspiration from themes, forms and ideas of another literature. In my opinion, the partriotic spirit of Radhanath Rai should not be taken as a feature of western influence. When critics use the term western influence they should answer two questions: (1) What is the nature of the western impact on our literatures; and (2) What are the features of external and internal influences?

DR V. I. SUBRAMONIAM—I have to make two points: (a) Is not the speaker taking into account the cinema stories when he is discussing the Western influence on Oriya drama? (b) From Prof. Das's paper one would gather an impression that without western influence there could not be a modern literature in India. But one should not forget that the indigenous folk-tales are the real sources of modern novels, epics and many other writings. Western contact helped us to evaluate those treasures. Would the speaker share this view?

MRS M. KAUL—In what sense has Radhanath Rai been mentioned as modern?

DR R. K. DASGUPTA—In the last twelve years (since the publication of Professor H. M. Black's papers, *The Concept of Influence in Comparative Literature*, in the yearbook of Comparative and General Literature, in 1958) there has been a good deal of fresh thinking on the idea of influence, and it has been rejected as critically useless. This rejection theory should be taken seriously. Many years before Black's paper, Granville Barker remarked that the Elizabethan tragedy became truly Elizabethan and truly tragic when it ceased to be Senecan. Would Dr K. B. Das share this view, and if he does, what would be the nature of Western influence on Oriya literature?

DR O. M. ANUJAN—What is the nature and depth of Western influence on Oriya? Is it mere imitation or some healthy influence? If the speaker considers it to be healthy, then how would he define it?

DR S. K. CHATTERJEE—I would like to remind Prof. Das that in the middle of the nineteenth century, Oriya writers got the taste of Western genres and forms and various ideas through Bengali writings of the time. Moreover, at that stage, most of the new trends in Oriya literature were introduced by the then Bengali scholars living in Orissa.

PROF IC B. DAS—I agree with what Dr Chatterjee has said about our indebtedness to Bengali literature, In most cases, Bengalis living in Orissa did the pioneering work. As regards folk-tales, I think they also are to be taken into account while discussing the emergence of

novels and short-stories in our literature. As to the works of foreign missionaries, I like to point out that they started the translation works in Oriya prose, but that prose was too artificial to be accepted by the creative writers in prose as models.

GHOSH, S. K., *Bengali Literature Today*  
&  
BHATTACHARYA, L., *A Passion Spent  
on an Increasing Futility*

DISCUSSION

DR MRS M. CHATTERJEE—In inviting discussion I would like to point out that the writers should not be so cynical about society; rather they should try to understand the influences causing such an atmosphere.

DR S. K. DAS—Both the writers have expressed very uncharitable remarks about the quality of modern Bengali poetry. But any lover of poetry should admit that some of the poets are very genuine in their expressions, and that in spite of all odds, poems of a very high order are being written, may be very small in number.

DR W. L. KULKARNI—I would ask Dr Ghosh, are there no satirical writings in modern Bengali literature?

DR S. K. GHOSH—I plead guilty, for I have failed to mention this rich branch of Bengali literature represented by Kedarnath Banerjee, Rajshekhar Bose, and many others who took their cue from Trailokya Mukherjee.

DR A. R. DASGUPTA—My contention is that the damaging remarks made by both the speakers regarding modern Bengali poetry are highly objectionable. Modern poets are very much serious about their work and are striving their utmost to find out their identity in the present day society. They are sincerely trying to find their way out of this chaos. Dr Ghosh, being an outsider and not a creative artist himself, might be excused, but I wonder how could Dr Bhattacharya, being himself a poet, have missed the point.

DR L. BHATTACHARYA—I refuse to accept this point. My firm belief is that all contemporary poets have lost their identity and that all their writings are irrelevant.

SRI ATTAR SINGH—I would like to inform the seminar that the Panjabi literature of today is not facing any such crisis. As far as I know, the Gandhi centenary had no impact on Hindi, Gujarati or any other Indian literature, but the centenaries of Guru Govinda and Guru Nanak have created an atmosphere of revivalism in Panjabi literature.

DR A. K. RAMANUJAN—I would ask Dr Bhattacharya why he is branding modern Bengali writings as irrelevant. Relevance presupposes some relation with others. The speaker should make clear in relation to which society those writings seem to be irrelevant to him.

DR N. R. RAY—Though the two papers are well presented, I do not agree with them on the basic question. The problems faced by a modern writer has to be treated more sympathetically. I find no reason why one should be so cynical. There are modern poets who express the agony of the present day, who are the conscience of their society, and who are struggling hard to transform that society into a better one. The agony reflected in their writings is nothing but the birth-pangs of a new order.

DR D. SHARMA—I would like to know about the American influence on modern Bengali writing.

DR S. K. GHOSH—That influence is negligible,

DR R. K. DASGUPTA—My point is: has there been any unity of vision and design in the Bengali novels of the last decade which marks a great novel?

DR S. K. GHOSH—I plead guilty of very many omissions in my paper, but on the basic question of the quality of modern Bengali poetry I find no reason to change my point of view,

## GEORGE, K. M., *Western Influence on Indian Literature*

### DISCUSSION

DR R. K. DASGUPTA—The question that I wish to raise is: how far it is critically important to trace English or European influence or element in Indian literatures.

DR M. VARADARAJAN—I wish to make one point in respect of punctuation, In early Tamil manuscripts there was no space left in between the words; space was introduced only at the time of printing, which undoubtedly was due to the influence of the pattern of English writing.

DR V. I. SUBRAMONIAM—Anthropologists generally classify borrowings in two groups, viz. (a) direct borrowings, and (b) stimulus infusion. To my mind a third group can be added, where an influence acts as a catalytic agent. A classification of the third group (catalysis) may serve some useful purpose in the analysis of the borrowings in literature, particularly in respect of our borrowings from the West.

DR K. K. RAJA—I would like to point out that the basic syntax-pattern of our language cannot be changed by any outside influence. If there be any such changes due to external influences, such changes should be considered superficial.

### PODDAR, A., *Lord Byron and the Literary Renaissance in Bengal*

#### DISCUSSION

DR S. K. CHATTERJEE—Lord Byron has two aspects, romantic elements and patriotism. The Bengali writers of the nineteenth century were fascinated by Byron undoubtedly, but they were not influenced by his deeper romantic sentiments.

DR R. K. DASGUPTA—I compliment Dr Poddar for his learned and well documented paper; but I would at the same time disagree with his viewpoint that there was a profound or pervasive influence of Byron on our nineteenth century writers. Would Dr Poddar suggest that they accepted his ideas about freedom after critical scrutiny?

DR U. S. JOSHI—I think borrowings should not be judged in that way, just showing parallelisms between two stories or passages. On Gujarati literature Byron's influence is practically nil.

DR N. R. RAY—The nineteenth century Bengali intellectuals were deeply involved in pre-Victorian attitudes. So, it was not possible for the Bengali writers of that period to properly appreciate the romantic sensibility of Lord Byron.

DR B. D. CHATTOPADHYAY—I wonder why some of our participants are trying to discard the element of western influence. They should then answer the question why the attitudes and ideas we find in nineteenth century did not occur in the eighteenth century or before the impact of the West. The phenomenon should be judged in the context of our changing social pattern.

DR A. PODDAR—I have allowed our nineteenth century writers to speak for themselves, but I agree that no critical examination of Byron's views was made. It was just a case of deep infatuation.

DR MRS M. CHATTERJEE—I thank all our speakers of today, and at the same time suggest our critics should judge the influence of western thinking with a more basic approach, as suggested by Dr Chattopadhyay.



## SECTION B

### *Folk Literature*

#### RAMANUJAN, A. K., *The Indian Oedipus*

##### DISCUSSION

DR S. K. CHATTERJEE—I can narrate a relevant Sanskrit story called *Divyavadana* in which a merchant was away from home for long years, the son grew to be a handsome youth of eighteen, the mother fell passionately in love with him. At first through an intermediary they met in secret, the son without knowing whom he was copulating with; later, they did it openly. When the father returned, he was killed by the mother and the son.

DR R. K. DAS GUPTA—My question is about the basic idea of an Oedipus complex as an Oedipus theme. Freud went into the subconscious and came back to the surface with the Oedipus complex, which led to the idea of an Oedipus theme in literature. I was concerned with my response to Sophocles' play, the profound tragedy of which lies in the fatality which inexorably involves Oedipus in an act of patricide he did not know was patricide, and in an incestuous marriage with his mother he did not know was incestuous.

DR A. K. RAMANUJAN—I did not present this paper as a piece of literary criticism, but as an attempt to find out patterns. The idea of the tragic sense is very complicated, and it is difficult to measure its extent. The Indian fathers of the stories I have discussed knew what they were doing, but in the West the sons never did know what they were doing. There is a sense of tragedy in one or two stories I gathered from South India.

DR A. N. KAUL—Sophocles' play is a tragedy. Freud saw the family situation as inevitably tragic, What would Dr Ramaujan say was the overall cultural attitude to incest in the literature he has surveyed? And how far does fate enter into the picture in Indian Oedipal stories? Or, are the actors more knowing and therefore more 'relaxed' about it all? Finally, as a cautionary note to over-simplification, the tale of Kartika summarized by him reminds me of Mann's *The Holy Sinner* rather than directly of *Oedipus Rex*.

DR S. K. DAS—Some more stories could be found throwing more light on the structural pattern studied by Dr Ramanujan. The last story of *Vetala Panchavimsati* is an instance of collapsing of generations. In the Radha-Krishna Legend, Radha is the matulani (mother's brother's wife), a mother-figure to Krishna who wishes her. It is a counter-story to the Indian Oedipus matrix, suggesting a matrix

$$+m \rightarrow -m + R$$

Moreover, the Ajatsatru-Vimbisara story and the defiance of elder gods that we find in the Bengali *Mangal Kavyas* may be taken as instances of generational conflicts.

DR A. K. RAMANUJAN—I admit that there are counter-stories. In European mythology there is no story of father marrying the daughter.

DR MRS MYTHILI KAUL—I wonder whether there is not a telescoping of the Oedipus story or theme with the Oedipus complex theory, since it is only, then that all 'intergenerational competitions' appear significant or Oedipal. Otherwise, how would the story of Sohrab and Rustom fall into the pattern as there was no woman involved in it?

DR N. R. RAY—I think the thematic pattern's influence on the form of the story has a bearing on the structure. Questions of power and authority have also to be taken into consideration, as against sex-motivation.

DR O. M. ANUJAN—The episode of Urbasi-Arjuna from the *Mahabharata* and that of Tara-Bali-Sugreeva from the *Ramayana* also have to be mentioned.

DR M. H. KHAN—I doubt the validity of the statement about the 'ritual of succession' in Muslim history—son overthrowing or imprisoning the father. There are stories which go the other way. For example, Akbar defeated, imprisoned and slapped Jehangir (as Prince Salim) and compelled him to wait till he vacated, In his turn, Jehangir fought and defeated Shahjahan (as Prince Khurran).

DR A. K. RAJA—Sankara Kurup's *Peruntaccan* is based on a popular legend of Kerala, where the death of the father is not accidental, but due to professional jealousy. But in the poem itself- the death is made probably accidental. The problem thus is left vague. Could Dr Ramanujan not refer to the Yana-Yami episode in the Rigveda also?

DR A. BHATTACHARYA—I wish to draw attention to the creation story in Natha literature, were Siva, asked to create the universe by Adi Deva, first created Adya Sakti, then married her and had several children. I would, however, like to know the source of the Bengali Durga legend mentioned in the paper.

DR A. K. RAMANUJAN—The source is oral tradition communicated to me by a student working in the Vishnupur area.

DR V. I. SUBRAMONIAM—I wish to refer to a practice current in south Kannada districts among a tribe according to which the mother, on the death of the husband, has to marry the eldest son. But my overall Suggestion is this that instead of studying merely the sex-relationships, underlying motives should also be studied.

On a point raised by Dr J. K. Misra that the Oedipal phenomena should be studied from the perspective of normal relationships as viewed by the primitive and modern men, Dr A. K. Ramanujan pointed out that no value judgements had been made in his paper.

DR U. S. JOSHI, in summing up, said that marriage as an institution had tamed human beings, and that without erotic relationships the world would have been much poorer. There were so many complexities in the sex-relationships of human beings. In the Jain legends, for example, creation began with brother-sister relation, which was corrected only in later times. Then there were generational conflicts which threw additional riddles on us. All that could possibly be done was to understand the phenomena and study them in their historical contexts.

## BHATTACHARYA, ASUTOSH, *Indian Folk-literature with special reference to Bengali Literature*

### DISCUSSION

DR N. G. JOSHI—It can not be said that folk-literature was not the product of individuals. Most of the *Lavanis* and *Powadas* bear the

names of their authors. The original versions might have been floating verses. The *Gavatan* songs became current coins, but could be traced to their origins. The *Gondhali* performers, it may be true, brought the original patterns from tribal or rural atmosphere.

DR N. R. RAY—The impact of folk-literature on modern authors and the modern mind has to be studied, and the causes of the impact have also to be found out.

DR A. N. KAUL—We should discuss the question of- the relation between folk-literature and literature proper or art-literature as Dr Bhattacharya calls it, either as legends, folk-motifs, etc., feeding a literary classic or a modern writer through deliberate art and artifice attempting to achieve the simplicity of folk-literature—Brecht for example. Some critics have taken the position that in each case the power of the later literary work derives wholly from the older legend or tale burried within it. When, therefore, Dr Bhattacharya observes that modern Indian literature has its basis in folk-literature, I cannot help requesting him to enlarge a little on the subject and give us a few typical or instructive examples.

DR A. K. RAMANUJAN—The difference drawn between art-literature and folk-literature is not very clear. The structural and intrinsic definition of folk-literature should be clarified, and whatever fits in should be called folk-literature. In this way the discussion may be clearer.

