

K. M. MUNSHI

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BHAVAN'S BOOK UNIVERSITY

SWAN LOVE
AND
OTHER KULAPATI'S LETTERS

(Fourth Series)

BY

K. M. MUNSHI

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BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN

CHAUPATTY, BOMBAY

Culbertson
near Biller.

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आ नो भद्राः क्रतवो यन्तु विश्वतः।

Let noble thoughts come to us from every side

—*Rigveda*, I-89.i

BHAVAN'S BOOK UNIVERSITY

General Editors

K. M. MUNSHI

R. R. DIWAKAR

53

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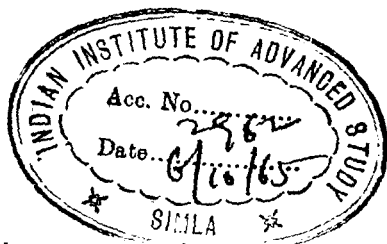


1958

BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN
CHAUPATTY : BOMBAY

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GENERAL EDITOR'S PREFACE

THE Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan—that Institute of Indian Culture in Bombay—needed a Book University, a series of books which, if read, would serve the purpose of providing higher education. Particular emphasis, however, was to be put on such literature as revealed the deeper impulses of India. As a first step, it was decided to bring out in English 100 books, 50 of which were to be taken in hand almost at once. Each book was to contain from 200 to 250 pages and was to be priced at Rs. 2/-.

It is our intention to publish the books we select, not only in English, but also in the following Indian languages; Hindi, Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam.

This scheme, involving the publication of 900 volumes, requires ample funds and an all-India organisation. The Bhavan is exerting its utmost to supply them.

The objectives for which the Bhavan stands are the reintegration of the Indian culture in the light of modern knowledge and to suit our present-day needs and the resuscitation of its fundamental values in their pristine vigour.

Let me make our goal more explicit:

We seek the dignity of man, which necessarily implies the creation of social conditions which would allow him freedom to evolve along the lines of his own temperament and capacities; we seek the harmony of individual efforts and social relations, not in any makeshift way, but within the frame-work of the Moral Order; we seek the creative art of life, by the alchemy of which human limitations are progressively transmuted, so that man may become the instrument of God, and is able to see Him in all and all in Him.

The world, we feel, is too much with us. Nothing would uplift or inspire us so much as the beauty and aspiration which such books can teach.

In this series, therefore, the literature of India, ancient

and modern, will be published in a form easily accessible to all. Books in other literatures of the world, if they illustrate the principles we stand for, will also be included.

This common pool of literature, it is hoped, will enable the reader, eastern or western, to understand and appreciate currents of world thought, as also the movements of the mind in India, which, though they flow through different linguistic channels, have a common urge and aspiration.

Fittingly, the Book University's first venture is the *Mahabharata*, summarised by one of the greatest living Indians, C. Rajagopalachari; the second work is on a section of it; the *Gita* by H. V. Divatia, an eminent jurist and a student of philosophy. Centuries ago, it was proclaimed of the *Mahabharata*: "What is not in it, is nowhere." After twenty-five centuries, we can use the same words about it. He who knows it not, knows not the heights and depths of the soul; he misses the trials and tragedy and the beauty and grandeur of life.

The *Mahabharata* is not a mere epic; it is a romance, telling the tale of heroic men and women and of some who were divine; it is a whole literature in itself, containing a code of life, a philosophy of social and ethical relations, and speculative thought on human problems that is hard to rival; but, above all, it has for its core the *Gita* which is, as the world is beginning to find out, the noblest of scriptures and the grandest of sagas in which the climax is reached in the wondrous Apocalypse in the Eleventh Canto.

Through such books alone the harmonies underlying true culture, I am convinced, will one day reconcile the disorders of modern life.

I thank all those who have helped to make this new branch of the Bhavan's activity successful.

1, QUEEN VICTORIA ROAD.

NEW DELHI:

3rd October 1951

K. M. MUNSHI

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

This is the fourth series of Kulapati's Letters written by the Author from June 1955 to May 1956.

Kulapati's Letters are published in the *Bhavan's Journal* as also in several newspapers and journals all over the country, both in their original as well as in translations in various languages. They not only interest the readers of newspapers and journals, but there is a constant demand for their previous numbers, such as those collected in the First Series (*Janu's Death*, 1952-1953), the Second Series (*City of Paradise*, 1953-54) and the Third Series (*The Wolf Boy*, 1954-55).

The Topics vary with the author's mood of the fortnight: they range from the 'Swan Love' and 'The Ratlam Conspiracy' to spiritual discourses, in the course of which both thought and expression sparkle in myriad patterns.

Reading these Letters, we can keep company with the Kulapati in undertaking picturesque journeys to sacred shrines, taking holy dips, enjoying the company of sadhus and saints, seeing historical episodes in vivid colours and laughing at human foibles all drawn on the background of a rich and sensitive life.

We have, therefore, great pleasure in presenting the Fourth Series of Kulapati's Letters from No. LXXV to C.

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A FREAK CITY—BHAKRA NANGAL—
THE TRIBUNE CASERAJ BHAVAN, NAINI TAL
May 22, 1955

ON the 16th, 17th and 18th of December 1954, we were at Chandigadh as the guests of my friend, Shri C. P. N. Singh.

Had Chandigadh, the new capital of East Punjab, been a toy exposed for sale in a shop, it would have found no buyer. Its design is so unfamiliar that at a first glance it is difficult to see whether there is any design at all. Nor would it be easy to discover that it is planned in every particular to suit the complexities of our modern urban needs.

There are roads, parks, streets and markets, arranged to fit into geometrically well-drawn localities, each of which is provided with self-sufficient amenities. They are connected by a special road system, which provides complete freedom for all types of traffic. There are special roads for motor cars and separate ones for cyclists.

Above all, there is a feature which will restore freedom and dignity to that man who normally uses the means of transport which is the most despised in these days, namely, the human legs! For this form of transport a separate system of roads has been provided and that is the amenity I liked the most. When it is completed, a pedestrian will be able to walk in Chandigadh with his head held high and without fear of a motor-car running over his feet or honking him into ignoble flight—not even an *ekkawala's* pony will be able to push its impertinent nose in his neck. He will be able to go about happily,

whistling gay tunes if he likes, weaving impossible dreams and feeling a monarch in his own right.

Geometry has been in evidence throughout the design of Chandigadh. There are localities marked out for the University campus; for Government buildings; for the Raj Bhavan; for industries and so forth. Their distance, their approach, their convenience have all alike been thought out in the light of their minutest needs.

There are poor men's houses with amenities; middle-class houses opening out, not on to the roads but away from them, with compound walls in the rear which shut out both the dust of the road and the danger to their playing children. There are public buildings to which you climb on ramps.

The High Court is a marvel of convenience for the Judges, the officers and the litigants. The public windows have sunbreakers, ugly devices which I was told will let in the air but not the sun, and they look like a grocer's shelf with hundreds of little compartments.

There are other public buildings: the Secretariat with each ministry accommodated next to the Minister's Chamber; the hospital, where patients suffering from a particular ailment can reach their own special wards without jostling those of another; and a college where every architectural device has been provided to let in light and air.

* * *

At first sight, Corbusier's strange-looking buildings make one doubt whether people will find the town convenient.

Corbusier is thought by his admirers to be the world's greatest living architect. Anyhow, his achievements in the sphere of town-planning have been the most noteworthy in recent times. At an early age he developed the

theory that a house is a "machine to live in, not a thing to be looked at and admired from outside." Its design therefore should proceed from within to without.

It was Corbusier who started the fashion of what are called "radiant cities," sixty-storeyed glass-walled skyscrapers. I saw one or two of them being constructed in New York. I have no doubt in my mind that when people begin to live in these glass-houses, they will look more or less as do our pilgrims taking their dip in the old-fashioned style in the waters of the Ganga. The onlooker will have one advantage over those who congregate to witness the pilgrims however. On the banks of the Ganga, you can only see the monotonous sight of men and women doing nothing but bathing. In glass-walled houses, the acrobatics performed by the residents will hardly lack variety.

Corbusier's structures are certainly not poems in brick and stone. Anyway, I do not think them to be so—perhaps I am too old-fashioned. It is always possible that they look ugly because they are strange. They certainly appear to be more convenient. And man, who is a creature of habit, may one day begin to grow into these machines and come to enjoy them.

Corbusier has built famous buildings in Paris, Moscow, Rio-de Janeiro and Ahmedabad. The whole of Chandigadh is in conception his marvel city. In this brand-new township he has brought together all what he has planned and devised in other parts of the world. Chandigadh will therefore be the pride of India. It is sure to influence, if not to modernise, the art of city-building in India.

I was told that these structures will create a better understanding of the traditional spirit of architecture. I do not claim to understand either the spirit or the tradition, so I must accept the opinion of experts.

But Chandigadh today is what Washington was

intended to be by the fathers of the American Government: a seat of Government with "needful buildings." So far it has only camp followers, no public.

We then went to see the Bhakra Nangal Project. On the way we went to Ruper to see the excavations which have disclosed the relics of the Harappan and Aryan Cultures. I have referred to them in an earlier Letter.

I will not venture to describe the Bhakra Nangal Project. It is something stupendous. You must read about its details yourselves; or, still better, take a trip to East Punjab. It will complete your education.

According to the 1954 estimates, the cost of the Project, when completed, will be Rs. 159 crores. At its peak, it has employed 1,67,000 men. The Bhakra Dam is 680 feet high and is the second highest in the world, and the highest as a straight gravity dam. It is the second in the world as regards the quantity of rock excavated; the third in power generation and as regards the quantity of concrete used. The first and second ones are both in the U.S.A.

The project, however, is easily the first in the world as regards irrigation. It will serve no less than ten million acres. Computing in terms of food resources, it might grow an additional million-and-a-half or two million tons of foodgrains.

When all the units have been installed, it will generate about 2500 million Kw. hours (units of energy); and, in addition, secondary power of the same magnitude. I was told that in Russia the biggest plant generates no more than 2,000 million units of energy every year.

Most of the expert work is being handled by Indians. In 1954-55, there were 41 foreign experts as against 382 experts from India. Most of the engineers I met were old boys of Roorkee. As Chancellor, I may be permitted to blush a little at this compliment to my little University.

Modern India should be very proud of this vast engineering feat. If you go to Bhakra Nangal, you will see wonderful things. You will see giant machines doing more than giant's work. You will see mountains being broken up; valleys filled up; rivers made to run this way or that way to order; and you will be able to stand in an underground chamber with a river rushing past over your head—almost like Mahadevji, with the Ganga on His head.

As a people, we are not sufficiently conscious of the rapid strides we are making. The only way, to awaken an emotional awareness of our achievements in the country, is to make people see them with their own eyes.

When I meet members of delegations recently returned from foreign countries, I find them in a state of ecstasy over the achievements they have seen. I am afraid our Government is not fair to these men and women. No one should be allowed to go to foreign countries in a delegation, particularly to those countries where visitors are taken round in carefully conducted tours, without a six months' course of seeing what India has been doing.

Suppose one has seen the Bhakra Nangal, the Sindri Fertiliser Factory, the Chittaranjan Locomotive Works, the Tata Steel Works, the Jayaji Rao Cotton Mills in Gwalior, the Ganga Canal and Pathri Electric Works in Uttar Pradesh, the Kolar Gold Mines, and the Hindustan Aircraft Factory in Bangalore; suppose one has paid a visit to the Pusa Institute at New Delhi, the Forest Research Institute at Dehra Dun, a couple of national laboratories, the Dayalbagh at Agra, the Loreto Convent, Lucknow, and the Shanti Niketan; and suppose one has also been taken round to a few Community Projects and the *Shramdan* centres in Uttar Pradesh, I am sure one might develop—unless one is a congenital slave—the faculty of keeping one's inferiority complex in restraint when one goes to a

foreign country as a member of a visiting delegation.