DR J. K. MISHRA—It is difficult to make a strict distinction between folk-literature and sophisticated literature, particularly in respect of our past literature. Are we to call Tulsidas, Surdas, Vidyapati, Eknath, etc., folk-poets or art-poets? Were Aranyakas and Upanishads folk or art-writings? I believe the distinction is of recent growth.

DR N. R. RAY—A distinction was indeed made in ancient India. Lokayana was distinguished from other yanas, as loka-sangit from marga-sangit.

DR K. B. DAS—How can it be said that individual creation is not accepted by the society? How can one say that religious songs are not to be considered as specimens of folk-literature in as much as they aim at something spiritual and unrealistic?

DR S. K. DAS—A distinction, has been made between integrated social life and disintegrated urban or industrial life. Is it suggested that the industrial life is disintegrated life and that it is uncongenial to folk literature? It has been argued that folk-literature is 're-created' by the society after the individual creation. How could

one distinguish, then, the ancient classics, which were re-created by several poets through several centuries and which underwent changes—linguistic, episodic and so on— from folk-literature? Certainly one cannot maintain that those epics are folk-literature. Then, the division of folk tales is not mutually exclusive. Many didactic stories are animal stories. I wonder where would you place the stories of *Panchatantra* or those of Aesop in your classification? These tales are in fact allegorical tales,, since each animal in the story corresponds to certain human characteristics. Finally, can we include riddles and proverbs within folk-literature? The proverbs are memorable utterances or formulated thoughts; but can we consider them as literature? The riddles, too, have their own structures—linguistic peculiarities and formal distinctiveness. But they are more components of the folklore of a given society than that of folk-literature.

DR N. R. SEN—I wish to know of the programme and the nature of the activities of the Bengal Academy of folk culture.

DR K. K. RAJA—I would like to point out that the Kudiyatham is not a folk drama of Kerala. It is the ancient sophisticated staging of select acts of Sanskrit dramas, such as the plays of Bhasa, Saktibhadra's *Ascaryucudamani*. The *Subhadradhananjya* and *Tapatisarnvarana* by hereditary professional actors of Kerala called Cakyaras in theatres within the temples. This is perhaps the only surviving classical Sanskrit theatre, the Kathakali owes its origin to this.

DR R. K. DAS GUPTA—I think in some sense folk-literature is a misleading term, When we speak of folk song or folk poetry we distinguish it from literary song or poetry. Our view of folk literature is then vitiated by some terminological imprecision. Work like Chadwick's *The Growth of Literature* and recent researches in oral tradition point to a folk origin of all literatures. The whole question then comes to this: Does not the distinction between folk literature and urban literature break down when the urban literary community deals with folk song? When we put a wild flower in a city-made vase the whole thing becomes a part of our aesthetic sensibility.

DR W. L. KULKARNI—Lavani, as referred to by Dr Bhattacharya, cannot be classed in folk literature. It is not a group product, for the writer often mentions his name in the last line of Lavani.

In his reply, Dr Bhattacharya dwelt at length on the folk element in Rabindranath Tagore's literary creations, and maintained that individual oral creations could not be accepted by the society. He

further pointed out that formal religious songs did not form part of folk literature, and that literature whose primary object was didactic should be excluded from folk literature proper; folk music, as was cultivated by the urban literary community, could not be expected to retain its folk character. Folk songs, as expression of the integrated village life, are still being composed in Bengal.

## MISHRA, J. K., *The Maithili Vratakathas*

### DISCUSSION

DR R. K. DAS GUPTA—Is Vratakatha a part of folk literature or folklore? What is the literary value of the Vratakathas, since these are connected with magic rites making use of puranic literature?

DR S. K. CHATTERJEE—Vratakathas are fast dying out, and there is no possibility of keeping them alive, Even attempts to connect them with the modern problems as was done by Ramendrasundar Trivedi during the Swadeshi agitation did not succeed.

DR A. BHATTACHARYA—In Bengal Satyanarayan Vratakatha is not included in folk literature; it forms a part of medieval Bengali narrative literature.

DR A. K. RAMANUJAN—We should not ask whether it is part of folk literature; the details of the content are more important. Also to be noticed are the functions that these Vratakathas are called upon to perform.

DR M. VARADARAJAN—There are parallel examples found in Tamil.

Sophisticated scholars are also studying these Vratakathas. What distinguishes these Tamil Kathas is that not only unmarried girls but even married women sing these songs and offer their prayers to Vishnu.

DR N. R. RAY—In Bengal Abanindranath Tagore made excellent studies of these Vratakathas, of which the root was to be found in magic. There are varieties of these kathas; in some priests are needed, in others not. Some are called Kumari Vratas., performed only by unmarried girls. I feel that the structure of these kathas should be studied by scholars.

DR W. L. KULKARNI—The Marathi rural stage called the Tamasha, with its very elastic stage conventions and improvised dialogues, is

influencing present-day Marathi drama. During the last ten years many writers have written Tamashas for the sophisticated urban stage. These dramatic writings are full of satire on current happenings in the political, literary and other fields and are becoming popular.

DR J. K. MISHRA—I do not think that these Vratakathas would be dying out soon. In Maithili, these are called only Kathas, not Vratakathas. These are not to be taken as rituals, but are meant for educating the people, particularly the womenfolk. No professional priests are needed to perform these, especially in Maithili Vratakathas.

DR U. S. JOSHI—What characterized the folk-literatures that has been discussed today is their lyrical quality, their simplicity, not generally found in sophisticated literature, But I find it difficult to accept the theory of group-creation; the first line must come from an individual and, to my mind, the first line is the most important line in a lyric. Folklore contains, racial memory and also historical memories, and I believe their structural study will yield rich dividends in that particular.



## SECTION C

### *Literary Genres*

#### KAUL, MRS M., *Ramcharitamanas and Some Epic Traditions*

##### DISCUSSION

DR R. K. DASGUPTA—While appreciating the analysis of Mrs Kaul I am reminded of the comments of Sri Aurobindo on Tulsidas. He said that Tulsidas's poem was a unique creation in the history of world literature in that it was a sustained lyric within an epic framework. I myself fully subscribe to Mrs Kaul's view that *Ramcharitamanas* could hardly be called an epic.

DR N. R. RAY—To my mind, this paper, by using Western concepts, has admirably pinpointed the weakness of the poem. I myself would go further and say that it has failed even as a *mahakavya*. Further, it would not stand up to a comparison with other devotional poetry of the time, such as Kabir's, for instance, which embodied a strong note of social protest. Tulsidas's poem represents an act of abject surrender. He lacks even the lyricism of other devotional poets. His message is hollow and his literary qualities nil.

DR S. K. CHATTERJEE—While agreeing with Mrs Kaul's viewpoint I would like to point out how fruitful the discussion of Indian medieval literature could be when studied from a correct critical perspective. As for Dr Ray's severe criticism of Tulsidas, I think it is extremely unfair to Tulsidas's greatness.

DR S. K. GHOSH—I would like to know if *Ramcharitamanas* is not an epic, then what it is?

DR J. K. MISHRA—Tulsidas's poem registers a departure from the

accepted canons of *mahakavya*; if it was a departure it had every right to be so.

DR M. H. KHAN—I am of the view that application of Western literary concepts such as epic and lyric to Indian poetry leads to confusion rather than clarity. Let us take the ghazal in Urdu literature which is often called a lyric, but which, despite certain common features is *not* a lyric, either thematically or structurally.

DR N. SEN—I would like to know how far Tulsidas's departures and attitudes were reflected in his diction?

DR N.R. RAY—Tulsidas's semantic background was pronouncedly Sanskritic, as against Kabir, Nanak, and others who sought deliberately to break away from their background. Kabir said explicitly that Sanskrit was only the Pandits' language, and not of the common people.

DR M. H. KHAN—I think Tulsidas's Bhakti cannot be explained in terms of socio-political conditions, since Bhakti is something that runs deeper.

DR H. GOHAIN—I think that the importance of the present paper lies in its attempt to make a socio-political analysis. I, however, think that the difference between Valmiki and Tulsidas cannot be explained in terms of Muslim rule alone. In Valmiki's time there was a consciousness of class conflict, but by Tulsidas's time this, consciousness had been eliminated. He, therefore, reflects a state of social stagnancy.

DR M. VARADARAJAN—I also would like to point out the inadequacy of the Muslim rule as an explanation of the poet's changed attitudes towards the Rama story. I agree with the speaker that *Ramchritamanas* lacks in real conflict, but as for the deification of Rama, the Tamil poet Kamban had done the same in his great eleventh-century epic, when there was no oppression of Hindus and no Muslim rule. On the contrary, Kamban's age was the age of the imperial Colas, the most glorious period, in the history of Tamilnadu. Actually, however, even Kamban was not the first to deify Rama. For that we must go back to Alwar's hymns of the 7th and 8th centuries and their influence on saint Ramanuja who popularized these songs and whose message reached the north through Ramananda and others. In conclusion, I feel that the paper could benefit greatly by introducing Kamban into its comparative study.

DR U. S. JOSHI—I fully endorse the importance of Ramanuja's influence. But I maintain that the socio-cultural aspect of the emergence of the Bhakti movement in the North was still relevant.

It was a time when the way of Karma was not possible because the arm was not powerful enough, while Gyana was not for the common people, so that only Bhakti was still possible. Also, when we think of lack of social protest in Tulsidas, we must not forget the presence of the great religious emperor Akbar.

DR MRS M. KAUL—*Ramcharitamanas* is undoubtedly a moving poem in some ways, but I very much doubt the presence in it of even an epic framework. As for its style and diction, Tulsidas was a conscious artist and deliberately chose, as he himself says, not only the vernacular for his purposeful poem but also plausible diction and pleasing metres. As for the analysis of the socio-historical background, I welcome the suggestions, particularly Dr Varadarajan's comments on the relation between Kamban and Tulsidas. The present paper I would like to point out again, is only a tentative and preliminary study, limited in scope and focus—a part, in fact, of a projected study which would include not only Valmiki and Tulsidas but also Kamban.

## MISHRA, J.K., *Forms and Genres in Indian Literature*

### DISCUSSION

DR R. K. DASGUPTA—I would like to raise a point about the relationship between genre and form as there appears to be some confusion on this point; the two terms have been used synonymously. Form in the Platonic sense would be that which an object shares in common with other objects. Thus we may speak of the typical forms of a particular literature. But genre is only one aspect of form—the relatively unimportant external structural, mechanical aspect. A. W. Schlegel speaks of the supple, free, and organic form of Shakespeare as distinguished from a pre-existing neo-classic form imposed on the neo-classic writer from the outside. This idea of organic form, further elaborated by Coleridge, A. C. Bradley, Clive Bell and Herbert Read, is much more relevant to literary criticism than the idea of genre which was rejected first by the other Schlegel and later by Croce.

DR N. SEN—I feel that the present paper has unwarrantably confused poetical forms with the ragas that were applied to them.

DR N. G. JOSHI—I would like to point out that in old Marathi

literature the names of various ragas were mentioned alongside the texts of the padas, but this did not mean that the raga was the only determining criterion of the form of the padas.

DR S. K. DAS—I would like to know what the formal features of a pada are. This paper has mentioned *Caryapadas*, *Gitagovinda*, and the lyrics of Vidyapati—all in a lump. But even in the forty-seven complete songs of *Caryapadas* the number of lines or couplets is not identical. They differ among themselves, and differ from *Gitagovinda* and Vidyapati as well.

DR N. R. RAY—To my mind the form of each lyric is in itself. As for genres, classification is more easily possible, but then the concept of genre is not as meaningful as that of form.

DR J. K. MISHRA—I acknowledge that some confusion might have crept into the paper through the use of Western concepts. Nevertheless, the basic distinctions are clear. By genres I mean, as has been pointed out at the beginning of my paper, three broad and simple classes—poetry, drama, and prose. Later, I had taken up the more complicated question of forms as types of literature. I have not fully worked out the relation between poetry and raga, but I do feel that medieval Indian lyric is to be distinguished in terms of ragas and raginis rather than thematically.

## ISLAM, KABIRUL, *A Note on Modern Bengali Poetry*

### DISCUSSION

DR S. K. GHOSH—Rabindranath's prose poems are mostly a fake and a bad influence. He thought these would bring him close to the folk. In this he was, rightly, disappointed. Sri Islam refers to the 'spontaneous creativity' of modern Bengali poets. But I think there is more of artifice than spontaneity in what most of these poets are writing. Finally, does 'poetry move on merrily'? May be it does. The *poets* are making merry—at the cost of poetry and the audience.

DR B. DE—Why can't a sophisticated person also be spontaneous? What about Sudhin Dutta? A poet can be a scholar too. To say that sophistication is incompatible with spontaneity is terribly obscurantist.

DR S. K. GHOSH—Yes, in Sudhin Dutta's case artificiality had become natural. Scholars can be poets certainly—Milton, for

example. But I wonder if such poets as Subhash and Sudhin are accessible to the people or only to their peers.

DR B. DE—In any case, there is an important point brought out by Sri Islam which we should not lose sight of Sri Islam has pointed out that poets today are weaning themselves from the stylistic flourishes of Jibanananda Das. If so, this is comparable to the earlier weaning away from Tagore. The present change would mean getting away from formalism. It would mean greater comprehensibility—and comprehensibility is an important consideration in poetry.