* * *

On the 17th of December 1954 we were at Ambala. The address which I delivered at the Convocation of the new Punjab University has already been the subject of a former Letter.

Even during the short time that I was at Ambala, I could not resist the temptation to visit the office of my old client, the *Tribune*, once of Lahore, and of meeting Bali.

Bali is the prince of newspaper reporters. In reporting he never misses a word, nor if he can help it an accent. During the years 1940 and 1947, single-handed, he restrained the vagaries of the Punjab Government and its officers by a meticulous reporting of all that they said and did. I do not know how many causes he served and how many rights he protected through the columns of the *Tribune*.

My close contact with the *Tribune* began in 1943, when I was engaged by its trustees to appear for it, as also for Bali and the printer of the newspaper, in an appeal before the High Court of Lahore. The Full Bench consisted of the Chief Justice, Trevor Harries, Munir and Teja Singh J. J.

Justice Munir — now the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Pakistan — had held them guilty of contempt of Court in relation to the publication of several matters in the columns of the *Tribune*. They were (1) comments on the arrest of Bali under the headings — “Arrest made on flimsy grounds”; (2) a petition for *habeas corpus* filed before Munir J. for the protection of Bali; (3) the comments of the learned Judge and the submission of Bali's Advocate when the petition was presented

in open Court; (4) a news item regarding a transfer application in the court of the same judge under the heading "Lawyer Insulted".

Before I attended the Court, the Bar was exercised over two questions: first, whether Munshi the lawyer and Munshi the author were the same or different persons; and secondly, whether he would appear with a Gandhi cap, which had been prohibited within the Court premises by a notification.

My host, Sir Manoharlal, then a minister and a trustee of the *Tribune*, was also anxious about my cap. When leaving for the Court, he gave me a mild hint as to the wisdom of my appearing in the Court in a Gandhi cap. I said I would. I think Bakshi Tekchand had told me about the notification and reminded me that several leading Congress lawyers left their Gandhi caps behind when they went to Court. I told him that if any objection was taken to my cap, I would apply for an adjournment of the case till such time as the trustees of the *Tribune* were able to engage a lawyer whose headgear was more palatable to their Lordships.

The Punjab at that time was passing through not only one of its worst periods of Hindu-Muslim tension, but the authorities were also dealing with the "Quit India" movement with a heavy hand. At such a time for a lawyer to appear with a Gandhi cap in defiance of the notification was quite unexpected.

The Court room was crowded to capacity. I made my appearance and thanked the Chief Justice for permitting me to appear before the Court. He was good enough to make a pleasant remark of welcome. My cap stood the test.

For several days we went into the Law of the Contempt of Court. I soon discovered that the Chief Justice,

Trevor Harries, was one of the greatest Judges whom I had had the honour to appear before in the course of my practice: pleasant, informal, clear-headed, openminded, courteous. All in all, I have never come across a better Judge in my life.

We waded through law report after law report, the pleasant remarks of the Chief Justice relieving the boredom of reading dull judgments, sometimes two centuries old.

To give but one instance. When I referred to a law report, the Chief Justice said: "There is only one copy in the Judges' Library, while in the Patna High Court from where I come, there were seven copies of each report, so that each Judge could have a copy for his own use."

"But surely, My Lord, the Punjab is a rich province," I said.

"The riches are not reflected in our Library", said the Chief Justice.

"Maybe", I replied, "the wisdom of the Judges of this Court makes law-books a superfluity."

The Chief Justice had the habit of quietly grasping the principle underlying a case and, after summarising it in precise terms, having the summary confirmed by me. "This is what you mean, is it not?" he would repeat again and again.



Justice Munir was naturally annoyed that somebody should have the temerity to question his judgment in the way I was doing. He was comparatively a young judge then.

One of the first principles which I had learnt as a raw junior at the Bombay Bar was never to be impatient

or angry with the judge; never to hit back at him; never to be unpleasant; and never to sacrifice independence.

I had had quite a few lapses from this standard in my forty-two years of practice. But every time I had a lapse, I was sorry that I had not been able to find the right word to turn unpleasantness away.

Irrepressibly sarcastic, he tried to find fault with every argument advanced. More than once he was annoyed with my English, justifiably perhaps, for my English is none too good.

I bore his comments as patiently as I could. Ultimately, to one of his remarks on the inaccuracy of language I had used, I replied, of course with a low bow: "My Lord, you know the handicaps under which all of us suffer. We have to express ourselves by means of a foreign tongue; and not having been to England for my Bar examination, as Your Lordship has had the good fortune to do, you will forgive me if my English does not come up to your Lordship's expectations!"

The atmosphere became a little tense. A breeze was anticipated. But Sir Trevor Harries rose to the occasion. "Don't say that Mr. Munshi. You are very modest. We in England speak English; you in India learn English; and you speak it better any day than most of us Englishmen."

On another occasion, Munir J. asked me: "Why should the papers publish the comments of a Judge? For their own safety they should only publish judgments."

"If Your Lordship's view was accepted, the liberty of the Press would be in jeopardy and the meaning and purpose of the proceedings in open court would be lost," was my reply.

"Justice is not a handmaid of journalists," returned Justice Munir.

“Neither, My Lord, it is a cloistered virtue that cannot stand the public gaze,” I replied.

Soon the Chief Justice and Justice Teja Singh were in my favour. A stage came when they themselves replied to all the objections that were raised by Munir J.

At the end of the argument our nerves became a little frayed. Munir J. observed with a touch of temper:

“If Bali comes before me again in a case like this one, I shall deal with him in the same manner.”

I bowed ceremoniously and said: “My Lord, Your Lordship is unjust to yourself. With the volume of learning to which I have drawn Your Lordship’s attention, I am sure the next time Your Lordship would find it difficult to do as you say you would.”

Later, I appeared before Munir J. in one or two other cases. I was glad to find that my impression of him in this case was just a passing experience. For instance, in a long argument in a very difficult case which went on before him for weeks, I found him a Judge both pleasant and patient. And no quality in a Judge is more indispensable than that of creating a happy atmosphere in which the tedium of a long and boring case be made enjoyable.

The *Tribune* case ended in a majority judgment in my favour, Munir J. dissenting. The Full Bench judgments are reported in AIR 1943, Lahore, page 329. The judgment of the Chief Justice is a leading authority on this branch of the law.



This first professional visit of mine to Lahore gave me a number of good friends, the principal among whom was Bakshiji (Tekchand). Later, I appeared in several important cases in the Lahore High Court, the most sensational being the *habeas corpus* application in regard to

the detention of Jayaprakash Narayan and the Pardiwala Case. Some day I will tell you all about them.

The trustees of the *Tribune* have always treated me as a friend rather than as their lawyer. On this occasion at Ambala they brought out the old files of the *Tribune* in which the several cases I did for them were published in *extenso*.

It was like the old, old days.

But the old Lahore is no more. Never again shall I be given a welcome by any friends in their old homes, for they are all scattered to the winds, these martyrs of India's disruption.

LXXVI

HOLIDAY THOUGHTS—SWAN LOVE— THE WAR OF THE PEACOCKS

RAJ BHAVAN, NAINI TAL

June 5, 1955

I AM now at Naini Tal. I am taking a holiday for about 10 days. I am not sufficiently arrogant to say that I can now do without a holiday. I have had eight months of touring and hard work and eight weeks of indifferent health. So I want it. It nourishes my spirit.

I propose to enjoy this holiday by giving free rein to myself.



I have peculiar views on holidays. Whenever I have been to one hill-station or another for a holiday, I have found train-loads of visitors rushing up in a frenzy to escape the heat of the plains. At Matheran, my favourite

hill-station, they say: "Bombay is so crowded; the plains are so hot; I must have a month away."

But when they come to these hill-stations, what do they do? They go to the bazaar in crowds; they congregate in the gardens in crowds; they parade the mall in crowds; they invite each other to endless teas, lunches and dinners. They arrange elaborate bridge parties; they attend sports, races, picnics, and always in crowds.

The so-called holiday on the Riviera or at Miami is something much worse. There, a holiday means a mad race of crowding into theatres, clubs and gambling houses, or lying in thousands on sea-beaches. From the bustle of the city, they plunge into the frenzy of an even more suffocating bustle. They are at the mercy of the herd-instinct, physically, morally and spiritually.

Even here in Naini Tal there is a fashionable club. The visitors behave exactly as they would in fashionable clubs in Bombay or Delhi: they play bridge, gossip, drink and dance. They live the same life and pay more for it than they would in their own home town.

* * *

I do not believe in such a holiday. I find anchorage for the spirit in a holiday when the normal life is changed, when its tempo is slowed down, when I have ample time to find myself. Such a holiday then becomes the fresh adventure of a return to myself and of gathering, where necessary, the threads of my life or ideals or of my *sadhana* into my hands once more.

Such a holiday should be taken by a husband and wife together. Nothing can better repair the bonds of love and mutual understanding which have been frayed by the wear and tear of daily life.

I hate the theory propounded by some modern

misanthropes or mismated partners, that a husband and wife should escape from each other by taking their holidays away from each other. The theory is hopelessly wrong. I speak from experience.

Normally, when a husband and wife go on holiday together, he wants to play or tramp or climb and she wants to dress nicely and meet interesting people. In fact, what they both want is to forget the drudgery, he of the office and she of the household; or, if they happen to be public workers, to forget their public work. They should forget for the moment that they are partners in the business of life and become lovers. No one else, except the children, should exist for them, at least for the time being.

That is where the great joy of a holiday comes in. He should take a greater interest in her and the children and drop his role of the "man who goes to the office." She should be able to forget the boredom and drudgery and the scars which his scowls may have inflicted. They will fall to and admire each other—maybe as an effort to start with—and re-capture afresh the odours of a fading romance.

Nothing is more refreshing than the communion of two souls on a holiday by means of silent and continuous physical proximity. If you like, you may exchange opinions on trifles for which you have had no leisure at other times. You may review the several five-year plans which you have made but failed to implement. What you do want is not a change from each other, but a change to be with each other. You want to walk in steps together, to sing your old songs, to narrate your old experiences; in short, to swim like swans on the stream of idle time.

* * *

I love swans. They spend most of their time

swimming together or nestling against each other on the margin of the lake. They are the symbols of communion through silent, continuous proximity.

While I am on the subject of swans, I feel that I have been guilty of neglecting the romantic swan in the Lucknow Zoo. Before coming here, I should have paid him a visit.

One day last year I heard that he had been brought from Nepal to our duck-pond. A hunter had killed his mate. Like a chivalrous knight he had gone to her rescue, but he had not been able to save his beloved and one of his wings had been crippled in the effort. Our Zoo received the wounded knight and the vet treated his injured wing. But the heart of the swan was broken. He would not eat, nor even drink the glucose water which was placed temptingly before him.

When his wound had healed, the swan was set free in the duck-pond. There he behaved with a strange detachment. He would neither eat nor drink. Only at times would the heart-broken lover swim in the pond in a disconsolate way.

When I heard of this romantic but unfortunate swan, I went to see him. He was sitting alone on the sandy bank of the pond, with his beak twisted back and thrust into his wing; for all the world he was like King Aja bemoaning the loss of Indumati, the very picture of misery. With an effort the keeper got him to step into the water. In lonely detachment he swam across the pond to our side, without so much as casting a glance at the hundreds of fluttering beauties which swam across or flew over him. Mournfully he stepped on to the sandy bank and stared at the birds sporting in front of him. Then he put his beak once again into his wing and stood lonely

and inconsolable. He looked a touching monument to grief.