DR A. R. DASGUPTA—This paper has distinctly brought out certain aspects of modern Bengali poetry. First of all, the modern poet's love-hate relationship with Tagore. In the last decade of his life Tagore tried to look like an incorrigibly modern poet, but in reality never flinched from his traditional sense of the totality of things. As Romain Rolland said, he recoiled from everything that stood for. No wonder a cult of detagorization set in during the early twenties, with poets like Jatindranath Sengupta and Mohitlal Mazumdar striking modern poses to denounce Tagore's insistence on the affirmation of life. The pose was necessary. The poets of the twenties and the thirties were like the birds in the Jataka parable who fled from the golden rock because, while on it, they lost their identities and looked alike. They preferred to be themselves even if it meant leaving behind the much-too-defined area of enlightenment and flying off into darkness. Gradually the poets returned to Tagore obliquely, using snatches from his poems, but making this idiom mean something different. As Budhadeva Bose said, to read Tagore was not a must; but the Tagore myth was a reality because we could not simply evade him. In the forties social protest and a lively topicality entered Bengali poetry. Then in the final phase came a sort of poetry that can be summed up in Archibald Macleish's dictum: 'A poem shall not mean, but be.' This does not necessarily imply that such poetry has no meaning; only that meaning is not the dominant factor, and that it is not the sort of 'teachable' meaning that can be summed up in a 'central idea'. Thus, what we have is a shift from the perpetual value-scale projected to Tagore through ideational bias to something like an emphasis on the intrinsic texture of poetry.

KABIRUL ISLAM—Dr Sisir Kumar Ghose, it appears, is no friendly critic of modern Bengali poetry as has already been revealed in his paper, *Bengali Literature Today*. His remarks on Rabindranath are uncharitable to a degree. I am sorry to say that his long association with Viswa-Bharati has bred only contempt.

## SECTION D

### *Literature and Ideas*

#### AYYUB, ABU SAYEED, *Religion and Literature* (Paper taken as read)

#### COMMENT

DR A. N. KAUL—I note certain difficulties and even contradictions in this paper. For instance, the statement to the effect that the belief embedded in a work of art ‘cannot be validated by anything outside the work’. This contrasts with the statement in the last paragraph about the high qualities of a poet’s view of life, among which Mr Ayyub includes the quality of being ‘founded on the facts of experience’. This surely introduces a criterion of validity that is outside the work. Again, he himself has stated that an artist, when he thinks and feels, is ‘thinking and feeling about something, about an object or objective situation’.

Mr Ayyub draws a sharp line between contemplation and morality, between thinking and conduct. But, in reality, can the line be drawn so sharply? Where in our mind does contemplation end and the moral consciousness begin? For, the issue in good poetry is not one of didacticism in any superficial sense, but of consciousness, including the moral consciousness. I would here like to quote two sentences from Emerson, the first from ‘The American Scholar’ and the second from ‘The Poet’. ‘The mind now thinks, now acts, and each fit reproduces the other’. ‘Words and deeds are quite indifferent modes of divine energy. Words are also actions, and actions are a kind of words’.

Then there is his main point, ‘personal’ religion. I believe by

personal he does not mean idiosyncratic. As he himself says, such a religion must also be 'in conformity with our experience of the world'. Therefore, by personal he means not only non-institutional, but also new and revelatory. With this one can agree, but the difficulty is this: since such a religion, once revealed, will appear to the readers in conformity with their experience, the result inevitably will *be* shared belief. If so, the personal religion will not long remain personal.

Finally, to criticize T. S. Eliot has become fashionable but I feel that the paper would have been better off if it had ignored Eliot instead. A glance—a critical glance—at Arnold would have proved more fruitful. Be that as it may, Mr Ayyub seems to want too many things which are mutually contradictory. To reject the idea of an institutionalized or doctrinal religion and yet salvage something out of Eliot's position, to have a religion that is 'personal' and yet conforms to the readers' experience of the world, is to attempt too much, fair neither to the idea of religion nor literature.

## FARUQI, KHWAJA AHMAD, *English Influence on Urdu before 1857*

### DISCUSSION

SRI ATTAR SINGH—Dr Faruqi has referred to the response of the Muslim religious teachers to the imposition of British regime on India and has suggested an anti-imperialist sensitivity in their rejection of it. He has specifically referred to the declaration by Shah Abdul Aziz of the territory from Delhi to Calcutta as *dar-ul-harb* (*enemy territory*). May I invite his attention to the fact that the Wahabis declared even the territory under Ranjit Singh as *dar-ul-harb* and launched a jihad against him from Afghan territory after collecting men and materials from the British territory? So, it will be proper to call this response as primarily a religious and communal reaction rather than a secular patriotic reaction. There are still some organizations in India which treat India as *dar-ul-harb*.

Secondly, may I request Dr Faruqi to elaborate on the range of themes of Maulavi Nazir Ahmed and his treatment of them? So far as I know he wrote primarily or solely for Muslim readers and his



basic inspiration was the welfare of the Muslim community to the complete exclusion of its correlation to national aspirations.

Finally, in the context of his general argument that the 1857 revolt originated in India's response to British suppression, how does he reconcile the fact that Panjab in spite of loss of its sovereignty just eight years ago remained almost passive and indifferent, although within only 15 years, that is in 1872, hundreds of Panjabis came forward to be blown by the British guns in the Namdhari movement?

DR K. A. FARUQI—The Wahabi movement has been wrongly painted in history. It was as broad-based as was the Puritan movement in England and could not have functioned without the help of the Hindus, especially Hindu bankers. Secondly, I have discussed only the novels of Maulavi Nazir Ahmed, not his other works. The fact that Panjab remained passive in 1857 may be due to the pacification policy of Lord Lawrence who succeeded in keeping Panjab quiet.

DR S. K. DAS—When Dr Faruqi says that the renaissance in Bengal was literary while that in Delhi was scientific, pragmatic and practical, he makes a comment which has little validity in history. The new literature that grew in Bengal was essentially conditioned by the new learning which was scientific, pragmatic and practical. Generations of Bengali intellectuals from Rammohan Roy down to Bankimchandra were inspired by the scientific spirit of the West and rationalism. This is evident in Rammohan's religious disputations with Christian theologians, in Vidya sagar's rejection of the Vedanta and Samkhya systems of philosophies, in Bankimchandra's formulation of a new religious idea in *Dharmatattva*. To my mind, the basic difference between Bengal renaissance and Delhi renaissance lies in the respective attitudes to British rule and to the fallen Mughal empire. Bengal accepted the West whole-heartedly. But Urdu was so intimately connected with the Mughal empire that its speakers could not welcome the British with any fervour. Few, indeed, shed tears in Bengal when Clive's men marched through the streets of Murshidabad.

Secondly, I think there was a growth of popular scientific literature at a very elementary level in Delhi. But to call it a scientific renaissance is to give it a pompous name. Was there any impact on Urdu literature of, let us say, Newton's Physics or Darwin's theory of evolution?

DR N. R. RAY—If there was a scientific renaissance in Delhi why did it take a century to establish technological and medical colleges there?

DR B. DE—I think the study of class-structure of the eighteenth century Urdu literature, of such works as *Sher-i-Ashob*, is important. The satire in such works represents the frustrations of lower nobility against the ‘new men’—shopkeepers, Jats, freebooters. This led to the building in of this class prejudice into later satire styles of, let us say, Akbar Allahabadi. Secondly, British insolence was greater in Delhi than in Bengal. It was easier for the Bengalis to be sweet and reasonable, and accept the West. The British forced the isolationism of Delhi. But even then a Bankimchandra in Bengal reacted very strongly against the British, but a Ramchandra in Delhi, though treated badly, did not.

DR M. H. KHAN—I think a misunderstanding has arisen due to the unhappy use of the term Bengal renaissance by Prof. Faruqi. In the history of Urdu literature we talk of Bengal or Calcutta renaissance only with reference to Urdu literature produced at the Fort William College. The whole discourse and argument therefore falls down.

DR S. K. CHATTERJEE—The Wahabi movement was a religious revivalist movement, not at all a movement of independence; at the most it expressed a feeling of fanaticism against British rule. This is fully corroborated by the activities of Titu Mir in Bengal.

DR A. K. FARUQI—I confess that the terms scientific renaissance and literary renaissance were uncritically borrowed from the writings of Prof. Spear. The Wahabi movement was no doubt socio-religious in character but yet it represented dissatisfaction, with the British rule, and there are many poems in Urdu which lament the conditions of the time, in particular of the days of 1857.

### KAUL, A.N., *R.K. Narayan and the East West Theme*

#### DISCUSSION

DR MRS M. CHATTERJEE—With reference to certain remarks made in the paper I wish to point out that the law of *Karma* is often misinterpreted as a cast-iron law. It contains a philosophically suggestive treatment of possibility—the theme of a lot of existentialist literature. So, just as the concept of *Nemesis* did not bring with it

any element of mechanism in the Greek world-view, so the concept of *Karma* cannot be held responsible for the absence of tragedy in Indian literature. Secondly, concerning the question of conflict, it can be said that the caste-structure of Hindu society set the ideal of a non-competitive economy before the people. But the relationships between men within this structure surely contain the stuff of drama. As soon as *loukik* themes were taken up by writers all this material was utilized by them, leading to not only horizontal but also vertical conception of levels of existence. This is, in a way, a richer model than the western. Thirdly, Dr Kaul speaks of the 'official elimination of any challenge to accepted laws', etc. This is not strictly true. One important factor in the Hindu view of society is the provision it made for the opter-out—the institution of *sanyasa*. This amounts to the concept of the 'rebel' being built into the system itself. Then the *sanyasi* stands for individuality of an extreme kind, that of the *paribrajaka*—who goes in quest of himself, in order to overcome the individuality, to discipline the empirical ego. This offers scope for the writing of biography, autobiography, etc.

DR M. H. KHAN—The concept of Indian English has not been clearly defined. May I request Dr Kaul to elucidate further the nature of stylistic achievement of Indian English, its acceptance by the native speakers and its place in the history of English literature? In putting this question I have in mind the fate of the Indian writers of Persian, the artificiality of their idiom and style and their consequent non-acceptance by the native Persians.

DR B. DE—Narayan, I submit, is not an Indo-Anglian writer, who are a group of writers, living in metropolitan centres in Calcutta, Bombay and elsewhere with a distinct social content. In *Waiting for the Mahatma*, Narayan has given a foil, a prototype of what the Mahatma was to many people, and was not writing a political novel at all. If taken as a political novel, then it would prove to be a failure.

DR H. GOHAIN—The small town life has many sordid aspects. In rejecting these as masks of evil, in the comic mode, Narayan probably rejects a possibility of growth and expansion of life. In *The Guide* the ambiguity proceeds probably from a sense that dismissal won't do. These forces have to be understood even as leading to fresh possibilities of life.

PROF. K. R. SRINIVASA IYENGAR—There are a great deal of autobiographical elements in the novels of R. K. Narayan, which give them the charm of identity as well as of vitality. Even his own marriage against what was predicted in the horoscope, the unhappy

end of it, have been described as they did actually happen in *The English Teacher*. His Malgudi was in fact Lalgudi, a small town, gradually growing into Mysore during the last thirty-five years, adding all sorts of things brought into existence during this period. His later novels, however, are artistically good, but lack in vitality because he had to move beyond the orbit of his personal experience. But I maintain *The Guide* expresses hope for mankind, that even a scoundrel can become a mahatma. Here the hero at a critical moment refrains from doing what he could have done. This is the moment of transformation, or hope. I also suggest that in discussing the works of an artist like Narayan, we should better avoid the terms tragedy and comedy.

DR A. N. KAUL—In Narayan there is no irreconcilable conflict, so no tragedy of the western type. In *The Guide*, the transformation of Raju is not permanent; he is playing a role as usual, but this time with a recognition of the responsibility involved. The opting-out theme certainly fascinated Narayan; and he is also interested in the idea of the *mahatma*, in what it means to other people, But I think what one retreats from is more important, as this gives the picture of one trying to free oneself from emotional bondage. The autobiographical elements Prof. Iyengar has spoken of are important, but I often feel that these may go against the work itself, causing loss of objectivity. The creation of types on these elements may be taken as more important. Finally, by Indian English I did not mean what is written by our great writers, but what is spoken by the people in the bazars. But our writers are yet to create their own idioms, as has been done by one or two African writers of English.

## SHARMA, DHIRENDRA, *Humanism in Contemporary Indian Literature*

### DISCUSSION

DR R. K. DAS GUPTA—Humanism as commonly understood means a concern with human themes uninhibited by the doctrines of an established church, and I wonder if such a concept was at all important for discussion of the new humanism in our literature or whether it would be more useful to compare it with the neo-humanistic movement in the United States between 1915-1933.

DR S. K. DAS—I would like to know if it is suggested that contemporary Hindi poets are more socially conscious: than their predecessors, and if so, that they are therefore better artists.

DR D. SHARMA—I see no influence of the American neo-humanists on contemporary Hindi poets. Hike to point out that the new humanism is based on a new social consciousness and realism. My paper is not addressed to value judgement, but I would certainly maintain that social consciousness is a value in some literary works and must be taken into account by the critic of those works.

DR N. R. RAY—But the quoted passages, while being good statements, seem to suggest little literary merit. As a matter of fact, is not this modern social consciousness a sort of romanticism? What social experience lies behind it? What felt experience?

DR SHARMA—Are you suggesting, biographical verification?

DR N. R. RAY—No, the quality of felt experience would be within the poetry.

DR N. G. JOSHI—I would like to know if the observations made in the paper are meant to apply to all modern Indian literatures. They certainly can not be applied in toto to contemporary Marathi literature.

DR O. M. ANUJAN—My point is that those who write in Malayalam in the manner of the Hindi poets cited in the paper would be considered neither poets nor humanists.

DR S. K. GHOSH—I would like to refer to the transformation of Kali as a symbol of secular revolution—and suggest that where the old Kaliwallahs did not (luckily for them), have to worry about social realities, the new Kaliwallahs are more worried, more committed, but aesthetically less satisfying.

DR D. SHARMA—We call aesthetically poor that which we do not like.

DR U. S. JOSHI—I think this paper is a rehash of the sort of Marxist approach that fails to do justice even to Marxist thinking. Such cocksureness and over-simplification, such tub-thumping, is unworthy of any student of literature.

DR MISS BOSSERT—In Western Europe humanism was a reaction against formalistic allegiance to a god who seemed unrelated to man. It opposed man's will to that concept, and may be said to reflect bourgeois society. One has, therefore, to be cautious in relating humanism to the sort of social consciousness analyzed in the paper,

DR D. SHARMA—I maintain that my point has been missed. It was not my purpose to suggest that Marxism was a panacea, but

only to trace a trend in modern Hindi poetry—a trend dominated by Marxist theory and reflected in a wide range of writers from national poets to young college lecturers. And this humanistic trend does emphasize man and man's ability to understand his problems and effect a change in his world.

### CHATTERJEE, MRS MARGARET, *Social and Political Ideas in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Bengali Literature*

#### DISCUSSION

DR H. GOHAIN—The wholesale debunking of progressive ideologies may apply to certain liberal ideologies but not to the subtle Marxist thinking that is fully cognizant of, and sensitive to, Indian realities. I would like specifically to refer to peasant revolts. But the writers of the nineteenth century were middle-class writers; they did not deal with peasant revolts; there were conflicts between their interests and those of the peasants. The assumption in the paper is that Gandhi's ideas were his from his birth. In reality, they had developed from the idea of collaboration with the British to his description of the British rule as "satanic" and his anti-imperialism; and in this development his 'roots' were not as important as the influence of modern thinkers, including Lenin.

DR S. K. GHOSH—Bibhutibushan cannot be claimed as a Gandhian at all, being neither a puritan nor a reformer but one who was amazingly, compulsively sensitive to the mystery of existence—a poet of innocence really.

DR S. K. DAS—I have to make two points. There are many plays and epics, dealing with the idea of the drain of wealth from Bengal to England, and while these had considerable impact on social and political thinking, they hardly contributed to the growth of literature. A distinction should, therefore, be made between the sort of literature that is significant as an aid to applied politics and another kind which, though nourished by social forces, impresses us as an independent body of thought and symbolism. Secondly, concerning Gandhi and Tagore, Tagore's character Dhananjay Bairagi deserves attention. Conceived as early as 1905, long before

Gandhi's emergence as a popular leader, this character anticipates many attributes of Gandhi. This is not to deny Gandhi's influence on Tagore, but to show that Tagore's imagination was long before working in a way that resulted in a fictitious character of his being later authenticated by a real man, Gandhi.

DR MRS M. CHATTERJEE—I thank the last two speakers for their points of information. As for the first speaker, I agree that by and large middle-class writers had ignored peasant revolts. I have said so in my paper. There were some writings and some examples of sub-literature, however, where the subject was not entirely ignored. As for Gandhism, it had certainly developed. But regarding Lenin, I would like to refer to Gandhi's comment on the Bolshevik revolution that nothing lasting could ever be built on violence.

## GOHAIN, HIREN, *Ideological Obstacles to Secularism*

### DISCUSSION

DR R. K. DAS GUPTA—I was expecting in this paper some definition of secularism as it applies to the literary process. Obviously, we have no religious establishment prohibiting the extension of literature beyond religion, only a tradition encouraging religious literature.

DR H. GOHAIN—I have nothing to say on these intelligent remarks except that they raise a question outside my rather limited subject in this paper.

DR L. BHATTACHARYA—It is an excellent paper, but raises a disturbing question. Since man is a social being and religion a part of society, where exactly does religion end and secularism begin? Can any secularism worth the name be completely independent of religious consciousness? If not, will man's religiousness continue to make him inescapably communal? Lastly then, where is the liberation we expect from literature?

DR H. GOHAIN—I can only give my personal answer. While secularism is not an arrogant assertion that all life's problems can be solved easily, I feel that religion belongs to that historical period when man felt less confident about controlling his destiny in the world. One can add sophistications and, subtleties to this statement, but I think essentially this is it.



DR S. K. DAS—‘Hindu Nationalism’ has many faces: Bengali middle-class nationalism, Indian Hindu nationalism and what may be called religious nationalism. The former two derive from political consciousness, while the last comes from contemporary religious debate. Secondly, I think Bankim’s ambivalence towards Muslims is not well examined. His passion for the past glory of Hindus is intimately related to his concern for the present and the future—which is not to be Hindu.

DR H. GOHAIN—As for the distinction between Bengali and Indian nationalism, we all remember Gokhale’s- remark about Bengali nationalism being the advance guard of Indian nationalism. Further, I would not be surprised to find Bankim influencing not only Bengali but Indian sensibility, and that is why I consider his role vital. As for religious nationalism, what is meant by it?

DR S. K. DAS—That which originated with Raja Ram Mohan Roy.

DR H. GOHAIN—I see no distinction. This is all a part of Indian peoples’ reaction to imperialism.

DR S. K. DAS—Ram Mohan’s reaction was theological, not political.

DR H. GOHAIN—Ram Mohan’s theological confrontation was embryonically political.

## ATTAR SINGH, *Secularization and Modern Panjabi Literature*

### DISCUSSION

DR N. R. RAY—What strikes me is that there is no difference between the literatures produced on the two sides of the border in Bengal. But this cannot be said of the literatures produced in the Panjabs. This shows that in Panjabi literature the communal question was more important than language.

DR M. H. KHAN—I wonder how Sikh nationalism can be justified after the reorganization of Panjab on a linguistic basis.

DR R. K. DASGUPTA—I would like to know what was Sikh or narrowly communal in the works of writers like Safir, Pritam, Harbhajan Singh, or Duggal.

DR S. K. CHATTERJEE—I have noticed a resurgence in the study of Sikh sacred books following the centenary celebrations of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh, and want to know the relation of such study to secularism.

DR K. M. GEORGE—I like to refer to the statement that secularism ‘at its best means multi-religionism’, and observe that multi-religionism is no ‘ism’. Further, does religion in this context also mean atheism or agnosticism? I myself feel that secular may be equated with non-religious as opposed to un-religious or irreligious.

DR U. S. JOSHI—I think partition has not solved the problem of nationalism. Linguistic nationalism has created the great problem of sub-nationalisms. Among the Sikhs language and religion are coterminous, and I agree with the distinction drawn in the paper between religious-mindedness and communal-mindedness. Gandhi was a Hindu leader but his Hinduism earned him three bullets at the hand of a Hindu. There is nothing wrong with a Hinduism that emerged as humanism. So in secularism we should include all those religious people who do not make religion the focus of politics.

SRI ATTAR SINGH—I feel that the various comments and observations made here have supported my paper by putting it into a national perspective. I agree that Sikhism started as a worthy protestant movement within Hinduism, but became more concerned with its own survival as a separate religion and assumed institutional rigidity. As for narrow communalism among modern Sikh writers, I cited the example of K. S. Duggal’s novel whose hero lives in a Muslim house but never smokes. Many of Duggal’s own friends smoke and shave their beards. But to project this would impinge on communal susceptibilities. Communalism has a cramping effect on the freedom of the writer. Harbhajan Singh has written five poems on Guru Nanak but in obscure language. Nevertheless, these subjects are coming into literature for the first time, and this is a hopeful sign. Again, it is a hopeful sign that Guru Vani is for the first time being studied rather than taken as a matter of blind faith. As for Panjab’s reorganization, it was not reorganized on linguistic basis. Had language been the criterion, Jammu and parts of Himachal should have been included. But this would have left the Sikhs at forty per cent of the population, and so was unacceptable to the Akalis. In conclusion, I would re-assert that Panjabi literature, like Panjabi politics, is not based so much on language as on communalism.

## SECTION E

### *Tools of Criticism* (Traditional and Modern Approaches)

GHOSH, S.K., *Sanskrit Poetics and Western Literature: Towards an Inquiry*

## DISCUSSION

DR R. K. DAS GUPTA—I would like to draw the attention of the speaker to the fact that Bankimchandra had rejected Sanskrit poetics as a useless tool of criticism, while Vidyasagar had found it too schematic. In our own time, Dr S. K. De had observed that the categories of Sanskrit poetics were mostly concerned either with technical matters or the philosophy of poetry and are thus of limited relevance to the work of creative criticism.

DR A. R. DAS GUPTA—The present paper began with a show of catholicity but ended with an undue insistence on the conservative ethos. However, I would like to point out that the concept of imitation was not absent in Sanskrit poetics, as has been claimed in this paper. Dhananjay has dwelt on the imitation of a situation if not an action in the Aristotelean sense.

DR A. N. KAUL—Certain very interesting ideas are found in the Kashmiri commentators on Bharata's *Natya Shastra*, particularly in Abhinavagupta. These critics have discussed the problem of transformation of bhava into rasa at some length. One answer given is universalization—this being the secret behind the transformation of the particular into aesthetic experience. While this idea is familiar to us from Western criticism, a more interesting answer seems to

imply that an experience becomes aesthetic because it is shared by an audience, a community.

DR N. R. RAY—I would like the seminar to consider these two points. First, Indian aesthetics is distinguishable from the western in that it does not regard aesthetics as a separate subject of study, but connects it with ethical, social, and metaphysical sensibility. Secondly, Sanskrit poetics should not be discussed in a lump, but each treatise should be considered separately, seen in its proper time and place, as also in relation to the art objects that were actually before the author and upon which he built his theory.

DR A. N. KAUL—I endorse the last point made by Dr Ray. Sanskrit treatises, unlike Aristotle's, hardly discuss any particular literary works; but just because they purported to be universalists, there is no reason for us to treat them as such. One of the difficulties, a non-specialist student experiences with regard to Sanskrit poetics is that its champions hardly ever descend from the heights of generalization and abstraction. That it can sharpen our sensibility needs demonstration through its application to some concrete literary works.

### *Tools of Criticism* (Prosody)

ANUJAN, O.M., *Metrical Structure of the South  
Indian Languages*

#### DISCUSSION

DR K. K. RAJA—The importance of prosody was fully understood by the Vedic seers; *Chandas* or metre, *rishi* or the poet who composed it, and *devata* or the deity worshipped by it had to be remembered while chanting a hymn; and there are several references to the various metres in the text of the *Rigveda* itself. Vedic prosody was quantitative; the number of syllables in a line for each *chandas* was fixed; stanzas in four and three lines were the most common, accent played an important part in prosody, as in the language itself. Though the length of a syllable in a particular position of a line was

not fixed, there was regular pattern regarding the variation of short and long syllables, and the lengthening of short syllables at times for the sake of metre is found in the *Rigveda*.

Later by the time of the classical Sanskrit literature, the position of the short and long syllables in each line of a stanza became fixed, except in the case of *anustupa* where more freedom was allowed. Four line stanza became the regular type. The *matra vrittis*, depending on the number of *matras* in a line, and not on the number of syllables, grew into prominence by this time, and were used side by side with the quantitative metres. The ancient Tamil poetry was based neither on the syllabic quantitative system, nor on the *matra* system, but on the *asai* or time beat system and is perhaps more akin to music. The prosody of some of the modern literatures is influenced by the folk songs also. The Urdu prosody is mainly based on the Perso-Arabic system which was alien to India. At present there is a tendency in many literatures at making experiments with metres, and even giving it up altogether,

DR M. VARADARAJAN—I congratulate Dr O. M. Anujan for his pioneering attempt to study the metrical structure of the four Dravidian languages of the south. I differ from him on several points:

(1) He thinks that the old definition of Tamil metre holds good only in the case of Tamil classics. This is not correct. The metres *verba* and *agaval* are still in use and the principles enunciated in the *Tolkappiyam* are strictly followed even today, even by the poets like Bharati Dasan.

(2) Dr Anujan thinks that folk metres were accepted in Tamil poetry from the days of Tevaram and Tiru Vacagani of the seventh and eighth centuries. In fact, it was still earlier. We find folk metres even in the epic *Cilappadikaram* (3rd century B. C.).

(3) According to Dr Anujan, the *asai* system of Tamil has become a straight jacket and the tradition is a dead one. This is not true. Even the most modern poets find it useful. From the eighth century onwards the Tamil poets have a preference for a new metre called *viruttam*. It is a Sanskrit word but it has nothing to do with Sanskrit *vritta*. It has enriched Tamil prosody but has not replaced the old *agaval* and *verba* metres.

(4) Dr Anujan has stated that no other language than Malayalam has accepted musical elongation as a principle of prosody. We find it in the *Sangam* literature as well as in later works—the difference being that in Tamil elongation is worked by a symbol called *alabedai*, whereas in Malayalam it is not marked.

I have listened to different types of Malayalam poetry and feel that they are not so different from the forms of Tamil poetry as they are supposed to be. I think there is room for further research on this subject so as to enable us to understand the close affinity between Malayalam and Tamil prosody.

DR NILRATAN SEN—Elongation of syllables should come under musicology and not under prosody. Dr Anujan has mentioned the dropping of one *matra* even in the middle of a foot. Does not he consider it a violation of normal prosodical rule? How does it affect the prosodical pattern? I also like to suggest that there should be a common terminology for Indian prosodic study.

DR M. H. KHAN—We must now begin to analyze in a more systematic way with reference to the new science of linguistics. How does the metre submerge into the great rhythms of language? The same metre assumes three types in Arabic, Persian and Urdu.

DR K. K. RAJA—Can the prosodical analysis be combined with musical analysis, also? Can the same metrical pattern be recited in two different ways? Is there any Arabic influence on *Mopla* metre?

DR S. K. CHATTERJI—I think all metres should be put in the framework of a tune, if possible. A blank-verse cannot be recited in a sing song way but *payar* can be sung. Would you think it is possible to view south Indian metres within a framework of tune? In Sanskrit, for example, a poem written in *Shikharini* (such as ‘kadacit kalindi tata vipine’) can be sung or chanted in three different styles. This variation of styles of chanting should be considered in prosodic study.