After a few days I could not resist the temptation to go and see him again. He was as miserable as ever. He had not taken any food and had grown thin. He was dying, this noble soul. The world without his beloved was to him a wilderness from which he wanted to escape. I felt moved as Valmiki was once moved at the plight of another bird.

After a few days, I was going to repeat my visit when I received the news that he had taken to eating. He had done it after exactly twenty-one days. Evidently, he was now reconciled to life. Unfortunately, our Zoo has no mate for this bird. Alone, unfriended and melancholy, he still swims across the pond in superior aloofness from the vulgar feathery world that surrounds him.

* * *

But to be frank, I must tell you the story of a swan I remember to have read of, which shocked my faith in swan-love. The hero was an Irish swan; so, of course, he could be forgiven many things. His ancestors never had the chance of living in company with their beloved mates in the holy Mana Sarovar Lake like the ancestors of our Indian swans and of hearing the *rishis* chant the *Grihya Sutra* which lays down that man and wife are one, the bone of bone, the flesh of flesh, the soul of soul.

The story, however disillusioning, is a drama of passion. Its hero was a patriarch of the winged world in a bay somewhere in Ireland, the name of which I have forgotten. Accompanied by his inseparable mate he went up and down the bay, steering a flotilla of four or six cygnets which was replaced every year by a fresh one.

This swan was a great champion of family planning.

If his annual arrivals were a group of five or seven youngsters, he would drown the odd baby. And his was a welfare state; he permitted none of his progeny to live as a bachelor or spinster.

This swan was a good father and a devoted husband. One day, however, the wife broke her wing and was brought to the shore to be treated. The lord and master felt very disconsolate. Two days later, he disappeared from the bay. A few days later he returned and brought back with him—alas, for my faith in swans!—an unknown lady.

Some days later, the wife recovered and was restored to the waters of the bay. Men, women and children, who stood on the margin of the bay, the planets in their courses and the stars in their Einsteinian orbits, all waited breathlessly. There was a situation which no Einstein could conceive or explain, one swan with two mates.

The swan sighted his old wife from afar. He gave a resonant cry of joy, tore through the water and embraced her. The new lady was furious with rage. For a moment she stood rigid and attacked the wife in a white whirl of fury. Wings flapped on wings; beak twisted beak as angry cries arose from slender throats.

The heroic swan, overflowing with steadfast loyalty, rushed upon the wicked temptress, fought her with beak and wing and drove her out of the bay. Thereafter, he settled down happily, his beloved companion of thirty years swimming by his side.

Three days later, the brute—I am sorry to misuse the word, but there is no more expressive word in the English language even for a bird—attacked his wife with unrelenting fury. He held her under water till she was almost dead. Then he drove her out of the bay for good. She disappeared never to appear again.

The wicked swan went forth the next day from the bay, and—returned with the temptress!

Thank God! the romantic swan of the 'Lucknow Zoo has restored my faith in swan love.

* * *

Now that I am on the domestic aspect of bird life, I am reminded of my college days. When at home in Broach, I lived in a large second-floor room; I generally sat and read in a balcony and watched with a friendly eye the birds which came fluttering over the neighbouring roofs which it overlooked.

Those were the doves, plentiful in number; the dark-blue rock pigeons which you find almost everywhere. Their domestic affairs, or whatever you choose to call them, were of the most shamelessly irrepressible variety. There was no marriage, sacramental, contractual or companionate.

I wonder why Picasso selected the dove as immortalising peace, perhaps because they never quarrel when they steal each other's mates. But I will not carry the research further lest I find the dove in many men and women in modern times.

* * *

I found that the pea family which lived in the neem tree of the New Temple was the very emblem of solid respectability. Also I found that the pea-cocks were the first propounders of a new substitute for war.

I knew the whole family very well. My friend, the peacock, had five or six consorts. The whole family came out on the neighbouring roofs every day on parade, picking up small insects as afternoon snacks. The lord and master strutted majestically in front, preening himself with great

dignity. The obedient wives followed him and surrounded him with care and admiration, an advantage which we modern men will have to deny ourselves as soon as the Parliament passes* the law of monogamy.

The ladies of the family were a tolerant lot. They lacked the malicious vigour often displayed in similar circumstances by the fair sex of the human variety. They never quarrelled, and never tore out each other's feathers from jealousy.

When the monsoon came and the clouds thundered overhead, the lord and master would develop a gay mood. He would lift his neck and look round with jerky vanity. He would open out his plumage and dance, and the worshipful ladies would stand, as the Gopis must have done once, eyeing their lord's performance in mute ecstacy. But the family as a whole were a highly decent lot; they had great taste; they never offended public susceptibilities.

One day, however, I witnessed a performance which I shall never forget. Another pea family, almost of the same size, strayed on to these roofs. Both families, picking their delicious little bits from the tiles, looked disdainfully at each other from afar. Then my friend looked at the head of the other family suspiciously.

I thought there would be a cock-fight, but nothing of the kind happened. You know these wonderful birds. They are wise for they have been, from the days of the creation, associated with Saraswati, the Goddess of Learning.

My friend of the temple tree strained his neck. From his throat, as from a cheerful trumpet, issued two or three resounding notes, and he began to dance.

At first, the head of the stranger family was non-plussed. He did not know what to do. In a minute or

*Passed since writing this letter.—Ed.

two, however, he accepted the challenge. He too began to dance. They had found in rival dancing a substitute for war. I wish the ancient Greeks had known this art when Helen was kidnapped by Paris. But then there would have been no Iliad for Homer to compose nor for us to read.

For about twenty minutes, both heroes danced for all they were worth. Each one spread his plumage and rattled his quills in brave challenge. And the harem of each of them continued to look upon its master with adoring eyes.

Then a miracle happened. The stranger peacock could not keep pace with my peacock. He lapsed into slow motion and, opening his wings, flew away to a distant roof, followed by his heart-broken, vanity-wounded women-folk.

My peacock continued to dance for a few minutes. Then he too flew back to the temple tree. His mates, raising their necks in pride, flew in his wake. I am not sure, but I think one of the pea-hens of the stranger family left it to join that of the conquering hero.

Now I have the privilege to observe a pair of large birds presented by the Chinese Prime Minister Chou-en-Lai to our President. They are here in the Raj Bhavan for a summer holiday but I do not know them well enough yet to tell you about them. But they appear to be overgrown *Sarasa* birds, white body, black tails, black necks and beak and huge red *chandla* on their foreheads!

* * *

THE HIMALAYAS—THE SPIRIT OF BEAUTY—
THE MAGIC SYMBOLS

RAJ BHAVAN, NAINI TAL

June 19, 1955

THE Himalayas which spread out in all directions are, if anything, all beauty. From a high crag which, now properly levelled, bears the name of *Vyas Giri*, I can have a look at the 8000-foot China Peak in front, the serpentine road winding down to the plains and the rooftops of Naini Tal nesting among the trees to the left. Silence reigns on the hill-tops; the pine-trees sway in the breeze; the valleys sweep out towards the plains. The range on which snow sleeps eternally is partially covered by distant clouds.

At such a time, I capture the spirit of beauty. Again, when I see the ever-changing mood of the Naini Tal Lake, I feel a curious sense of romantic mystery coming over me. In sunlight it scintillates like a huge emerald; by moonlight it becomes a sheet of silvery ripples; on a moonless night, with white and green lights reflected in its waters, it becomes a pool of mystery.

It is generally imagined that lovers of Nature come to such beauty spots. Such a 'lover of nature' thinks that a capacity to admire Nature should be attributed to him. He would lose caste if he did not make that claim. He arrives at the summit of such a mountain and utters such phrases as: "Ah! How wonderful!", with the air of one whose one aim in life has been to live in tune with Nature. But he immediately rushes off to play billiards or bridge

in a room laden with alcoholic fumes, every window of which is barred.

This "lover of Nature" puts himself to this trouble because he believes that to admire Nature is generally accepted as a characteristic of a cultured man. When he returns home, he hangs landscapes on the walls of his house for guests to admire and for him to proclaim the price he has paid for them. If the natural scenery depicted in such pictures is of a sensational or picturesque kind, he feels happy that his claim to culture has been fully established. The fact, however, is that he has no true capacity to admire Nature. It only exists in the man who is gifted with a sensitive imagination and the gift to transfer his emotions to things of Nature.

I loved an old print of a painting—an heirloom—under which was printed: "Thames below Twickenhor." In 1907 when I moved to Bombay, I carried the print to the foul-smelling rooms of Anantwadi and Pimpalwadi. It continued to hang on a wall in my room till it was eaten up by moths.

In my early days of struggle, this faded print made me feel that my life was worth living. After a tiresome day—and that was often—I gazed fondly at the river, the grass on its banks, the lovely trees and the distant sky. They gave wings to my imagination. I forgot for a while the filthy crowded chawl, the small room which I shared with three or four companions, and the sordid mattress on which I sat. I was then wafted on the wings to open space and scented forests.

Later on in life, when I came to live in the midst of natural beauties, in forests, by the sea-side, under the star-strewn skies at night, I realised what I had felt when I used to gaze at the moth-eaten print of the "Thames below Twickenhor". I was sensing the beautiful and I knew

that beauty was not in Nature herself. It was in the seeing eye or the spirit.

* * *

This urge to perceive and feel beauty is not merely an urge; it is the very breath of life. It is also a strange power which normally ebbs and flows according to a law of its own. It has nothing to do with health or comforts, not even with illness or distress. Sometimes, I find life dreary; work has no charm and pleasures no edge. I am in a mood, heavy as lead.

Suddenly, against this murky background, flashes the spirit of beauty. Flowers assume new colours; hill-tops, a new radiance. I feel a yearning, painful as a stab but inexpressibly delightful. It ends in rapture. I feel like singing all my way, joyously, like a lark, and the world moves to the rhythm of my song. Then I know that the spirit of beauty is stirring within me.

On the other hand, I do not necessarily catch the spirit of beauty when I am successful, prosperous or happy. On the contrary, at such times, it seems to fly away from me. I have seen many successful men, many men rolling in riches, many flushed with the triumph of victory; but I have not found in them the power to capture the spirit of beauty. Music has no meaning for them; poetry does not thrill them; they do not feel the harmony in the world; nor are they aware of the wonderful visions which surround them.

I am sure some of you would say that this is fantastic, but it is not so. If the spirit of beauty is not awakened in us, it only shows that we have been unable to outgrow our lower mind or that we are slaves to that ruthless tyrant,

the thinking mind which only reasons, calculates manoeuvres or seeks ends.

* * *

In spite of materialists who make the world hideous by insisting that we are no more than insects, the spirit of beauty has no physical basis. As I said before, it has nothing to do with success or happiness, certainly not with robust health. It does not desert me when I am unwell. It defies the laws which govern the body and the mind. When the spirit of beauty comes to me like an angel and touches me with the tip of its ethereal wings, the world is changed. I gaze enraptured at the sweeping mountain-tops. I enjoy the fresh lines of the branches of the trees which are already familiar to me. I am moved by an intricate pattern of leaves or the distant sound of a ringing bell. I feel an exquisite pain. Then I know that I am in the region of beauty where neither mind nor matter rules.

This experience has nothing to do with the thinking mind. It is not the product of any intellectual process; no amount of reasoning could produce it. It might not come even if I read my favourite poets; it never comes when I use my reasoning powers.

And sometimes it does come when I am thinking out some abstruse problem, but not as a part of it. Then I can almost sense it is coming by a sound or sight or an idea. And I leave all that I am doing and try to capture the spirit.

This is not an emotion and is not alloyed with pleasure. It is a radiation of the spirit, the fundamental aspiration which has established contact with the source from which it springs. I feel for the moment that I am in the presence of God.

• • •

I found, however, one danger in pursuing this mood. When such an experience is repeated, we are driven to seek it again and again, as do the poets. For, they are delicate instruments which can easily and often catch the spirit of beauty. But it is difficult to keep the instrument in trim and, when it is out of order, the natural tendency is to send the mind in pursuit of it. But the mind thus goaded is powerless; it is not made for this end and its attempt will end by a feeling of pessimism or frustration creeping over it. The mind can never capture beauty. It is the aspiring spirit alone that can find it.

If the spirit has to pursue beauty, the mind has to be kept quiet; all that it can possibly do is to enlist the services of the imagination and envisage as best as it can some picture of ineffable beauty.

We must train the mind, and through the mind the imagination, to pass from beautiful things to beautiful ideas, from beautiful ideas to beautiful lives, from beautiful lives to beauty in one's life and experience till we reach Absolute Beauty.

Temporary experiences will then be related to that picture held in the imagination. As the picture continues to grow in vividness, the aspirations would become stabilised.

Once I asked Krishna Prem, the Englishman who at one time was a professor of English and is now a Sadhu, how he likes the daily worship of Sri Krishna in the wilderness a few miles away from Almora. He answered that the ceremonials of bathing the image, preparing food and offering it, chanting the praises—these brought him happiness. And what more can one wish for? These have become the symbol of beauty, the experience of which has become a settled frame of mind with him. He is right. Beauty is the living testimony of God. That is why when

on mountaintops or in vast spaces, the presence of God is felt, transfiguring one's whole existence.

• • •

I have no patience with those who talk of the consoling power of Nature. Many poets have sung of it. But most people who come to the Himalayas for a holiday play golf, attend bridge parties or ride horses and never feel this power. There is no greater agony than even when surrounded by natural beauty the spirit loses the power to produce this aspiration. There is nothing more distasteful than to see, on the heights of Badrinath, the Uttar Kashi saffron-robed sadhus snarling at each other for an anna's worth of food.

Perception of beauty, therefore, depends not upon the natural beauty which surrounds us but upon the presence and the power of the fundamental aspiration. We may nourish the aspiration by a study of beautiful things. We might train it to remain with us for some time, once it has been evoked. We may strengthen it by keeping in constant sympathy with the beauties of nature. But its source and strength are both derived from the spirit within.

In this age of speed, however, we neglect the spirit. Daily newspapers, four-hourly doses of radio and the half-hourly 'hellos' of the telephone, drive us to seek exciting and sensational pleasures. We seek amusement instead of beauty. We are afraid of being alone. The fundamental aspiration is naturally stifled. Himalayas or no Himalayas, we do not feel the spirit of beauty. Naturally, we find no God.

If, therefore, we want beauty in life, not only in our own, but in that of the world as a whole, we must at all costs learn some time or the other to be alone with Nature and with ourselves when we can give time for our

aspirations to rise and to raise us from our sordid day-to-day existence.

Often I live without this aspiration; sometimes I am overpowered by it. But on many occasions, I have prayed for it in all humility and the prayer has been heard and answered.

When I am alone, quiet and patient, I enter into an all-embracing calm. Then I live in the beauty that lies in the stream that makes the music, or the birds that twitter in ancient trees, or in the vast spaces on every side or in the stream which spreads out at my feet.

The tree, the cloud, the flower, the stream which give us this mysterious satisfaction are but magic symbols of the beauty that lies within. It is there, real, insistent, undeniable. It is a symbol of Reality. If once the spirit of beauty is captured, the gates of Life Divine are opened and not even death can close them.

LXXVIII

AN IMMORTAL ROMANCE—ITS AUTHOR— HIS PATRON

RAJ BHAVAN, NAINI TAL
July 3, 1955

THE other day, when I was reading about the world's greatest novelists, I could not help feeling that to the European scholar the world only means the West; the rest is outside the pale of what they consider civilisation. We, on the other hand, know all about Scott, Hugo and Dumas; even about Homer and Virgil; but we do not know much about our greatest romantist who wrote a historical

romance, gave us a glimpse of an obscure age, rescued for us the memory of a great conqueror. He also wrote an immortal work of imagination.

* * *

It was the fifth century of the Christian Era. Emperor Skandagupta presided over the Gupta Empire which then dominated northern India. The Classical Age of art, literature and plenty had just passed its zenith. Kalidasa, in words, and the Ajanta masters, in colour, had enshrined beauty in immortal works. The *Mahabharata*, as we know it, had just been completed.

At that time a race of very learned Brahmanas, descended from the Sage Bhrigu—as my ancestors also claimed to be—lived in the village of Pritikut on the banks of the Sona in Bihar. They studied the *Kaumudi*, mastered the Vedas and the Shastras, read the Epics and the Kavyas and performed the traditional rituals which were their birthrights.

While peace and contentment ruled in Pritikut, the Huns began to enter India. Homeless and lawless, these fierce people rode their horses night and day, spread terror wherever they appeared by their fierce yells and engaged all the civilised people in the world in cataclysmic wars; killing, destroying, burning and devastating with demoniac ruthlessness. The Emperor, Skandagupta, marched his army to the north-west frontier, drove the Huns back and saved India. A few years later, Skandagupta died and the empire began to disintegrate. In about A.D. 518 the Huns, under Torman, overran North India and destroyed Kaushambi, the capital of Aryavarta.

But little Pritikut went its placid way. Of its Brahmanas the foremost was Kuber of the *Vatsyayana-gotra*, honoured by the Gupta Emperors. Some of his sons,

grandsons and great-grand-sons were "the crest-jewels of all learned Brahmanas."

To Chitrabhanu, one of the eleven great-grandsons of Kuber, was born Bana by his wife Raj Devi. His mother died while he was still a child. His father, who brought him up affectionately, died when he was fourteen. The boy was quick and brilliant at his studies. High-spirited and of quick observation, this "independent and impetuous" boy had, however, an "aversion which young men have towards steadiness". So he betook himself to "youthful follies", possibly not unstained with the graver vices.

Bana knew his grammar, his Shastras and his Kavyas. More than that, his imagination revelled in *Brihat-katha* of Gunadhya, that immortal storehouse of folk stories. He was too full-blooded to be the "crest-jewel of learned Brahmanas." He had a handsome striking personality, a lovable and joyous nature, a scintillating intelligence and an infinite capacity for becoming everybody's darling. He sought friends among the oddest assortment of people: poets, actresses, mendicants, potters and jugglers.

The learned family frowned upon his irresponsible ways which could bring nothing but disgrace upon its fair name. But the boy was incorrigible. It may be that he was grossly maligned and that his high spirits could not brook contempt. Soon he was to drift away from home.

* * *

In the course of his wanderings, it is possible that Bana herded with vagabonds, played opposite friendly actresses in improvised theatres, mixed with struggling scholars and left eminent poets bewildered by his rare mastery of Sanskrit. Between A.D. 620 and 630 he might have been attracted to Kanauj, which was then ruled by

the Emperor Shri Harshavardhana, and was on its way to becoming the metropolis of India.

In the hundred years since Toraman had devastated Madhyadesha, northern India had undergone a vast change. The Kshatriyas of the North had fought the savage invader year after year and after him his even more savage son Mihirakula. The Gupta Empire disintegrated. The conqueror Yashodharman Vishnuvardhan had arisen, flashed like a meteor across the political horizon, vanquished Mihirakula, Toraman's son, and vanished, leaving to Kanauj a transient glamour.

Then had arisen Ishanavarman Maukhari, again of Kanauj, a great liberator, his vague outline shining against the obscurity of the times. Rallying the Kshatriyas of Aryavarta, he had sent the Huns staggering back to the North-West and founded the Empire of Kanauj.

* * * *

The romance of Bana begins with Prabhakarvardhana of the Pushpabhuti dynasty who, a few decades later, was to rule over Srikanth (East Punjab) with his capital at Sthaneshwar, (modern Thaneshwar). He conquered far and wide and drove the Huns before him as a "lion would drive a herd of deer."

By his queen Yasomati, a princess of Malava, he had three children. Rajyavardhana was born in c. 586; Harshavardhana in c. 590 and a daughter, Rajyasri, in c. 593. Rajyasri was married to Grahavarman, the great-grandson of Ishanavarman, the liberator.

In about A.D. 606, the king sent an army under his son Rajyavardhana to repel an incursion by the Huns. Harsha followed him with the cavalry. Then followed a dramatic sequence of events which our author narrates in

his prose poem with rare picturesqueness.

The old king fell ill, and Harsha, recalled, found his father dying and his mother, like a true *sati*, preferring suicide to widowhood. Rajyavardhana at once returned from the war. Overborne with grief, he hesitated Hamlet-like whether or not to accept the Crown. However, the fifteen-year old Harsha, wise beyond his years, induced his brother to shoulder his obvious duty.

* * * *

Kanauj was facing a grave crisis. It had grown weak under the descendants of Ishanavarman. Shashanka, the king of Gauda, was racing for this prize city when the king of Malava, who had reached it first, killed Grahavarman and took Rajyasri prisoner.

Rajyavardhana rushed to his sister's rescue with whatever troops were available, asking his minister and cousin Bhandi, to follow him. He then drove off the investing forces and relieved Kanauj.

Shashanka, afraid to meet Rajyavardhana in battle, invited him to his camp and treacherously murdered him. When he heard of this outrage, young Harsha, wild with anger, hurried forth to give battle to the king of Gauda.

On his way, Harsha learnt that Rajyasri had escaped from prison; so he turned and went in search of his bereaved sister who had fled to the Vindhya forests. When he found her, she was on the point of courting fire. With some difficulty he succeeded in rescuing her from her own dread resolve with the help of Divakaramitra, a venerable Buddhist sage.

For some time after this, Kanauj was ruled in the name of Rajyasri by Harsha as regent.

The historical romance does not deal with the later events in Harsha's life. They can be reconstructed,

however, from out of the confused memoirs recorded by our author, Hiuen Tsang, the Chinese pilgrim, who visited Harsha's court in A.D. 636 and from another Chinese work, *Fang-Chih*.

After the death of Grahavarman, his brother had left the city. His name, according to a seal recovered at Nalanda, begins with the letter Su. When Harsha restored Kanauj to independence and began to rule it in the name of his sister, he had pledged himself never to occupy the throne himself. This was possibly to satisfy the local pride of the Kanauj hierarchs. Soon, however, things changed. It is possible that Rajyasri died. Bhandi, the trusted minister, caused the crown of Kanauj to be offered to Harsha. He hesitated for a while, but conquered his scruples in the end and became the sovereign both of Madhyadesha and Shrikantha (East Punjab).

* * * *

It seems that, early in the reign of the Emperor, the literary vagabond of Pritikut came to Kanauj, then fast becoming the centre of power, learning and glamour. The poets of Kanauj set the fashion in literature all over the country. Its women were beautiful, accomplished and made lovelier by art. They must have appeared as divinities to the impetuous and imaginative youth.

There is little doubt that in the brilliant crowd which had gathered in the capital, young Bana attracted attention as much by his irresponsibility as by his brilliant gifts. He appears to have secured the patronage of Krishna, a step-brother of the Emperor, and to have been introduced to the Emperor himself.

Harsha, now a devout Buddhist, was himself too full of righteous impulses to relish waywardness in others for

long. At the same time, he was not so self-righteous as to fail to appreciate the gifts of the author.

Then something happened, we do not know what. It is possible that Bana was guilty of playing impetuous court to some highly placed beauty and had to leave Kanauj. He betook himself to Pritikut. I am pretty sure that his family, forgetting his waywardness, would have celebrated the return of the prodigal son with highly elaborate rituals and dinners so loved by Brahmanas.

Contact with Kanauj had fired Bana's literary ambition. He went back to his studies and stuck to them for some years.