PROF. K. B. DAS—Are there blank-verse and prose-poems in Malayalam?

DR ANUJAN—There are no blank-verses in Malayalam.

## SUBRAMONIAM, V.I., *Linguistics and Poetry*

### DISCUSSION

DR M. H. KHAN—Congratulations for this learned paper. Will Dr Subramoniam agree with me that what goes under the name of literary criticism in our country is as such a patch work of historical, philosophical, biographical and sociological information? The kind of analysis he is trying to do gives a new insight and a new tool of

criticism. It takes away the irrelevant and redundant and gives a framework to the analysis of communication.

DR K. S. MURTHY—This kind of analysis is like de-mythologization in religion. *Rasalila*, for example, can be analysed from several points of view but the myth plays its role which is significant and important. I think poetry can be analysed in terms of patterns of emotional response as in Comparative Religion one distinguishes one religion from another by binary distinctions, such as absolutism and non-absolutism, salvation and non-salvation. This is useful but how much relevant to the appreciation of poetry I do not know.

DR O. M. ANUJAN—This method might be useful in solving problem of authorship of a work, or to solve other textual problems but I doubt if this is going to be useful in understanding poetry.

DR L. BHATTACHARYA—I am really baffled by the paper. This kind of analysis does not reveal the soul of a poem—it is like dissecting a beautiful girl limb by limb. How the personality of a poet can be revealed from the number of adjectives, adverbs, nouns etc. he has used—I do not understand.

DR N. G. JOSHI—Is linguistic analysis going to help the creative process?

Miss JEANNETTE BOSSEST—Some of the participants fear that through analysis poetry may be reduced to a dry thing. I may mention a parallel in the sphere of music. When I analyze music it does not result in the elimination of the beauty of the music; on the contrary, emotional as well as intellectual understanding gives a sense of depth, of totality which cannot be obtained otherwise. I thank Dr Subramoniam for directing us towards the integration of emotional and intellectual understanding.

DR S. K. GHOSH—If Prof. Subramoniam had a large enough pair of scissors and there was an angel in front of him would he clip her wings? Seriously speaking, is there room for an irreducible mystery in such a scheme of analysis? Or is this the inevitable road from the sacred to the profane, from synthesis to analysis?

MRS F. BHATTACHARYA—Prof. Subramoniam has referred to Levi Strauss. In *The Raw and the Cooked* Levi-Strauss indicates a new approach to the study of myths. The reductions of myths into *mythic* or base-element. This method suits better the study of myths than literary criticism. May I draw the speaker's attention to the work of Roland Barthes, whose last book is available in English under the significant title *Writing degree Zero*.

DR V. I. SUBRAMONIAM—I thank Dr Murthy for welcoming



the present attempt to demythize and to reduce the myths to core statements. In this connection it may be pointed out that the attempts of Levi-Strauss to reduce the myths into mythemes have been commented upon. But his mytheme rests on sentences. The semantic units rest not only on sentences but also on words, phrases and clauses. At times it rests on parts of words or in more than one sentence. Only as an irreducible minimum abstracted out of contraction of sentences.

It may be in the present state of our knowledge the pattern of emotions cannot be categorized. But once the knowledge or emotions are shared by a society, they should be amenable to analysis. Otherwise, poetry will become individual and, therefore, not of the society. We are not concerned with individual aesthetics or experiences. If an analysis cannot cover all aspects of poetry it may be due to the defect of theory or shortcomings of the analyzer, or want of adequate knowledge in the area from other disciplines like psychology, biology, etc. As a tentative solution we may take any hypothesis and develop it further. Of course, future researches may modify the approach, but may also confirm many of the hypotheses.

Dr Joshi's question whether such analysis can help the poet in his creative work can be answered in the affirmative. By model setting we can perhaps help the poet to try new experiments and new forms. As to Dr L. Bhattacharya's comment that verbal differences cannot throw any light on the personality of the poet, I wish to point out that in Shakespeare's works there is a frequent reference to burnt bread. From this one dare not infer that he ate burnt bread all his life. How much of inference we can make on the basis of verbal expressions about the personality of the poet we are not certain. As to Dr Ghosh's comment what I will do if I have a pair of scissors and a flying bird and whether myths can be done away with, I have nothing to offer except my salutations for this mythical question which he does not expect anybody to answer.

### JOSHI, N. G., *Marathi Prosody*

DR A. R. DAS GUPTA—Dr Joshi has hinted at the possibility of a comparison between *payar* and *abhanga*, which is probably derived from *ovi*, *abhanga* has a special thematic significance while *payar* is the name of a genre. Several interpreters of Bharata's *Natyasastra* have

said categorically that *obi, carya, lolli*, etc., are marked by endrhyme (prantaprasa). I want to know about the end-rhymes in modern Marathi poetry.

DR O. M. ANUJAN—I doubt very much if lines composed entirely of long and elongated syllables can be called *mukta chanda*.

DR M. H. KKAN—I was wondering, Dr Joshi, if we are not again prisoners of words and terminology. To me the classification of metres into *matric, varnik*, etc., does not have any significance. They do not take into account the linguistic features, especially, stress, juncture, pitch, etc. I think it is high time that we made a restatement about the prosodies of our languages in linguistic terms.

DR S. G. TULPUL—What about the charge that the so called *mukta chanda* is more of a printer's art than those of the poets?

DR W. L. KULKARNI—Some of the Marathi *chandās* like *abhanga* and *aavati* are no longer mere chandas, they have attained the status of forms of poetry with certain thematic content.

## SEN, NILRATAN, *Three Eastern Indo-Aryan Versifications*

### DISCUSSION

DR R. K. DAS GUPTA—The question refers to all the four papers. We sing verse, we chant verse, we recite verse and we read verse. Singing and chanting would be close to each other and reciting and reading would be close to each other. The question is whether there is a means of devising a prosodic scheme, as attempted by Mrs Ing in her Elizabethan lyrics, consistent with a musical scheme?

PROF. K. B. DAS—Jagannath Das belongs to the sixteenth century and not to seventeenth century.

DR M. H. KHAN—In what sense is Dr Sen using the word syllable? As we understand it—it is a single chest pulse. Again, he stated that 'closed syllables are bimoric'. This is not correct. Phonetically, short a and short u are close but are unimoric.

DR S. K. GHOSH—Regarding free-verse, I would like to say one or two words. No verse is really free. No poet worth his salt cares for such liberty which may easily degenerate into license. The poet is free not in spite of the apparent restrictions of verse but because of. I might add that Tagore's prose-poems had two rather unfortunate

results, first an explosion of pseudo-poets and secondly, it provided a stylized prose for *belles lettres*, or *ramya rachana*, one of the worst features of contemporary Bengali writing.

DR S. K. CHATTERJEE—Pronunciation of old poems must be considered seriously. The examples Dr Sen has given are unfortunately not good from that point of view, since that they are pronounced in the modern way. The final vowel was not lost when *Srikrishna Kirtan* was written. In fact, in modern Oriya will be found the cadence of middle Bengali.

DR NILRATAN SEN—AS regards Dr Das Gupta's question, many songs can be cited whose musical patterns are different from their metrical pattern. For example, *nay an tomare payna dekhite rayecho nayane nayane*: it is 6-6-6-3 in simple moric style but in music it is tetramoric (*kawali*). So far as the *carya* recital is concerned, I agree with Dr Chatterjee but I think by the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries many words had lost their final vowels and that made possible the fusion of the styles of folk-metre and moric-metres. It is evident from metrical analysis.

## *Tools of Criticism* (Form and Style: Translation)

KHAN, M.H., *Urdu Poetic Forms and Indian Literature*

### DISCUSSION

DR R. K. DASGUPTA—In at least five literatures, viz., Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Urdu and Pashto the *ghazal* form has found its place. I would like to know if there has been any formal or thematic variation from the original Arabic form. Incidentally, I remember that this *ghazoi* was introduced in Western poetry by Schlegel, Ruckart, Platen and Goethe. It would be highly interesting, to know if the transplantation of an oriental poetic form in a Tutonic language had given rise to any new feature.

DRA. R. DASGUPTA—Would the speaker consider the introduction

of *Radifon* and *Kafion* as alien in Urdu literature? I would also like to be informed if 'relief' is necessary in *ghazal*.

DR K. A. FARUQI—*Ghazal* is now sung in Indian ragas, so it should not be considered as an alien thing.

DR N. C. JOSHI—In our Marathi *rubai* is being translated in *muruthl* metre, and *ghazal* is being sung in *bhairabi* raga.

DR A. N. KAUL—Sri Kripalani in his keynote address raised the question of Indianness of Indian literatures. From Dr Khan's paper it is clear that prosody also cannot be a common criterion for Indianness. So, it is better to analyse a set of key texts of each language on the basis of certain traditions. That may give some clue to the Indianness of Indian literatures. I also cannot approve of Dr Khan's contention that 'radif' is fetters for poets. A real poet prefers to abide by some formal discipline of poetry. The rules and conventions, as shown in *ghazal* have heightened the level of poetry, which a poetstar cannot master so easily.

DR V. I. SUBRAMONIAM—I shall be glad to know the principle of *gana*-counting in Arabic prosody. My question is whether consonants, without vowels, are counted as measuring units. I am of opinion that in the phonological structure of metre paraphonological systems should be taken into consideration.

DR S. K. CHATTERJEE—I question the validity of Dr Khan's theory that Urdu, from the very beginning, has been influenced only by the Persian and Arabic literatures. In proto-Urdu stage it had been influenced by Hindi also.

DR M. H. KHAN—I would like to impress upon the participants that *ghazal* should not be considered as merely a poetical form; it connotes something more than the mere formal aspect of it. It was imported from Persian to Arabic literature and then to Urdu. Real Urdu poetry has to be composed only in Persian and Arabic metres, and not in Sanskrit metres. Otherwise, it will not be considered as Urdu poetry. To Dr Kaul I would say that so far as Urdu literature is concerned it is very difficult to conceive something Indian; even in traditional themes it has nothing common with other Indian literatures. As to Dr Subramoniam's question my answer is Perso-Arabic consonants are counted as letters; short vowels, of course, have no separate entity. To Dr Chatterjee I would say, although some of the Sanskrit Prakrit metrical forms like *doha*, *soraha*, have been introduced in Urdu poetry, still those should not be taken as genuine Urdu poetry in spite of their Urdu language and script.

## DAS, S.K., *Towards a Unified Theory of Style*

### DISCUSSION

DR MRS M. KAUL—I appreciate very much the quality of the paper, but I have grave doubts about the usefulness of the rigid scientific method applied in the judgement of literature. Literature communicates something more than we get by merely reducing it to some dry formula. Based on language, no doubt, but it has some transcending effect which the present speaker has lost sight of.

DR R. K. DASGUPTA—I am reminded of a comment by I. A. Richards in his *How to read a Page*: ‘The greatest sayings of men have inexhaustible fertility.’ In my opinion, this particular comment negates the view that style is something given and unchanging.

DR H. GOHAIN—I also praise the zeal and learning of the speaker but fail to understand how this new science of stylistics will help to spot out a good poem. One who wishes to find that has to be sensitive to the freshness of the literary piece concerned. The sort of descriptive approach we have before us will not help in that search and evaluation.

DR S. K. GHOSH—I have also the same doubt as expressed by the previous speaker. My point is that the lines quoted from Keats and analyzed in Dr Das’s paper as ‘neither grammatical nor situational, but stylistic’ have a deeper significance which has been lost sight of by him. A work of art is not an object of mere objective linguistic analysis. It is something more. A rose is a rose is a rose.

DR MRS M. CHATTERJEE—I would like to raise the point of predictability. We should distinguish between the composer and the reader on this point. To the writer, the agony for a new creation is a somewhat unpredictable thing. To the reader, however, its style is recognizable. This predictability is something different from determinism.

DR V. I. SUBRAMONIAM—I am of the view that the categories as suggested by Dr Das may be further expanded and rearranged.

DR MISS BOSSERT—My point is when language itself is a dynamic and changing element, then how can Dr Das’s theory be applied in the study of creative art?

DR A. N. KAUL—I would like to know if the speaker would endorse the view of Elder Olson that the effectiveness of words as agents of disclosure should be distinguished from the effectiveness of what is

disclosed. In my opinion, novels lose less than poems in translation. A bad stylist may be a good novelist, as Hardy was. How would Dr Das explain this phenomenon?

DR S. K. DAS—It is natural that the stylistic approach to literature should have roused the suspicion of scholars. But I have a feeling that I have been misunderstood. I only suggested that besides other approaches, the stylistic approach can help in a certain sphere of literary study. It can provide a framework which would help in the evaluation of literature. My approach is not against the mystery of literature and language. As a student of language I was fascinated by the whole process of linguistic activity and felt that literature should never be viewed simply as a text to be analyzed but, to be enjoyed. Both are equally important to me. To Mrs Chatterjee, I would say that determinism can never explain all phenomena. When the choice of linguistic elements is involved, that choice can be explained. But it is not possible to predict the choice, because the creative process cannot be explained in simple linguistic terms. In reply to Dr R. K. Dasgupta I would say that in the comment quoted by him Richards probably refers to thought or content. Style is changing in the sense that the meaning of a text is always identical with the reader's response to it. A style can transform to a form; this is more related to the style described as 'period style'.

## TULPULE, S.G., *Classical Forms of Marathi Literature*

### DISCUSSION

DR W. L. KULKARNI—I like to point out that the classification of *akhyana*, *abhanga* and *lavani* given by the speaker, should be linked up with *kirthana*, *bhajana*, and *tamasa*, respectively. I also doubt whether medieval Marathi literature can be called classical as has been suggested by Dr Tulpule. There are some factual errors too.

DR N. G. JOSHI—I also like to draw the attention of the speaker to the first point mentioned by Dr Kulkarni.

DR S. C TULPULE—I admit that such a correlation regarding the classification is possible, but I see no necessity of it so far as my subject is concerned.

DASGUPTA, A.R., *East-West Colloquy and the  
Problem of Transition*

DISCUSSION

DR L. BHATTACHARYA—I entirely agree with the speaker that sometimes writers earn more fame through translation, as was the case with Edgar Allan Poe. But I fail to understand how the speaker could draw an analogy between Shakespeare and Tagore. Even when the translations are bad, Shakespeare enjoys popularity with general readers, whereas Tagore, though once, popular in Europe in the early twenties, *has* now virtually been rejected by the West.

DR A. PODDAR—To my mind Tagore himself was to some extent responsible for his diminishing image in the West, but his blind supporters in Bengal are much more responsible in this respect. *Gitanjali* was never the best of Tagore, yet the western readers were asked to take it as such. In my own view, Tagore's prose writings are far superior to his poetry, and this point has got to be stressed. I fully agree with the speaker that the group of Indo-Anglians, led by Sri P. Lal, who also call themselves 'alien insiders', are doing disservice to Indian literature through their translations.

DR MRS M. CHATTERJEE—I have some observations to make:

(a) In Western literature nature has been depicted in two different ways: as brutal and as beautiful. This idealized beautiful concept links up with the essences of nature. Rousseau and D. H. Lawrence retained this identity but dropped the aspect of rationality.

(b) Is there any 'Lermeneutic' study of Indian literature? It is time to construe such a study.

(c) A comparative study of symbolism is presupposed in the task of the translator.

(d) Problems faced by the translator from one Indian language to another must be different from the problems of translation from one Indian language to English. What is the nature of that difference?

(e) Comparative studies, whether in literature or in philosophy, all depend on translation. What exactly should be our goal in such studies?

(f) Indian paintings and sculpture have more response in the West than Indian literature. The reason is that the former art-forms do not require any translation, but the latter does. In music



we have an inter mediate form, which is not translatable, but is not easily accessible either. Some sort of training is a prerequisite for its appreciation.

DR R. K. DASGUPTA—I like to bring to the speaker's notice that in translation of Greek and Latin classics in English three procedures are followed. The first is represented by Dryden's *Virgil*, where the objective was to present an analysis of the original; the second is represented by Pope's *Iliad*, where the translator tried to reproduce only those elements of the original which his own idioms can regenerate. The third is Marianne Moore's *Fables of La Fontaine*, which is successful because the translator chose an original which she would like to write in her own language. These three procedures are defined by three motives, and it is important to decide on a translation policy keeping in view the capabilities of the translator and of the language in which he is translating. From that point of view, T. S. Eliot's comments on Gilbert Murray's translation of Greek tragedies are unjust.

DR S. K. GHOSH—I object to the presentation of Abanindranath's *Rajkahani.as* as a saga, as has been done by the speaker.

DR H. GOHAIN—Translation has now become a sort of international protocol But the real task of translation involves proper knowledge of two language-societies. Most of the translators are not aware of their responsibilities.

DR V. I. SUBRAMONAM—The problem involved in the translation from one Indian language into another is not so difficult to solve, as semantically Indian words are more or less equal But translations from one Indian language into English is indeed a difficult task. The English lexicon is a different realm altogether.

PROF. K. R. SRINIVASA IYENGAR—The task of translation is a very difficult task but at the same time a worth undertaking task. The translator's primary concern should be to give something important and beautiful, something to be possessed, to a reader who does not know the language translated from.

SRI K. KRIPALANI—A translator should have a thorough knowledge of two languages. Unfortunately, such persons are not available in India in good numbers. All the translations published by the Sahitya Akademi are below standard. In my opinion, translation should be both beautiful and faithful, just like a woman to her lover.

DR S. K. CHATTERJEE—I agree with the views expressed here, but I also think that a translator should know the philology of the two languages concerned, and should have a keen sense of judgement

which is important in translation. Mere collaboration between two persons belonging to two languages will not help.

DR A. R. DASGUPTA—The comparison between Tagore's response in the West and Shakespeare's response in India is relevant because these two writers have been translated into most of the languages of the East and West. I thank Dr Poddar for supporting me but I find it difficult to agree that Tagore's prose is superior to his verse. The term *saga* used by me in respect of Abanindranath's book is merely a rhetorical expression and should not be taken seriously. In reply to Dr R. K. Dasgupta I would say that in translating the literature of knowledge, one should have an approach different from that involved in the translation of a purely literary work. In translation, we lose a lot, especially in poetry. But" can this be helped?

### *Tools of Criticism* (Literary Historiography)

#### KULKARNI, W.L., *Western Forms in Marathi Literature*

##### DISCUSSION

DR R. K. DAS GUPTA—I assume by form Prof. Kulkarni means genre. May I ask him about the fate of a European genre when it is introduced in our literature. Let us take the personal essay. My question is whether the genre has achieved a form in Marathi literature—in other words, is-there a Charles Lamb in this language?

DR W. L. KULKARNI—There are good essayists, for example, N. S. Phadke.

SRI ATTAR SINGH—May I request Prof. Kulkarni to give an indication as to how a particular form came to be borrowed or adopted in the Marathi language? What is the relationship between such a borrowed form and a corresponding traditional form? Will he also tell us which Western forms are dominating the present

Marathi literature.

DR KULKARNI—Take drama, for example. There is influence of Sanskrit as well as of English on Marathi plays but still a Marathi element is there which is *music*. Music forms a part of the dialogue. Among certain poetic forms, *ode*, for example, has taken a different shape in Marathi, and the sonnet has lost all its appeal.

DR S. K. CHATTERJEE—Music forms a vital element of the Parsee theatre, which has helped the growth of Hindi theatre. When we speak of Western influence, we must consider that the influence can be direct as well as indirect. The influence of Bengali for example, on Marathi is a kind of indirect influence of the West on Marathi literature.

DR N. G. JOSHI—The Marathi dramatist was influenced by the Parsee theatre as well as by Western theatre.

SRI K. KRIPALANI—The musical element of the Marathi stage has a classical quality which is not to be found in Parsee Theatre.

DR S. K. GHOSH—Could Dr Kulkarni please tell us a little more about the new Marathi theatre and if the theatre of the Absurd has appeared in the Marathi stage and what are its prospects?

DR KULKARNI—There are not many *absurd* plays, *Ek Sunya Bajirao* is a great departure from conventional drama. Vijay Tendulkar is writing plays on the lines of Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams.

DR MRS M. KAUL—In Western play, there is a tradition of musical comedy distinct from that of opera. Has it anything to do with the Parsee theatre?

Dr Kulkarni—No.

## DASGUPTA, R.K., *Literary Historiography*

### DISCUSSION

DR A. PODDAR—Dr Dasgupta has voiced a strong warning against the limitations of the sociological approach, which is also the Marxist approach, and has raised exactly the same question about George Thomson's *Aeschylus and Athens* which T. S. Eliot raised long ago after reading Lowes' *Road to Xanadu*. He has mentioned with approval the absence of a sociological scheme of literary studies in the critical essays of Bankimchandra. Though he has also said that a literary historian should not be indifferent to the social background, he has

left us in no doubt as to his own preferences. In view of that I submit, if sociological methodology is to be deprecated then it becomes pointless to deplore the absence, of literature in the disciplines of social science, cultural anthropology, history of religion and philosophy, etc., as has been done by him.

As regards Caudwell's *Illusion and Reality*, I would like to point out that no Marxist literary critic accepts it as a guide and a model. His mechanistic approach to and categorization of English poetry came in for sharp criticism not only in England and America and also in Bengal. Better models were supplied by Ralph Fox and Lukacs for the study of literature in general and of fiction in particular. The Austrian poet and critic Ernst Fischer also made a competent application of the Marxist methodology in the study of European literary movements in the nineteenth and twentieth, centuries in his book. *The Necessity of Art*. Such attempts, not altogether unworthy, have been made in Bengal too. My point is that there is nothing to be allergic about the Marxian methodology. As for limitations, every methodology has its own limitations, if incorrectly handled.

I believe that we would not be able to write competent histories of literature unless we view the life of the people and their literature as an organic whole, and that whole again as a growth, as a development. For this purpose, I think, three things are needed: (1) a knowledge of the socio-economic and ideological structures of the given period which form the ideational component of the life of the people; (2) a knowledge of the factors that cause or contribute to the changes in taste,, attitude, belief, etc., of the people; and (3) an appreciative literary mind that will correlate the literary creations with those elements and at the same time evaluate them as the beautiful or ugly or indifferent images of life in its totality. This brings us back to the sociological methodology.

Lastly, as another example of the danger of depending upon secondary sources, I wish to point out that Ronaldshay in his *The Heart of Aryavarta* mentioned Dinabandhu Mitra's *Sadhabar Ekadashi* as 'a famous novel', though in fact it is a play.

DR R. K. DASGUPTA—I would encourage the study of sociological background of literature, sociology of taste, etc., but in a history of literature I want to discourage any excessive preoccupation with methodologies.

DR H GOHAIN—Is not the personal element rather more important in literary history than in any other type of history? The writing of history in collaboration is not a good idea. Consider the

varying pattern and emphasis in the different volumes of the *Oxford History of English Literature*. Dr Dasgupta does not mention in his paper the most important Marxist critic of our time—Lukacs. Lukacs has contributed concepts that are of crucial importance in the history of literature. For example, the theory of types—outstanding fictional characters representing historical forces, sometimes latent.

DR R. K. DASGUPTA—It goes without saying that individual work has more profundity and individuality but the suggestion for a corporate history of Indian literature has been made because of knowledge of various languages are involved in writing an history of Indian literature. Lukacs' approach is certainly interesting, but it is yet to emerge as a valid approach to literature.

DR V. I. SUBRAMONIAM—I think there can be three kinds of approach to the literary history—history dealing with theories of growth of different forms, a chronological account, and a history of evaluation.

DR R. K. DASGUPTA—It is difficult to decide the proportions of these elements in a history of literature.

DR K. A. FARUQI—We have only chronicles of literature in Urdu, no history. There are several periods in our literary history which are still in the dark and have to be studied in depth. There are many texts which are yet to be precisely edited. I think, we have to wait for some time (until some of the basic and fundamental problems are solved) before we can make an attempt to write a history of Urdu literature.

DR R. K. DASGUPTA—Yes, compilation and collection of materials are extremely important. Many pioneers failed to weave a complete texture of history of literature with a sense of proportion, balance and readable presentation of the material.

DR A. R. DASGUPTA—We must have a unified view of our own literature. The exponents of world-literature emphasized on the *urphanomen* or the universal phenomenon in literature. Would it not be advisable for us to look for the *universal* in literature which would help us to arrive at a conception of Indianness in Indian literature?

DR R. K. DASGUPTA—This is very important. Goethe enunciated the concept of world literature. Tagore also spoke about *Visva-Sahitya* (world-literature). A wider view of literature is a deterrent to unhealthy parochialism. Saint-Beauve pleaded for an enlargement of taste. An awareness of the literature of the world would certainly give our study of literature a new dimension.

D.R.A. N. KAUL—I like to draw attention to some of the difficulties

of literary historians. We do not have dependable studies of individual authors, periods, forms and even dependable criticism. Literary histories, I think, are perhaps the last fruit of our researches, rather than an introductory one. And that's why I don't think it should be included in our post-graduate classes.

Literary historians have to combine expert abilities in various fields. The literary history need not be evaluative but interpretative in the sense that it must explain why a form develops in a certain time and how a particular form develops. About sociological approach, I think, we must remember that the focus of literary history is primarily on literary works. But no one denies the importance of historical information for a better understanding of literature. Arnold Kettle's book on English novel, for example, contains an excellent historical introduction. The conception of literary history changes. Taine's framework is no longer accepted today. The world-view of the literary historian changes with the change of society. Sociological frame-work does not provide always the right kind of framework. For example Marvell, wrote poems in courtly tradition though he being a secretary of Cromwell was a progressive of some sort. Literary traditions and changes are far more subtle and complicated than other social traditions and changes.

SRI ATTAR SINGH—In my view, the history of a literature is relevant to the task of literary appreciation, as well as to the study of general history of its people. The problems of literary history are similar to those of general history. A history of ideas is a prerequisite for a literary history. The history of literature must centre round the history of ideas to discover the significance of the date included in it. In this sense, all history is only contemporary history, the task of literary historian is to evolve a method which gives a definite shape to his own vision. As regards methods, it should not be confused with models. Adoption of foreign models is dangerous, since it encourages one to adjust with the model ignoring the inconvenient facts and to arrive at a pre-conceived conclusion.

DR R. K. DASGUPTA—We have to make a distinction between the methods of investigation and of presentation. We have our personal response to facts and therefore literary histories can have different points of view. And our personal responses are certainly conditioned by our ideas and views about history. The methodology also depends on the taste, training and objectives of the historians.

DR M. H. KHAN—Taking up once more the thread of the argument about the sociological approach to literature, I think there are areas

of human activities when a man stands outside the orbit of history. I know of an eminent scholar who studies the *ghazals* of Ghalib from sociological approach and has got nothing out of it.

PROF. K. R. SRINIVASA IYNGER—A question has been raised whether one should have literary criticism first or literary history first. These two activities do not exclude one another. In fact.

Neither ways are better  
Both ways are necessary.

DR NIHARRANJAN RAY—All history is contemporary history, Any historian is conditioned by the time and place he is placed in. History can be written at any given point of time. Therefore, to say that the time of writing the history of Indian literature has not yet arrived, is not valid. Any time is good time to write history. All facts of the past can never be collected.