Suddenly, a messenger from Krishna arrived in Pritikut bringing the Emperor's command that the literary vagabond should return to Kanauj. "Youth is bedevilled by evil" so the great monarch had said. "One is easily guilty of misdeeds at the beginning of life."

Bana hesitated to obey the imperial command. He weighed the pros and cons: "All service is full of evils; a king's court is full of danger." But he was as impetuous as he was ambitious. The invitation was too tempting and he decided to accept it.

Bana set out to meet the Emperor, who was camping at Manitara on the banks of the river Ajiravat.

"He rose in the morning very early, took his bath and put on a fresh piece of white cloth. Rosary in hand he chanted the Vedic mantras which he was to recite during the journey. Then he worshipped Lord Shiva, the god of gods, bathed its idol with milk and offered it sweet smelling flowers, incense and pigments. Finally, he ceremoniously waved the sacred lights before Him.

"He also propitiated the god of fire. He lighted the sacrificial flame, turning it in the proper direction by offering ghee and sesamum. He also gave some presents to

Brahmanas. Then with devotion he went round the sacred cow which stood facing the east, applied white powder to his own body, wore white clothes and put *siddhartha* in his hair.

“The elders then came and smelt his head by way of blessings. Then, putting his right foot forward—for that is auspicious—Bana started out from Pritikut. His relatives accompanied him a little of the way with flowers and fruit in their hands, chanting the Vedic mantras.”

In 1953, when I left Pauri for Badrinath, the leader of the town and the Brahmanas followed us in exactly the same ceremonial way. Nothing dies in India.

* * * *

When Bana reached the camp, he passed through crowds of soldiers, elephants and camels. Finally, he was ushered into the august presence. Approaching the Emperor, who sat surrounded by his courtiers, he offered his salutations.

“Is that Bana?” asked the Emperor of the door-keeper.

“At His Majesty’s commands”, replied the door-keeper.

The Emperor turned to his friends, and said, “Here we have this *bhujang* come to us.” Everyone was silent.

“Why does His Majesty address me thus as if he does not know the ways of the world? What signs have I of being a *bhujang*?” asked Bana who could not be beaten at effrontery, and said: “I have special claims; I am a *Vatsyayana* Brahman; I have studied the Shastras; I am a married man. Is it that you love a ‘gay dog’ and not me? I was, of course, guilty of youthful follies. But now I repent.”

“So we have heard,” said the Emperor and fell silent.

Bana, angry that he was not offered a seat, left the audience chamber. But even in his anger, his shrewdness did not leave him: "The Emperor is still fond of me", he said to himself. "Only he wants me to be virtuous. Well, he will know me in time."

So the Emperor did. And in a few days' time the poet was one of his favourites, and the pupil of a very learned man Bharvu, the teacher of the Maukharis.

* * * *

Basking in the sunshine of the imperial favour, Bana began his masterpiece *Kadambari*. It created a tremendous sensation. It blazed the trail of the new literary tradition which was to dominate India almost up to the 19th century, when the impact with the West created a new literary tradition, taste and public.

Kadambari has not met with a proper appreciation from modern scholars. The modern critic is not able to realise that Bana was composing a prose poem which was to be read out to learned audiences day after day and was to be enjoyed not only for its interest and characterisation, but for its mellifluity; for its elaborate and subtle rhetoric; for its vivid accuracy of details; for its sculptured descriptions which, like the panels of the Konarak Temple, are beautiful word-pictures piled one upon the other.

It was composed for men who had the Indian background and for all those who could lose themselves in the unlimited wonderland created by a free and romantic imagination.

There is a saying in Sanskrit that the whole world was covered by Bana: *Banochhistam jagat sarvam*. It is an admirer's estimate; at the same time, the world is not so beautifully described and in such wondrous detail anywhere else but in *Kadambari*.

The theme of *Kadambari* was taken from *Brihatkatha*. It was typically Indian. On its vast screen men and women move through a succession of lives; birds and beasts, who have been human beings in previous lives, talk of their past experience; curses are pronounced by angry sages and are cured of their evil effects by expiation; youth and maiden, pledged to eternal love, pass through trials, sufferings and self-immolation in a sequence of lives to meet at last in immortal union.

For centuries, *Kadambari* was the model of literary craftsmanship. Even to-day, if one can conquer an aversion to picturesque word-piling, it ennobles, pleases and thrills. Anyhow, I have always found the story thrilling.

* * * *

Bana died early in life. *Kadambari* was left unfinished, and was completed by his son. But his patron continued to rule over a vast empire until A.D. 647.

Harsha was a great military leader. He gave stability to a Northern India which the arrival of the Huns had seriously disrupted. The empire which he won for himself was only comprised of what is now East Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa and part of Bengal. In extent it was only one-fourth of the Mauryan Empire and smaller than that of the Guptas who preceded him and of the Pratihara Gurjareswaras who followed him. He could conquer neither the king of Gauda in the East, nor Chalukya Pulakesi II in the South.

Harsha's large standing army bore heavily on the people. "The wretched householders were running away from their tiny hamlets, crushed by the (army) crowd", says Bana at one place. At another, he says: "Others began to censure the King (Harsha), expressing their sorrow at the plunder of their grain (by the army)".

The author puts into the mouth of one of his characters: "Let this (Harsha's) expedition somehow pass. May greed go to the bottom of the nether regions. May God do good to the army, *the root of all trouble.*"

Harsha, grown formidable in power and self-righteousness stood aloof from his people. He never could appreciate the resurgent neo-Hinduism of the times. Though nominally a Shaivite, his attachment to the declining Mahayana Buddhism of the day, was fanatical. One can thus understand the respect he paid to a visiting Chinese scholar like Hiuen Tsang, raising him sky-high at a national gathering. But, in treating the scholars and philosophers of his own country with contempt, he was guilty of unpardonable conceit and poor statesmanship.

The Brahmanas, usually the champions of kings, entered into a plot to murder him. "Great King!", declared his would-be assassin when caught, "you have assembled the people of different countries, exhausted your treasury in offerings to the Shramanas, cast a metal image of the Buddha. But others (Brahmanas), whom you consider heretics and who have come from a long distance, have scarcely been spoken to."

In spite of his large army and a reign of about thirty-two years, the empire that Harsha had founded died with him. His character stood high. He had conquered far and wide, had staged spectacular festivals, made generous gifts. But he had been unable to build on firm foundations. On his death the fabric of his power fell to pieces and Kanauj lay exposed to the greed of rival conquerors till about A.D. 800. Called as he had been to the joint rulership of Kanauj and Thaneshwar as a matter of military urgency, he had to hold his personal position with the aid of a large army, unable to create a hierarchy which could carry forward his life-work. He had failed to re-

lease a fresh integrating impulse in the people over whom he ruled.

Harsha failed where Skandagupta, the founder of the Gupta Empire, had succeeded so well.

Nevertheless, he had the good sense to invite Bana, the greatest prose-writer of his time, to his court. He lavished hospitality upon a Chinese pilgrim who in return gave him exaggerated praise in his memoirs, because he happened to be a Buddhist. He wrote three mediocre plays himself. But for these, he would have remained no more than a name, and that too not so great as that of Yashodharman at whose feet the Hun conqueror, Mihirakula, had paid homage.

LXXIX

A NATIONAL ARMY—ITS VALUE AND ROLE

RAJ BHAVAN, NAINI TAL
July 17, 1955

ON April 21st, while at Dehra Dun, I visited the Military Wing of the National Defence Academy and addressed the Officers and Cadets.

It is an institution with a great tradition. Most of the leading soldiers of Free India have been educated there. When I arrived, discipline was in the air. Every wall of the hall to which I was led was adorned with trophies of the different victories won by the Indian Army. The bright faces of the neatly-uniformed young men were in sharp contrast to the slovenly looks to which one is exposed in only too many educational institutions.

As I thought of the subject, The Role of a National Army, on which I had decided to address these young men,

I felt happy at having known a number of our leading soldiers and enjoyed the personal friendship of several of them. I had also come into contact with many of our young officers and admired their bearing, their bravery, their self-assurance and their patriotism.

I saw the neat performance of our Army in Hyderabad. I have followed its gallant adventures in Kashmir and its splendid leadership when it was in Korea in peace. I am very proud of it.

* * * *

In 1945, before the end of World War II, I happened to travel in the same compartment with a high-ranking British Military Officer. We fell to talking about the "Quit India Movement" and naturally drifted to the subject of Indians in the Army.

"I know my boys very well," said the officer. "For thirty years I have been seeing them grow up. I know most of the men under my command and they in their turn know me well. They are loyal to the very core. They do not like the Congress Movement. They hate those who have joined Subash Bose. They will stand by the Empire to the last man."

"I agree that you know your boys, but only as officers of the British Army," I replied laughingly. "I know them, too, for they are the flesh of my flesh. Not one of them has any love for you!"

During the rest of our journey we agreed to disagree.

Soon after, the achievements of Netaji began to develop posthumous importance. The trial of the three I.N.A. Officers demonstrated to the world, not only his heroic achievements, but gave him the place of a liberator in the popular mind.

Bhulabhai Desai, my guru in the profession of law,

who defended the accused at the trial, gave a new look to the struggle for freedom. He showed that the subject races, in the Army or outside, had an inherent right to fight for the freedom of their country.

I also undertook the defence of one Bashir and four other officers of the Indian National Army who were being prosecuted at Rangoon. If I mistake not, I was not allowed to proceed to Rangoon. Later, I was asked to appear for Major-General Bhonsle in the second I.N.A. Trial.

The drama of Netaji's achievements, vividly unfolded during the I.N.A. Trial, destroyed the British myth that the Indian soldier was not capable of military leadership. What it proved beyond a doubt was that once the third party was out of the field, Indian soldiers could be relied upon to secure and maintain national freedom.

In 1946 there was a mutiny among the ratings of the Royal Indian Navy. Bombay staged sympathetic riots. The Sardar deftly stepped in and controlled the mutiny, and I was entrusted with the defence of the naval ratings who were to be tried for taking part in the rising.

One evening, I was reading my brief for the accused when there came to me a British military officer whom I knew well.

"Are you preparing the case for the ratings?" he asked me.

"Yes," I replied.

"Don't bother to read your brief," said he. "There is going to be no trial, either of the ratings, or of Bhonsle."

"Why?" I asked him in surprise.

"Every trial is costing us the loyalty of a hundred thousand men."

The trials of the I.N.A. Officers had been prompted by a belief among the British generals that unless the "traitors" were tried and punished, the loyal soldiery would

feel aggrieved. In fact, the trials became for the sponsors a monument to blind folly. The British generals got nothing out of it; India, everything. Subash Bose received an apotheosis; Capt. Shah Nawaz and his colleagues, a place in the Nation's memory; Indian freedom, a new impetus and direction. The British Commander-in-Chief did the wisest thing possible in the circumstances; he bowed to public opinion and withdrew the trials.

When their sentences were remitted, the convicted I.N.A. Officers were welcomed throughout the country as national heroes. The Indian Army kept its foreign uniform, but foreswore foreign allegiance.

* * * *

With the dawn of Freedom in August 1947, our Army, no longer an appendage of the British forces, became national to the core, loyal, disciplined, unaffected by parochial considerations. The officers and men pledged themselves to India as a Nation and were determined to maintain her freedom.

During the troublous times which followed Partition, our troops maintained the highest traditions of a national Army. They helped to create a stability in the country which has enabled us to face the food problem; to make rapid progress in industrial development; to attain respect among the nations of the world and to stand behind our great leader, Panditji, while he has been leading the country to worldwide influence.

* * * *

In my little study of history I have found that the rise or fall of a nation has depended on the strength or weakness of the group sentiment which dominates its army in relation to the country.

Though we use the word "nation" often enough, we are not at all clear as to what it is, how it is made and how it disintegrates. It is only when we do so that we realise the meaning and purpose of the role of a national army.

Every society, however rudimentary, must forge a fighting weapon against internal upheaval and external aggression. From the earliest times, an organized armed section of the group has been found a pre-condition to the continued existence of a society.

Philosophers have hoped for, and talked about, a society living in peace without such a section. But the only really peaceful people of whom—I have not known any—I have read were the Hopis of Arizona, a self-contained tribe of North American Red Indians, who lived in an isolated area of a vast unoccupied continent, and, from the beginning, eschewed physical violence in their individual and collective life. Even the word "Hopi" means "peaceful."

Even today the Hopis will not fight or engage in physical encounters among themselves. They hold all warlike conflicts in horror. We are told by competent authorities that their warlike activities consist only of the harbouring of grudges, the spreading of spicy scandal, or of the making of complaints against each other in a way that no other people are known to do. These activities exhaust their warlike instincts. Under modern conditions, therefore, they are classed as conscientious objectors.

When the vast vacant spaces of North America began to be filled up by an increasing population, the Hopis would have been wiped out by their ferocious neighbours, the Apaches, had not the armies of the North American Colonies and later of the U.S.A. provided them with protection.

Let us make no mistake about it. No society can exist

in the foreseeable future without a vigorous and effective instrument of armed defence.

* * * *

I must, however, pursue my thoughts on the National Army. A nation is a peculiar organization. The elements of geography, race and religion have a very subordinate party to play in its formation or functioning. Fundamentally, it is a group of individuals who are bound together by psychological bonds.

The unifying influence which makes a nation is provided by a psychological urge that the group is one; that it is going to remain one; that it has to be kept as one at all costs. The predominant motive in all vigorous societies has been to defend its group existence at all costs.

Among the factors which contribute to create or strengthen the psychological bonds of nationhood, three are of great importance:—

First, that the intellectuals, that is the class of men who think, speak and write, who teach, administer and govern, should develop the will to national unity.

Secondly, that the Army, and I include in it the national militia or police, if any, should develop the will to maintain national existence.

Thirdly, that both these groups should develop the capacity and behaviour to inspire the vocal and active sections of the people to a feeling of identity with them.

The intellectuals provide the ideas which foster the sense of unity, enrich the national tradition and provide the appeal for collective action. The army is, in the last resort, the instrument of defence, both against internal subversion and external aggression, but it need not necessarily fight wars. In peace, it is an asset of collective strength; a crystal around which gather the fluid elements

in society; a well-disciplined source of national unity which operates by its silent influence.

In order that the national army should fulfil its mission, particularly in a democracy, its composition must represent all sections of society and its outlook must symbolise national unity. The Army can do this much more effectively than the intellectuals, who, by their habits of mind and the way they live, can never, except in totalitarian countries, be a regimented body. On the other hand, the officers and soldiers of an Army live and work together as a single human aggregate. By its very nature, by the habit and training of every member of it, from the Commander-in-Chief downwards, an organic loyalty is developed, both to each other and to the Army as a whole. It, therefore, almost constitutes a sort of living organism.

How long could a nation last, however well-knit, if a large number of its intellectuals were to entertain and disseminate ideas that it was not one, thereby undermining its emotional attachment to unity? Or if the army were to be divided in its loyalties to the nation and to develop a regional or separatist attachment?

* * * *

Countries have only gone under in history when the intellectual or the fighting wings of their society have failed them.

In ancient India, the Brahmanas and Kshatriyas played leading roles as highly-trained and purposive agencies of integration. They were inspired by the Aryavarta consciousness, which had two aspects: Firstly, that Bharatavarsha was the sacred land of Dharma, in which no alien could abide for long.

Secondly, that Dharma was the eternal law which

Brahmanas and Kshatriyas were pledged to maintain at all costs.

The expansive power and culture of ancient India was the work of the Brahmanas and the Kshatriyas, who were bound in common loyalty to Dharma in relation to their sacred land.

In the sixth century of the Christian Era, the Huns invaded India. By a tremendous effort the Kshatriyas of Madhyadesha drove them out in wars which lasted over half-a-century. But in that very effort, their vigour was exhausted. They no longer formed a compact military class of Madhyadesha dominated by a single cultural impulse.

In the result, the Aryavarta consciousness came to be restricted to religious and social spheres and its political aspect receded from active life into race memory.

Many conquerors thereafter built up large standing armies. But with them the wars were not an expression of a people nor of their culture, on the move. They were undertaken to satisfy personal or dynastic ambition.

Sri Harsha, for instance, built up a large army: 60,000 war elephants attended by 240,000 men; 100,000 horse-men and possibly 200,000 foot-soldiers. Sri Harsha died and at that moment the Empire of Kanauj collapsed.

It had been a hired army and the paymaster was gone. The soldiers, who had fought for two generations, were scattered to the winds even as dried leaves. They lacked the collective spirit of the Madhyadesha Kshatriyas who had driven out the Huns.

The Kshatriya clans of Gurjaradesh, from whom the Rajputs are descended, inherited the tradition of the older Kshatriyas. They combined to expel the invading armies of the Caliphs. They developed a collective spirit of conquest. They became defenders of the Dharma. From

A.D. 750-940, the Gurjaraeshwar-Pratihars of Kanauj built up a formidable empire. But soon the clans acquired regional loyalties and lost whatever "Aryavarta consciousness" they had possessed.

By the time the Turks invaded India, the kings and the armies of the North had lost the collective sense that had held the country together as a whole. The Brahmana and the Kshatriya had become regional-minded and the latter were only interested in defending their own small regions. That is why, after A.D. 1000 India presents a pathetic picture of warring groups, but no national army.

You know the Great Revolt of 1857, the "Mutiny" as the British Officers called it. In a loose sense, it was a war of independence; it was the result of the spontaneous urge to resist the foreigner; but it failed. Each group which joined the Revolt fought against the foreigner, but none possessed the psychological urge to combine with others under one national leadership. The movement had a negative resistance aspect; it did not have a positive unifying bond.

Then came the British Rule. It gave India two things which had been lacking so far: it gave her a hundred years of peace, so giving us a respite in which to revise our ideas and to evolve new psychological bonds. It also gave us the benefit of an intimate contact with that idea of national unity which prevailed in the West. We then realised how we had lost our sense of unity; how, instead of a national army, we had regional forces which fought against each other, often in the interests of the foreigner. Out of this experience of centuries was born our national army.

* * * *

India's future is bound up as much with the people as with its intellectuals and its army.

In my address, therefore, I exhorted the Cadets thus: "Maintain the highest traditions of a national army. Keep up the great traditions which our Army has built up in the past. The role of a national army in a democracy like ours is not necessarily to fight wars. The primary role is to provide by its very existence a stabilizing factor in national life. The secondary one is to help in developing a sense of national discipline in other organizations, not only by direct training as in the case of N.C.C. and National Volunteers, but by its very example."

LXXX

LOOKING BACK—THREE YEARS IN UTTAR
PRADESH—LITERARY LABOURS

RAJ BHAVAN, LUCKNOW
July 31, 1955

ON June 2, 1955 I completed three years in Uttar Pradesh. When I took up office, I thought I would be bored. Curiously enough, I feel as interested in the life I lead here, as ever.

I have made up for all my sins committed during a stay-at-home life for over sixty years. Apart from the duties of my office, during this period, I have visited thirty districts; seen canals and power-houses; community and N.E.S. projects; inspected *shramdan* work in many villages.

A visit to Uttar Pradesh for an Indian is what a visit to Italy and Greece was to Goethe and Byron. At any rate it was so for me, for I lived once again in the living memories of Aryavarta, the homeland of India's immortal spirit.

I have seen several places of historical interest: Kalanjar, Fatehpur Sikri, The Taj, Rani Lakshmbai's Palace and others; lived in the midst of the majestic Himalayas and on the crowded banks of the sacred Ganga; worshipped at the shrines of Badrinath and Kashi Vishwanath. I have paid homage to Lord Buddha at Lumbini, Sarnath and Kushinagad. I have invoked the memories of the divine Cowherd at Gokul, Mathura and Brindaban and of Radha, His eternal bride, at Barsana, her home. I have even planted trees at Giri Govardhan, the Lord of the Mountains.

Finally, I went on pilgrimages to several spots associated with Veda Vyas; to Kalpi where the Master was born; to Hastinapur where he inspired and guided the Pandavas; to Mana where he composed the *Mahabharata*; to the Naimisha forest where he heard his immortal work recited when Shaunaka's Sacrifice was held.

In my early days I tried my best to avoid ceremonial functions as I thought they were a waste of time. I now know better; I have expiated for that sin, too. I have attended an almost endless series of functions. I have seen countless institutions, delivered innumerable addresses, formal, solemn and gay. I have met people in thousands and admit I like the people of Uttar Pradesh. They are not parochial nor exclusive. They are a good natured people unless you happen to dispute the fact—absolutely uncontroversial to them—that Hindi is the most perfect of languages. The people of U.P., however, have two things in common; they are highly Tulsidas-minded and they have a tendency to be very good to me.

I have met some extraordinarily able professors and hundreds of fine students. I am vain enough to think that most of them do not dislike me. A few do; but they add zest to my life.

My Ministers—a happy team—are very kind and considerate. The more you know Dr. Sampurnanand who leads them, the more you regard him with affection; incidentally, he is a great scholar; I wish I knew a tithe of his knowledge of Sanskrit.

I confess I felt a little uneasy when Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant left the Chief Ministership of U.P. to go to the Centre. Apart from my long and affectionate association with him, it was for some time difficult for me to envisage U.P. without Pantji.

In 1949 when some of us, members of the Constituent Assembly, met to give new names to the newly constituted States, some members from U.P. made the suggestion that the United Provinces should be called Aryavarta; we turned it down; we were not prepared to place our States in a foreign belt. Ultimately they brought the suggestion that United Provinces should be termed Uttar Pradesh. Some one said that this would save the expenses of changing monograms, boards and letter-heads. A wag commented: "Yes it will be 'U.P.'—'Under Pant' it is, and 'Under Pant' it will remain!" Without Pantji, Uttar Pradesh may be as good; it may even be better; but it will never be the same.

When I was asked to take up the office of Governor of U.P., I consulted a very dear friend of mine—who alas! is no more. He advised me not to take up the Governorship of this State. He said: "Pant is there; I know him well; I know you well too. The two of you will soon come into conflict with each other."

"I am going there because Pantji is there", I replied. "He knows me well; I know him well; never could I conceive of a conflict between us". So I accepted this office.

After thirty months of close association with Pantji, I

remained convinced that I have taken the right decision. Of such rich associations, is life made.

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As I look back on the achievements of U.P. during the last three years, I discover four significant achievements of which the first thing that strikes me is the success of the *shramdan* movement.

What a change has come over the country in four years! In 1951 I invited the President to inaugurate the movement for a Land Army by digging up a silted-up channel near Delhi. A few villagers joined in the ceremony more as a matter of curiosity. A few students in their white creaseless trousers and tennis shoes contributed to it a touch of superior condescension. Now, in four years, the Land Army idea has blossomed forth into a typically Indian mass movement, not only of economic but social and moral significance.

In Uttar Pradesh, 35,400 Gaon Sabhas established by law are carrying on the *shramdan* movement. They have constructed public works; provided medical relief and sanitation; regulated fairs and markets; established and maintained primary schools; developed agriculture, cottage industry and even inter-village commerce.

During the last three years the creed of *shramdan*—voluntary labour freely given—has swept the countryside in U.P. with the vigorous fervour of a new-found faith. Voluntary labour of nearly three crores of man-hours has gone into it. Its value in terms of money would also be of the order of as many rupees.

This vast effort has been achieved at comparatively little cost to the State, as most of the monies needed for these works have come from the villagers themselves.