The second point that I want to make is that as in creative literature one feels compelled to write because of his creative desire (*kama*) so in the writing of history. The historian organizes the data, and orders them chronologically. But history is not a mere chronology, but a creative activity. This brings in the question of the historian's attitude, approach and methodology. My third point is that all data are significant. One has to select data and one selects according to one's sense of values. The question of a sociological approach has been raised by some of the participants. This is an important approach. Individual psyche is unique but it has its relations with the community-psyche—and the former cannot be understood without a reference to the latter. I want to make it clear that I think not only the thematic content of an object of art but also the form and style of a given art at a given period are conditioned by the society.

DR R. K. DASGUPTA—It may be true that any time is good time for writing a history of literature. But one must note that literary history is a modern exercise. The Greeks did not write a history of literature. There was no history of literature in the middle ages. It has been the occupation of university men and it has grown out of the labours of literary scholars. A history of Indian literature is possible only through the labours of literary scholars, which involve several related tasks such as editing the manuscripts, writing the biographies, identification of texts and so on.

DR B. DE—To a student of history, nothing is secondary or corollary. He takes everything into consideration—be it literary,



political or economic. If history is essentially a study of man's relation with society, the task of a literary historian is also to discover the relation between the creative process and social forces.

### SEN, NILRATAN, *Bengali Literary Historiography*

DR R. K. DASGUPTA—May I ask Dr Sen about two important works in Bengali literary history—D. C. Sen's work and JVC. Ghosh's work both are in English—the first was published in 1911 and the second in 1948. Sen is more copious, has a much larger measure of enthusiasm, is not so careful about form arising out of a sense of proportion and balance, a concern about sequence of order; while Ghosh is more compact, has a sense of form; appears rather cold in at least some portions of his work. Ghosh is supposed to be absolutely free from any kind of Bengali patriotism. In my view, each supplements the other for an enquiring reader. Will he accept this view?

DR N. R. SEN—I agree with you entirely.

DR A. N. KAUL—I think there is some confusion in our attitudes about sociological attitude and its relations to literary history. The old historians too viewed political and social facts as useful for the appreciation of literature. One must note that literary historian has to concentrate on literature but he should naturally try to correlate the social events with the facts of literature.

SRI K. KRIPALANI—Dr Dasgupta has rightly reminded us that for a proper appreciation of literary values we need to cultivate literary taste as well as literary knowledge. No doubt, one can have taste without knowledge or knowledge without taste, or as is more common and more profitable, one can do without either.

Without taste one cannot enjoy literature, and without knowledge one cannot teach it. Knowledge is necessary, for while one can be virtuous and happy without knowledge, one cannot be a lamp unto others. One can, for example, enjoy a poem of Tagore by itself and it should be so enjoyed, but one can hardly take in the totality and magnitude of his genius without relating it to the various influences, Upanishadic, classical, medieval, indigenous, regional and foreign which fed it. We may be content to browse in our regional acres of green grass but if our horizon is limited by the fences raised round it, we shall miss the true perspective of the vast undulating landscape

full of forests, pasture lands, jungles and deserts, of which our own particular acre of green grass is only a part.

It is our misfortune that the most astonishing fact of our national and cultural consciousness is our colossal ignorance about ourselves. We are so ignorant of what constitutes ourselves that until recently very few Indians could have named the major languages of their country, and even today the number of these who can do so would not be very large. We were not only un-informed but ill-informed, and what is worse, supercilious in our ignorance. To cite a common instance: to the north Indian every one from south of the Vindhyas was a Madras; to the Bengali every one from outside of Sonar Bangla was a Hindustani or an Ure; to the good Hindu every one outside the sacred fold or outside the holy land was a mlechha. No doubt, these compliments were fully reciprocated with, let us hope, equal ignorance and equal self-complacence.

Even today, with all the vociferous boosting of our national consciousness and organized inflation of our cultural ego, our intellectuals know much more of poets and writers outside India than of their counterparts in regions of India other than their own. A Bengali intellectual, for instance, who is at home with Baudelaire, Mallarme, T. S. Eliot or Jean Paul Sartre, may not have heard the name of Ilango Adigal or Warish Shah or Kumaran Asan. It is certainly an asset to know of great writers outside India and it is good for us if we can derive joy or inspiration or both from their works. Whether it will ever be possible or not “to create a unified field of taste” to which Dr Dasgupta’s paper has referred, I cannot say; but I fully share his conviction that “The finest taste is at its finest when it is most catholic”. But we cannot be truly catholic and universal unless we first know ourselves well.

How we shall learn to do so and when, who can tell? Unfortunately, so far, the more we have talked of national integration, the more we have fallen apart. It would, therefore seem that if we have to achieve an adequate awareness of our Indianness, at any rate in the limited field of literature, we will have to do so in spite of our politicians. Dr Dasgupta’s paper is in fact, an invitation and appeal to our scholars and professors to explore the vast field of the literary history of their country, a field so vast and tortuous in time and space, that its horizons and undergrowth are hardly perceptible—to explore this field, not in isolated patches of green acres or fertile periods, but as a single panorama, however multiple and varied the

changing landscape. To this end, he has pertinently argued the case for a unified history of Indian literature as a whole, and not in patch work fragments.

Let us hope that one day such History will be written. We may also hope that our universities will see to it that no one is allowed to call himself a Master of literature in any Indian language unless he has had at least a bird's eye view of the panorama of Indian literature as a whole.

In any case, such a history might be a mere catalogue of names, unfamiliar and irrelevant, unless concrete specimens of this literature are available in a tolerably readable translation, preferably in all Indian languages, but if not in all, in at least some easily accessible 'link languages' such as Hindi and English and may be one or two others. This stresses the importance of the problem of translation which we briefly discussed yesterday, arising out of Prof. Alokranjan Dasgupta's paper. He was referring therein to the colloquy between East and West, but I would here stress the urgency of such a colloquy between our own Indian languages as well. As Prof. Srinivasa Iyengar pointed out, it is good to translate and it is also difficult to translate, What is good must be bravely attempted and carried on, and we must not be disheartened if the achievement has not so far been impressive.

My own experience has been that the less I know others, the better I like them. But that is only the limited experience of what may well be a distorted mind. And, in any case, knowledge is its own reward, for otherwise there might be no professors, no philosophy, no seminars, and no Sahitya Akademi. So I am duly grateful to knowledge and honour it. Our approach to literature should be such as to discover the past in the present and to bring the distant near.

## SECTION F

### *Indian Literature as an Academic Discipline*

#### SRINIVASA IYENGAR. K.R., *Indian Literature as an Academic Discipline*

## DISCUSSION

DR A. N. KAUL—To my mind, there is an apparent contradiction in this extraordinarily well-written paper. It is between Prof. Iyengar's preliminary question concerning the teachability of literature and his suggestions concerning how literature courses might be taught. I agree that the core of what is called literary appreciation is unteachable but not, for that reason incommunicable. It can be guided and stimulated. And in this respect the various critical approaches are of immense help in 'unlocking' our response or at least our full response. Training and education must not be confused. One of the great values of a literary education is the expansion of our humanity, the maturity, sensitivity, and growing complexity of our consciousness. But even as training, literary studies need not be inferior to other disciplines. For though ultimately it is our response to, or feelings about, or appreciation of literature that is important, we do not merely utter these feelings and have done. We try to reason them out, and by so doing train our minds as well as our sensibilities and that is exactly why literary studies can be a fine discipline.

DR N. R. RAY—I maintain that literature can be taught. However, I would like to differentiate between two aspects of literature: (1) Literature as experience which is unavailable from other disciplines and can be communicated by good teachers. (2) Literature as

knowledge which can be taught, which sharpens the sensibility, sensitivity, and perceptions, and which is hence a discipline.

DR L. BHATTACHARYA—I very much appreciate Prof. Iyengar's forthright paper and his constructive suggestions. One key aspect of the teaching of Indian literature is contained in the clichéd but often misunderstood word 'unity'. It is very important that a course in comparative Indian literature be introduced in our universities so that the objective of the unity of Indian literature might be arrived at.

DRA. R. DAS GUPTA—I also see Indian literature as an autonomous unit. Comparative studies would help to show the value of various indigenous forms and the thematic continuities in our literature.

DR V. I. SUBRAMONIAM—My suggestion is that there should be comparative courses in the Indo-Aryan languages or the Dravidian languages before there were Pan-Indian courses. In the south where there are no language requirements or course work for research degrees such requirements ought to be introduced. Translations of important works out to be made available and the necessity of familiarity with another Indian language ought to be recognized. Sanskrit influences ought to be traced, but since Sanskrit, too, had borrowed from other sources, the Indian content of Sanskrit out to be examined. I feel that students alone should not be blamed for the existing state of affairs in Indian literature. Teachers and the limited range of subjects are also equally responsible.

DR O. M. ANUJAN—My practical suggestion is for the teaching of a comparative course in Indian literature. I think that annotated translations of major works of major writers in the various languages (commissioned translations) would help to overcome the problems of script. For the success of our purpose, I urge for the speedy compilation of a comprehensive history of Indian literature.

DR K. A. FARUQI—We have been teaching Indian literature since 1947 at the Delhi University, and our Urdu, department also gives a course on the social and cultural background of Indian literature with special emphasis on Urdu. We are now thinking of including a full-fledged course in Indian literature.

DR S. K. GHOSH—I accept the speaker's suggestion for one composite paper in Indian literature for students of various Indian languages. But I wonder why the students of English literature should not be give the same advantage of 'rootedness'.

PROF. SRINIVASA IYENGAR—1 consider English to be one of the Indian languages.

DR N. SEN—I would like to bring to the notice of this seminar some practical problems involved in the teaching of Indian literature. Let me ask this question: does the teaching of Indian literature, let us say Bengali help the students to become perfect citizens, or whether without this knowledge they would feel a lack, and, if not, what is the usefulness of teaching Indian literature? From a professional point of view, students of Indian literature are hard hit since they are unable to get jobs. In the syllabi of Indian universities, the formal aspects rather than the aesthetic and philosophical aspects of literature ought to be stressed, and the emphasis should fall on *inter-disciplinary* courses. Honours and M.A. courses should be integrated and cover a period of four to five years, and during this period students should have direct access to all important works of literature in their purview. Teachers who teach Indian literature simply because they love it can do infinite harm. Teachers of Indian literature fail to devote attention to class lectures or to students and, consequently, contribute to the sense of frustration, and gloom pervading the Indian literature departments.

DR S. K. DAS—I would like to point out the deplorable state of affairs in the teaching of Bengali; I do not know if the same applies to other languages. Bengali, even after long years of its introduction into the academic syllabus, enjoys neither academic nor social prestige. Rejected students from all other departments find their way to the Bengali class, their perspective is narrow and the quality of work done is also poor. The universities are indifferent to the Bengali students and most of the teachers also have no formal training in Bengali. What is needed is a drastic change in the syllabus: (1) A knowledge of Sanskrit and English literatures is essential; (2) General linguistics in Bengali should be introduced; (3) Textual criticism must be taught; (4) There should be courses on the socio-religious background of Indian literature; and (5) The study of at least two Indian literatures should be made compulsory.

DR K. K. RAJA—I am rather shocked to hear Dr Das remarks. This state of affairs does not prevail in the south where M.A. courses in regional languages are very popular. These students take additional papers in Sanskrit, comparative philology, history of languages and literatures, and use the standard works of English literary criticism.

SRI ATTAR SINGH—We should not succumb to the sense of gloom as expressed in Dr Das remarks. In Panjab, after the declaration of Panjabi as the sole language of administration, there has been an explosion in the number of students taking postgraduate courses in

Panjabi. But, of course, the standard is not rising; for this we teachers are responsible. I would ask Prof. Iyengar if the 'Indianness' of Indian literature is something we start from or aim at. The emphasis at the present moment is on separateness and self-sufficiency of each language, rather than on commonness. It is certain that Panjabi was introduced as a subject of study on political grounds. There is a lack of standards, a lack of excellence, and a lack of criteria of evaluation. There is no common medium of exchange.

DR N. R. RAY—By way of commenting on the remarks of Dr Das, I would like to point out that social prestige is based on economic opportunities and job opportunities, but it can also be given by good or great teachers. But, unfortunately, the teachers of today are neither committed nor involved.

PROF. K. R. SRINIVASA IYENGAR—I am grateful to the participants for the interest they have shown in my paper. I would, however, like to stress some points. Literature as knowledge implies 'experiential' knowledge, not the kind of knowledge gathered from other disciplines. A good teacher of literature is very necessary, much more so than a committee on reform. I feel the urgent need for a course on comparative literature. A study of Indian literature will induce in the student a greater sense of awareness of his own individuality together with a sense of community. The production of a good edition is as important as a first-rate critical study. I agree with Dr Kaul that stating the reasons for liking a poem is indeed a discipline. As regards the suggestion of translation of major works in different languages, I would also add the playing of tapes in various languages. I realize the importance of writing immediately a comprehensive history of Indian literature, but the problem is who is to undertake the job. The picture that Dr Das has drawn of Bengali is no doubt gloomy, but since it is not true of other languages like Tamil, Hindi or Panjabi, I hope the situation would improve and the students of Bengal would realize the importance of other languages and master two or three of them. I would like very much to stress that 'rejects' do not exist or should not exist, and the humanities should treat no students as such. In conclusion, I would like to draw attention to the popularity of the Nanak seminar in Madras. This reveals the unity of understanding that exists in the country and the ease with which linguistic narrowness or barriers can be overcome.

DR S. K. CHATTERJEE—The study of the modern Indian languages was started in Bengal with the Swadeshi movement. Lectures on Bengali language and literature were given at the Calcutta University



and courses in many other Indian languages were introduced. But the promise of the department had remained unfulfilled, and the overall picture today is surely not very hopeful.

## DASGUPTA, R.K., *Research in Modern Indian Languages*

### DISCUSSION

DR A. R. DAS GUPTA—I have a feeling that the present paper displays an enlightened inferiority complex, haunted by an English and a Sanskrit spectre I wish to emphasize the fact that Sanskrit forms were not taken over by Bengali or Marathi, but Jaydeva and other poets derived them from Apabhramsa.