Herein lies an unexpected source of power, generated

with inconceivable spontaneity. It has given to economic planning a momentum which was scarcely thought possible and proved, if need be, that India has its own way of doing things on a grand scale.

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On every July 1st during the last three years, I have inaugurated the Vanamahotsava at the Naini Tal Flats. During the last five years—this is the sixth Vanamahotsava—the country has taken great pride in tree-planting. Between the public and the forest department in U.P., no less than three crores of trees have been planted. In terms of area which these trees cover, or would have covered if planted forestwise, approximately 100,000 acres were planted.

In spite of this proud record, we have yet very far to go. Few people have an idea how U.P. has been robbed of its forest wealth.

For a country to be self-sufficient in food, timber and pasturage would require 33% of its areas in forest. Against this, the average area in India in 1948-49 was only 21% of the total area, the percentage of U.P. being only 19% out of its 131,000 square miles. With freedom and the threats of integration and zamindari abolition began the massacre of the innocents—the trees. Now the average of our forest area is reduced to 11.3%.

But the Gangetic Plains, where there is a ceaseless demand for agricultural tracts by a fast-increasing population, are in a hopeless plight. The total area under forests is only 2%, the average of the State being made up by large forest areas in the Himalayas and the Vindhya.

The results of this lack of trees are apparent in every district. The Yamuna does not flow as plentifully as before; nor does the Gomati. Many of our rivers are in floods. Why? Because there is no adequate afforestation

on their banks. The catchment areas have not sufficient cover and the fuel reserves are diminishing. And there is already an increasing scarcity of fuel and pastures.

When will we realise that the climate, the trees, the land and those who live on it form but a single, inseparable, collective organism? When will we realise that if we cut down trees, we deprive ourselves of the primary sources which directly or indirectly provide food, clothing and shelter?

* * * *

The next significant achievement has been the new spirit that has been growing up among the officers of the State. Many of them have entered into the spirit of constructive work. Quite a few have been inspired by an enthusiasm to develop the country. There are exceptions, no doubt, to these but their numbers are dwindling now.

Even the Police Force has entered into this spirit of constructive work by undertaking the very difficult task of organising village defence. U.P., as you know, covers a vast area and takes in one-sixth of the population of the country. Naturally, the far-flung villages cannot be defended without popular co-operation.

During the last three years the Force has organized defence societies in 99,058 out of 99,965 villages; the rest are hamlets which are tacked on to adjoining villages for defence purposes. It has done a good job of work too. It has been training villagers in the art of self-defence; of facing dacoits; of trapping them wherever possible in the village itself; of arranging for help from the neighbouring villages. Periodically, rallies are held by the Police and the villagers in co-operation with each other. Rifle clubs are also being promoted for those who hold licences for guns.

Talking about the activities of the Police Force, I

inaugurated two spectacular tattoos, one at Lucknow and the other at Naini Tal, by firing a revolver-shot on each occasion into the air. I had not handled a fire-arm for thirty-two years and I was glad to find that I stood the test without losing my hand.

The object of the Police Force in holding such tattoos all over the State is to establish contact with the public. They will also help us to overcome our prejudice against the Police which we acquired in pre-independence days.

People in huge crowds turned out to witness the tattoos both in Lucknow and in Naini Tal. In Naini Tal, particularly, three out of four persons turned out on the flats, though the air was biting cold.

From a sort of red fort, constructed some distance away, emerged the two Police Bands, and later, hundreds of policemen, who displayed extraordinary skill in P.T. drill. Some of the exercises would have amazed even self-confident circus experts. A few hundred men, uniformly dressed and moving their limbs simultaneously with mechanical and rhythmic precision, has a wonderful attraction for me. The collective vigour and grace instil you with a sense of power as you watch their activity.

There were also side-shows, more in the nature of open-air theatricals, music and dances. They showed how villages behaved when they were attacked by dacoits; how out of sheer lack of civic duty, people refused to assist the police in detecting crime. Few realise what skill, patience and courage the Police have to expend in tracking down criminals.

In Lucknow, however, we saw an uncanny performance; a car ran forward and backward, slowed down and stopped, but without a driver. It had the mysterious look of a ghost car when it shot forward unassisted by a human hand. The U.P. Police had a radar-driver car! The

following day, some people complimented the police on being possessors of such a wonderful mechanism.

I, too, was beginning to feel proud at this honour when I learnt that a driver lay concealed in the frame of the car all the time!

* * * *

The fourth significant event in U.P. during the last three years has been the reorganisation of Education. In U.P., thousands of schools have now been provided with a ten-acre farm each, so that the students may learn the Gospel of the Dirty Hands. Several land schools have come into existence. The Land School, which I helped to found for the ex-Servicemen's sons near Lucknow, is flourishing.

The Universities of the State, not in too happy a state three years ago, have been reorganised; the Roorkee University, by a mere change in the Vice-Chancellor, while the Universities of Agra, Allahabad and Lucknow, by their Acts being modified. The most revolutionary, and I am sure the most beneficial, change has been to do away with the election of the Vice-Chancellor by the Senate as a whole. Nothing ruins a university more than keeping open such floodgates of electioneering, patronage and intrigue. In educational institutions, the age, experience, learning and academic achievements, the last two particularly, not the skill for winning elections, should be the significant factors.

There is also a growing awareness among the academicians and the public as to the need of greater discipline among the students and of a less specialised education at the pre-graduation stage. The Lucknow University has blazed the trail by introducing Marathi and Tamil among the modern Indian languages; by making provision for

lectures on Indian Culture to all the students; by prescribing in the course elementary knowledge of the Humanities for the Science students and of General Science for the Arts students; and by making an elementary knowledge of Sanskrit compulsory for Arts students.

Of course, we have had our setbacks. For instance, the Allahabad Convocation over which I presided, has made ignoble history. But I will tell you of all this in detail later.



But you would like to know something about my personal activities during these three years. Far distant as I am, I have kept in touch with the Somnath Trust, the Anand Institute, the Hansraj Morarji Public School, and above all, the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan.

But more than anything, I have found time for study, as well as for literary labours. For years and years I never had such time at my disposal. I have revised several of my works; I have written a few new ones. I have maintained the fortnightly flow of Kulapati's Letters which have become a part of my life. And every fortnight, I have felt happy to receive from some people, whom I had never known before, some comment or the other on these letters.

Such were the tasks which I cheerfully undertook and patiently fulfilled. Nothing makes me happier than settling down with paper before me and pen in hand, ready to pour out my heart. As days slip by and sunlight brings its daily freshness, nothing brings me such tender-hearted or joyful company as when, from out of the written page, arises a man or a woman of vivid charm or stands resurrected some unforgotten experience or a historic incident.

I am 68. I do not know how long it will be the Will of God to let me live in this company. Left to myself, I would like to do so eternally. But when the day comes, as it must, for this ever-youthful effort to come to an end—as I look forward to the day—I hope to see the old visionary casting a wistful, loving look at the past, bidding good-bye to the world of hope, beauty and charm, which his imagination conjured up and his words created for himself. Even in that forgotten hour, I see him writing diligently, till the weary failing hand lays down the pen and lies in the dust.

But, before that hour comes, I have to live in the fullness of the moment, for that has been the humble mission to which I have been called.

LXXXI

THE CRUCIAL YEAR 1946—CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY—THE HOUR OF FREEDOM

RAJ BHAVAN, LUCKNOW
August 14, 1955

DURING the five fateful years, 1946-50, India became free; was integrated, stabilised and converted into a Sovereign Democratic Republic.

For me, it was a period of hard work. It also brought me the rare privilege of making close contact with the best people in the land. I also witnessed and sometimes participated in the conflicting developments which have made India what it is to-day.

I would like to give you a few glimpses of those years. Such glimpses, given from a personal angle, are bound to be ego-centric.

Though I played a very insignificant part during those days, it was most interesting time.

* * * *

The year 1946, as anticipated by Lord Pethick Lawrence, then the Secretary of State for India, was the most crucial in India's history.

Early in February 1946, Chief Justice Stone of Bombay asked me whether I would lead a team of lawyers to go to Japan in order to prosecute Premier Tojo and other alleged war criminals. But I declined. Japan was one of the warring nations. She had fought the war for her national ambitions on exactly the same basis as the rest had done, and failed. As a result, her's were already the woes of the vanquished. To inflict a post-mortem condemnation on her appeared to me to be vindictive as it could only make the reconciliation, which must eventually come, difficult.

This trial and several others of the kind reminded me of the only dissenting speech made by a French Peer, when Marshall Ney, "the Bravest of the Brave" was sentenced to death by the French House of Peers in 1815, for failing to arrest Napoleon on his march to Paris from Elba. "There are actions", he said, "which, though highly reprehensible before God and men, are nevertheless by their nature and essence, not to be met by human justice."

On February 18, the day before Attlee announced the Cabinet Mission, I went to Gandhiji who had just arrived in Bombay and discussed with him the offer of the Chief Justice. He approved of the reply I had given and asked me to join the Congress.

I placed myself at Gandhiji's disposal as, in fact, I always had been. I went to the office of the Bombay

Provincial Congress Committee; signed an admission form and paid my four annas.

I was also invited by Major Woodrow Wyatt, M.P. to attend the Fabian Conference which was to be held in March. But he himself came to India with Cripps and the Conference stood adjourned.

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Soon afterwards, the achievements of Netaji began to develop posthumous importance. The trial of the three I.N.A. Officers and the mutiny of ratings of the Royal Indian Navy brought under control by the Sardar, greatly stirred the hearts of Indian soldiers.

Many British statesmen began to see the light. Sir Stafford Cripps was the most clear-sighted of them all. It was impossible for the British to hold India any longer. If, therefore, they had done what they did then earlier, it would have saved India from many trials.

On March 15, Attlee, the British Prime Minister, as their spokesman, announced that the minority could not be allowed to veto the advance of the majority. Jinnah's formidable instrument was thus snatched away from his hands.

The country was astir. The general elections gave the Congress an overwhelming majority of non-Muslim seats. Early in the year the Congress nominee—Mavlanekar—was elected the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. One after another, its leaders also began to form ministries in the different provinces.

The British Parliamentary Delegation arrived in India, followed on March 24 by the British Cabinet Mission. Even the Princes, keen as ever to anticipate British policies, became converts to popular assemblies, the rule of law and fundamental rights for their subjects.

The general view of the country was that the Delegation was a device to postpone or sidetrack a solution of the Indian problem. This view was the result of a general distrust of all that the British did at the time but I did not agree with the view and declared so publicly.

On May 16, the Cabinet Mission announced their historic plan. There was to be a constitution-making body on the basis of the Union of India, with freedom to the provinces to form groups. In the meantime, a new Executive Council was to be set up at the Centre, with the support of the main Indian parties. Gandhiji saw in the Plan the seed to 'convert this land of sorrow into one without sorrow and suffering.'

I was not quite happy about it. My diary note runs:

"May 16 Plan accepted by the Congress more as a start than the end of the journey. If it is implemented, India will be cut up into four: one Hindu, two Muslims and one Princely. The Centre is bound to be weak. The Hindus of Bengal and Assam will be crushed; the malignant spirit of zonal division of India, invoked by Professor Coupland, will stalk the land."

My old friend and ex-chief of the Home Rule days, Jinnah, continued to play his part with superb adroitness. He never let a single practical advantage go or failed to keep his eye on his cherished aim of Pakistan. Under his leadership, the Muslim League negotiated, threatened, broke away: announced policies and repudiated them; rejected the Plan of May 16, but accepted it later to blow it up.

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On July 10, Gandhiji told me that the Working Committee of the Congress had appointed a Committee of Experts to prepare the materials and draft proposals for the Constituent Assembly, and that Panditji had appointed

me as one of its members. "You should give up whatever you are doing and take up this work", he said. "It is very important and you will have to bear your share of the burden."