DR MISS BOSSERT—I would like to know if an Indian language could be the sole content for an M.A. or Ph.D. programme, since the element of comparative study is vitally important for the understanding of one particular language.

SRI ATTAR SINGH—I wish to point out that a low quality of research marks out not only Indian literatures but English literature as well. Some time ago, the *Times Literary Supplement* devoted a special issue to the low standard and even irrelevance of current research on English literature with F.R., Leavis leading the attack and lamenting the shifting of emphasis from teaching entirely to research. A balance between the two is very necessary if Indian literature is to grow into a university discipline.

DR. A. BHATTACHARYA—The quality of research, I believe, is dependent on the quality of students. The quality of students in Bengali at the Calcutta University is not generally bad and hence most of them are able to secure immediate employment. Many such students, do not come for a Ph.D. and research scholarships go a begging. It is only when the results are bad that some of them come to do Ph.D. as a compensation. The Ph.D. degree, therefore, is rather meaningless. Only the D.Lit. appears to have any worth.

DR R.K. DASGUPTA—I am glad to know that the quality of the Bengali students in Calcutta is good, but what perplexes me is the question, why then the teaching is so bad?

DR S.K. CHATTERJEE—These good students lose interest in the subject once they accept the teaching assignment.

DR R.K. DASGUPTA —So far as the question of prestige is concerned, I believe, the fact that professors of various Indian languages are made vice-chancellors is by itself of small importance. This does not make for improvement of language teaching. The new image of Tamil and Hindi is due purely to political reasons. In Hindi there is no new dimension to studies in the language; the only new dimension is political.

## Concluding Session

DR S. K. CHATTERJEE—When I review the work done during the last fortnight, I feel that there are absolutely no differences in our attitudes and perceptions, though we—the participants—belong to different regions of India. My firm conviction is that through a spirit of understanding we can achieve real integration, real unity in and through multiplicity.

DR S. K. GHOSH—A seminar like the present one, with elders, of the tribe present as well as young Turks, not to mention those who belong to the ‘realm of between’, has its direct and indirect, central and fringe benefits. We shall go back much refreshed and enriched, perhaps more than we are aware of. For this our thanks are due to the organizers of the seminar, especially the Director.

PROF K. B. DAS—This seminar has been an illuminating experience to me; it has cemented in us the feeling of oneness. I am also convinced that in spite of many differences, modern Indian literatures are one and indivisible. But, at the same time, I feel that there is great need for standardization of the teaching of Indian literatures in our universities.

DR S. MURTHY—I have a strong feeling that we have yet to find a definition of Indian literature. But, however that may be, we seem to be concentrating on European and American literatures, besides our own. We should not forget Chinese and Japanese literatures, which have produced great modern writers and have a glorious heritage. May be Arab and African literatures should receive our equal attention. Non-Indian Eastern literatures also should not be ignored.

DR L. BHATTACHARYA—Personally speaking, the seminar has been very interesting to me. Though it did not provide a single answer, it did raise several questions, which I think is the purpose of all seminars. I would have liked it to lay a greater emphasis on ideas than on discussion of the subject of Indian literature from mostly an academic point of view. It would perhaps have been more fruitful if we confined ourselves to specific topics, like, let us say, the problems facing contemporary writing or obscenity or radicalism in modern literature, etc., My own feeling is that due to the predominantly academic nature of the discussions and the generation gap among the participants, resulting in difference in points of view, we have perhaps not been able to establish a dialogue

during the seminar. Nevertheless, we have spent a very memorable time, during or outside the discussions. The greatest benefit has been this staying together for so many days with so many reputed scholars and discovering in the process not only the range of their scholarship but also, and more importantly, their essential humanity.

DR K. A. FARUQI—I wish to make one suggestion to this seminar. We should introduce the study of two optional extra languages at the M.A. level. In fact, we have already introduced two optional languages in the M.A. Urdu course at the University of Delhi. One is a classical language, Sanskrit or Persian or Arabic, and the other a modern Indian language or a modern European language. At present, we have arrangement for Hindi, Bengali and French.

DR N. G. JOSHI—All of us have greatly benefited by coming here. From our discussions, I have found that even a dry subject like prosody becomes poetic among scholars.

PROF. K. R. SRINIVASA IYENGAR—I feel that our sense of identity must be projected outside, into the greater life of our people. National life is the field where something has to be achieved. If we speak in different voices there, our voices would not be heard. So, we must speak in one voice.

PROF. IYENGAR then presented the statement prepared on behalf of the seminar, which was accepted. He then moved the following resolution: ‘This seminar on Indian literature places on record its deep sense of appreciation of the initiative taken by Dr Niharranjan Ray, Director of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla, in organizing the present seminar, and affording generous hospitality and all assistance to the participants. This seminar also thanks the Fellows of the Institute and the staff for their sustained co-operation in contributing to the success of the seminar’. The resolution was accepted.

The Chairman then requested Sri Krishna Kripalani to say something relevant to the seminar.

SRI K. KRIPALANI—Thank you, Sir, for allowing me this opportunity of joining with you all to express my grateful appreciation of the charming hospitality of this charming abode of learning nestling in the charming lap of the Himalayas. The Director’s imaginative sympathy provided us a welcome relief from the heat and dust of the plains, on the virtuous and laudable excuse of improving one another’s minds. Let us hope the minds were improved, the appetite certainly was, and we have thoroughly enjoyed

our stay here, thanks to the affection and care we have received from Dr Niharranjan Ray and his excellent and untiring team of colleagues in the Institute, from the ebullient, resourceful and ever obliging Mr Malhotra and the gentle, sweet and efficient Mrs Sood to John Massy who comes with the dawn, with silent, stealthy steps, bearing a welcome tray of tea in his hands. Sundar and his mates have fed us lavishly and borne with our impatience and greed with admirable patience. Returning late at night, when the lights were cut off, Masterji, always courteous and ever ready with his Eveready torch, has lighted us to our rooms. Where can we get such charming hospitality, and for what? For talking—which most us love to do in any case.

I must not forget to acknowledge the delight and stimulus I have derived from the company of the Fellows whose quiet and unobtrusive pur suit of knowledge adds ballast to the floating cargo at this seat of learning. Needless to say, Fellows include both he's and she's. It is a pity that the English tongue is so illogical and erratic that while it has provided heroes with heroines, it has failed to provide Fellows with fellowines. Nor must I omit a reference to the picturesque personality of Mrs Dayal, a silent and consistent observer at every seminar, whose pithy, practical and forthright comments were they audible to the participants, would help to enliven the debate and contribute to a saner outlook.

It has been a privilege, Sir, to participate in this seminar. We have done our best to impress one another with our learning and cleverness by talking, and with our wisdom by our silence. Dr Johnson advised writers to keep away from each other. We have rendered his warning unnecessary by not quarrelling. Even if we have learnt nothing else, we have learnt to like one another. Fortunately, we have not solved any problems. Not unoften, the solution of a problem gives rise to other and worse problems.

But I am no judge in this respect. My mind wonders when grave issues are discussed with earnestness. Yesterday, for example, when the basic problems of whether literature is or can be made a proper academic discipline was being discussed with much learning and wisdom, the only thing that survived in my mind was Prof. Iyengar's casual remark dismissing nose-blowing as an academic discipline, I was conscious of it all the while as I went for my evening pilgrimage to the Mall. I had never before given the matter any thought, but last evening I could not help noticing the various styles of nose-blowing that enlivened the land scape—all

of them truly Indian and national. Here was a lady blowing her pretty little nose into a loose end of her sari; another passer-by dressed patriotically in dhoti blew his into a fluttering fragment of his pure white garment. The majority of the fair sex who wear churidar and kurta in these parts utilized the urni or the sleeve of the kurta. Gentlemen in Western dress, mindful of their costly warm clothes, took the aid of their thumb and first finger to deposit their leagacy on the road and wiped the hand on the nearest fence or tree. I was trudging up an arduous climb when an athletic gentleman coming from behind blew the bugle of his nose with such blast that I nearly missed a heart beat. There are notices all along the way warning against spitting but none advising how to blow the nose. Then I wondered to myself if it would not be to our good if nose-blowing were taught as a discipline in our homes and schools, if not in the higher seats of learning.

But that is by the way—both literally and metaphorically.

It was our good fortune, Sir, that we had the privilege of listening to Prof. Murthy's lectures. He took us on an exciting cruise in the ocean of man's wisdom through the ages and pointed to us many splendid and elaborately constructed ships tossing on the waves of their metaphysical speculations, in the happy illusion that they were reaching somewhere or plumbing the depth when they were merely going round and round. Each was aware of the leaks in other vessels and was blissfully unmindful of its own. Which of these leaking vessels carried the cargo of Prof. Murthy's own beliefs, he wisely refrained from confiding to us. All the same I am grateful to him for this fascinating voyage. It was heartening to know that his vast erudition and my abysmal ignorance led to the same little haven of animal wisdom that life is to be lived and not argued about, that of the ultimate meaning of existence we can have no certitude except by lulling ourselves into a semblance of it.

Sir, I recall when I first went to Santiniketan in the early thirties, Tagore had entered the last great phase—according to some the greatest phase—of his poetic achievement. During this phase, ailing and bent with age, the poet seemed to feel and live more intensely and to belong more to this earth and came closer to us humble mortals of clay than ever before. And yet every Wednesday he spoke in the Mandir of God on the meaning of life and death with the eloquence and certitude of the Upanishads, in striking contrast to the mood and tone of the verse he was

composing simultaneously. I was intrigued and puzzled and provoked to commit one of the biggest follies of my life. I blundered into talking to myself in verse in a language I hardly knew, which I was just beginning to learn and have not yet learnt. I said:

*Rabi Babu mājhe mājhe  
Kathā bolen ati bāje.*

To my Bengali friends I apologise for this impertinence and this assault and rape on their language and prosody. For my non-Bengali friends, I may translate this, piece of atrocity as: Rabi Babu now and then talks a lot of nonsense.

This was said privately and playfully by myself to myself. I could commit this impertinence, which to some would seem a sacrilege, because I loved the poet. Love gives one the right to be playful and profane, as a child to its mother, as a lover to his sweetheart. May be, that is why we have so many profane and perverse jokes about Lords Krishna and Shiva who are our most beloved deities. Prof. Iyengar told us, very wisely and very feelingly, that in love is our salvation. One might also say that when one loves, one needs no salvation, for love's very bondage becomes salvation, as Dr Niharranjan Ray pointed out.

Sir, if this seminar and our stay here have shown us how little we really know, and have taught us to know and love one another better, it has done us ample good. Let me once again thank the Institute, its able Director and his ever-obliging team of co-workers for their unfailing friendliness and hospitality. And thank you, friends, for bearing with my foolish words.

DR N. R. RAY—I am extremely grateful for the kind words that have been expressed here. I may be permitted to say that the seminars I have organized during the last five years have been a great education for me. I have learnt many things I could not have learnt otherwise, and the affection I have received from nearly six hundred participants is unforgettable. It is a rich treasure which I shall preserve till the last days of my life. Once again, I thank you all.



## Statement Issued by the Seminar



I

This Seminar on Indian Literature, held from May 10 to 23, 1970 at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Rashtrapati Nivas, Simla, under the general chairmanship of Dr Suniti Kumar Chatterjee, National Professor of Humanities and Chairman, Sahitya Akademi, discussed at its various business sessions, over forty working papers raising important issues relating to the heritage and background of Indian Literature in its classical, medieval and modern phases, the ramifications of folk literature, the impact of society and ideas on literature, the methods of linguistic and literary study, and the role of translations. The Seminar also considered the present state of language and literature studies in the Indian universities and the desirability of instituting a background course in Indian Literature as ancillary to the study of the various individual literatures.

II

The broad aim of the Seminar was to infer the many-faceted reality of Indian Literature, a complex and living unity that is perhaps more conceptual and experiential than mechanical and outward, and perceived at the deeper level of insight and intuition than in the outer uniformity of script or language. The Seminar nevertheless

feels that the acceptance of the reality of this common denominator of Indian Literature can give a wide base and healthy orientation to the study of the various Indian languages and literatures.

III

The Seminar feels that individual Indian literatures should be studied in depth both in terms of an aesthetic that takes note of the theories developed in India and the West and in the historical context of the evolving society and the changing climate of ideas, and making judicious use of the latest methods of linguistic, stylistic and psychological analysis.

IV

The Seminar feels that a junior course in at least one other literature (preferably a classical and a modern literature), and a back ground course in Indian Literature as a whole should form an integral part of an Honours or Postgraduate course in any Indian Literature. It is also desirable that students of Indian literature should be enabled, by means of courses of extension lectures, to come into contact with the main currents of world literature with the emphasis on the outstanding writers.

The Seminar feels that an earnest attempt should be made by Departments of Language and Literature in India to raise the standards of teaching and research, of scholarship and criticism, setting the study of any particular literature in the total context of Indian literature and culture. The Seminar hopes that our universities will give the language and literature departments adequate encouragement, support and recognition so as to enable the teachers with a sense of commitment to reach peaks of excellence in scholarship, research and criticism.

VI

The Seminar feels that a large scale programme of reliable and readable translations of selected works of literature from each of the Indian languages into the others, and also into English, should be launched to bring about a general, even a world wide diffusion of knowledge of the significant achievements in Indian literature.

VII

Finally, the Seminar recommends to the University Grants Commission and the Union Ministry of Education and Youth

Services that a National Survey of the teaching of Indian languages and literatures in our universities should be made so that appropriate steps could be taken soon not only to inaugurate a new era in the teaching of the Indian literatures but also to promote, unobtrusively yet effectively, the cause of national integration.



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