Next day, I received Panditji's letter asking me to join the Expert Committee. The other members, besides Panditji himself, were Asaf Ali, Gopalaswamy Ayyangar, K. T. Shah, Santhanam, Humayun Kabir and D. R. Gadgil. I returned the brief of a very important case which I was conducting at that time.

On my being appointed to the Committee, I plunged myself headlong into preparations for the first meeting which was to be held about July 20 in Delhi.

By August 4, my first draft of the Rules of Business of the Constituent Assembly was ready. It had been rather a tough job.

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In those days, I joined Sardar every evening as, like a caged lion, he paced up and down the terrace of his flat at 68 Marine Drive, Bombay. On such occasions, he often talked to me of what was passing through his mind. Not that he wanted to consult me, but he always found in me a sympathetic listener to his spicy and vigorous comments on men and things.

I might be mistaken, but my impression at the time was that the Congress felt baffled. Gandhiji was waiting for someone else's move before he made a move himself. Satyagraha could not possibly be used at a time when the country was torn by communal riots. I did not know what plans Panditji had. To follow up my simile, Sardar left upon me the impression that he was crouching watchfully and impatiently waiting for some bar of the cage to break so that he could pounce upon the prey.

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Everyone blamed Lord Wavell for his weakness but he too was clearly baffled. Anarchy prevailed in several parts of the land and he was helpless. About the beginning of August, I learnt that he had written strongly to the British Government. Power, he had said, should either be handed over to the Indians, or violence should be brought under control by a vast military and police action. He would have liked to transfer power to a coalition of the Congress and the League; failing that, he would have liked to transfer it to the Congress for the time being. Events were drifting towards a catastrophe. But he was not sure whether the Congress would accept office without the formal concession of Dominion Status to India.

V. P. Menon—who at that time scarcely knew any of the Congress leaders—was the Constitutional Adviser to the Governor-General. He took the initiative by sending an I.C.S. officer. Would Sardar agree to help? Would the Congress take office if it were to be offered with an assurance of a practical recognition of the Executive Council as a Dominion Government? Or, would it insist upon a formal declaration of Dominion Status which, for practical and legalistic reasons, appeared out of the question?

By the evening Sardar had made up his mind. He conveyed his pledged word that, if the Congress was asked to take office, he would exercise all his influence in the Congress to see that the offer was accepted.

Lord Wavell understood the significance of this assurance. He wired it to London. The British Government acted on it and in a few days Panditji received an offer to join the Interim Government as Vice-President.

On August 12, Wavell invited Panditji to form the Government.

Two days later, the Muslim League declared August 16

as a Direct Action Day. It was in reply to Lord Wavell's invitation to Panditji. Jinnah also charged the Viceroy with striking a severe blow at the Muslim League and Muslim India. The British Government, he said, was supporting the Interim Government with their bayonets and thus played into the hands of the Congress.

Soon, Sardar came to Delhi to live at Birla House as the guest of Ghanshyamdas Birla. V. P. Menon was in the confidence of Lord Wavell and was trying hard to bring about an understanding between him and the Congress leaders.

One day Sardar, on his usual morning walk, turned towards the road which passed Menon's house and the latter happened to be standing near the gate. This meeting was by no means brief nor was it the last one. V. P. invited Sardar into his house. I am not prepared to swear that they had met by pure accident for, if it were so, it was indeed a miracle! In this way was laid the foundation of an understanding which lasted until Sardar's death.

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After I was asked to join the Expert Committee of the Congress, I began the preliminary exercise of preparing a draft Constitution. In the middle of August, V. K. Krishnan Menon spent a few days with me in Bombay, helping me to go over a part of the ground. He was extremely helpful but he suddenly left for England and I was left alone to complete my amateurish labours.

Panditji asked me to discuss the draft Constitution with Gopalaswamy Ayyangar. So began our partnership—we were already good friends—in this great venture. In those early days, we met almost every day, discussing drafts, problems and moves.

From October of 1946 until the end of 1947 I lived with the Birlas at 5, Albuquerque Road, New Delhi. The Sardar, until he moved to his own house, was also there. At the time, Gandhiji also camped there when he visited Delhi. This gave me a great opportunity to be in touch with the various activities of far-reaching effect of which the Birla House was the nerve centre.

The food situation showed no signs of improvement. The Bengal Famine had already taken a toll of 1,50,000 lives—the non-official figures being nearer 3 million and the food crisis was worsening.

On October 15, Jinnah decided to join the Interim Government in order, to use his own words, "to get a foothold to fight for Pakistan." Having joined the Government, the Muslim League repudiated joint responsibility. The Congress members of the Interim Government were in despair; they threatened to resign. "Our patience is fast reaching the limit," said Panditji. "If these things continue, a struggle on a large scale is inevitable."

Ultimately, in response to Attlee's appeal, the Viceroy as well as the leaders of the Congress and the League went to England for a discussion on how to make the Constituent Assembly successful.

Jinnah now added a new demand: exchange of population. Sir Chimanlal Setalvad called it impracticable; Sardar called it absurd. Jinnah, however, knew his own mind.

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Panditji returned from London on December 7. The Constituent Assembly opened on December 9. My impressions recorded in scraps in my irregularly kept diary notes on reconstruction run thus:

“Excitement everywhere. A great day for India has dawned: Indians are going to frame their own Constitution, but there is unhappiness everywhere.

Bardoloi met me early. He was miserable beyond words. Bapu had assured him that he would not let Assam down. But how would Sardar act, he asks? When we went over the same ground on the advisability of seeking judicial interpretation of the Plan, my opinion was (I had given it in writing) that on a strict construction of the Plan, grouping was voluntary. Alladi thought otherwise, though he was doubtful as his letter to me showed. I told Bardoloi that I had told Sardar that a recourse to judicial decision was too uncertain a peg to hang the fortunes of crores of Hindus.”

And the diary note is in a lively canter:

“I am in the Hall early. Gopaldaswamy meets me on the way. If a non-party man has to be chosen, he is likely to be the President. He modestly disclaims certainty.

As I enter the Hall, I am stirred to the core of my being. With lights and decorations, it makes a fitting birthplace for a free nation.

Members standing around in small groups are talking excitedly. Friends are here from all over the country. We shake hands, talk enthusiastically; but the cheerfulness is forced.

Churchill's declaration has been ominous. Jinnah has threatened the country with disaster. Wavell has fled from Delhi for the day. Either partition or the sacrifice of crores of Hindus—that is the price—a very heavy price—demanded of us.

I go over to H. V. R. Iengar. The British Government has sent no message for the Constituent Assembly; they have refused to recognise it. The U.S.A., China and Australia, however, have sent messages of good-will.

Some groups are discussing who the President should be. The Congress opinion, however, is crystallising. The President must be a leading Congressman. Many eyes are turned towards Rajendra Babu. Without effort, he makes people turn to him in a difficult situation; almost a case of unquestionable attraction of moral strength.

Kripalani enters; with his long hair he looks like a temperamental revolutionary. We talk about the outcome of the London discussions. He is cynical and indifferent.

Sardar comes in, all smiles, and accosts the members; but evidently, he is in a truculent mood. Smt. Naidu enters, vivacious as a girl in her teens, spreading sunshine all round. Jayakar takes his seat, aloof and contemptuous. He coldly acknowledges my greetings.

Panditji enters: there are cheers. He smiles all round, flings his leather-case in the air, catches it and takes his seat. Curious members surround him as they want to know what is happening.

I walk over to my seat in the second row just behind the Sardar and Kher who wears an air of Chief Ministerial gravity. Shankarrao has his seat on my right. We talk anxiously on what is going to happen.

The leaders take their seats in the front row. The bell rings. For a moment, the babel of tongues is hushed."

At 11 O'clock Kripalani, then the Congress President, proposed Dr. Sachchidananda Sinha, the oldest member of the House, as the provisional Chairman and conducted him to the Chair. The Chairman then read out his address emphasising certain words with his rare sense of humour.

As he read out the address my mind went back to our first contact in 1909 when I was in College and I wrote an article for the *Hindustan Review*. He was an important man then, but he wrote me a nice letter which,

in those dreary days, gave me great encouragement.

“I wish we could have started with a prayer. We badly need the guidance of God in this hour of trial. . . .” I noted later. But this omission was rectified by the Chairman when he invoked Divine blessings on the proceedings.

“He (Sinha) wants us to ‘build for immortality’. I wish we could do so. He appeals for vision. Where there is no vision the people perish, he says. The speech is received with thunderous cheers,” runs the diary note.

The ceremony of taking an oath was replaced by the Secretary calling out the names of each member. H. V. R. Iengar called each one of us by name; we proudly walked up to the table and signed our names.

My note of the day ends with the remark: “For the moment the spirit of triumph is in the air, but the smell of coming danger persists”.

Thus began the first hour of our freedom.

LXXXII

THE MODERN ARROGANCE—THE SCRIPTURE —THE FIRST FREEDOMS

RAJ BHAVAN, LUCKNOW
August 28, 1955

THE other day a gentleman whom I knew casually came to me, and after the usual siesta went straight to the object of his visit. “I have liked your writings very much,” he said, “but I do not like your believing in God”.

“Why?” I asked.

“I never found Him anywhere,” he asserted.

Like most men steeped in Westernism he appeared to

feel that it was the business of God so to behave that he, the man, might be pleased to take notice of Him, the Creator.

Not to believe in God or to be indifferent to His existence is accepted as a badge of superiority in these days. This arrogance is the heritage of the dogmas which the nineteenth century Western scientists accepted for themselves till Einstein came and blew them up.

“I assert,” he once said, “that the cosmic religious experience is the strongest and the noblest drawing force My religion consists of a humble admiration for illimitable superior spirit who reveals Himself in the slightest details we are able to perceive with our frail and feeble minds.”

I began my intellectual life the same way. When in the college I studied the French Encyclopaedists, I drew up a number of reasons why God cannot exist. A little later, I began to entertain doubts about my dogmatic denial. But I was most arrogant where I should have been most humble. I thought that the search for God requires less effort than learning how to play cards.

I took twelve years of education to get a degree; I spent fifteen more years to be a good lawyer. But in matters of God I wanted the results now and here. I wanted miracles to convince me and no trouble on my part.

Slowly and humbly as I proceeded in my little efforts, I learnt that God has no mercy for the arrogant, the vain and the self-complacent. This arrogance is encouraged in India by the perverted sense in which Yoga is understood. Most people believe that anyone who dresses in saffron robes and can talk rapidly of the other world is a Yogi.

Yoga is often taken to be *Hathayoga*, but that physical aspect of Yoga is no more than a training for the great

All these keep back the help of God and make progress difficult.

Yoga provides a rapid, conscious, self-directed evolution. It is through it that, if I am a true aspirant, I can bypass this slow and confused growth, liberate the spirit and arm it with a superpersonal force.

But Yoga does not stop there. Once the purposive evolution of Yoga begins, it grows into an all-embracing effort to realise God not only in one life but in order that a higher race of men is developed on earth.

Either life is an aimless, fruitless joke perpetrated by wicked demigods or it is moving towards the consummation of building up this race of men who would live in God.

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As a first step I realise that no one can become God-minded (*manmana*) without awakening the spirit in him. Mere thought or conduct will not suffice. If the spirit is once awakened I can draw sustenance not from desire but from the Joy which is the very substance of our existence. Then only will my egoistic nature become so transformed.

It is not easy to transform our egoistic nature. Even to begin an effort, preparation is essential. It has to consist of arming ourselves with certain essential equipments. The essential equipments are four: scripture, the resolute will, the presence and faith.

The first equipment is a *shastra* or a scripture. Without its constant recital, no step forward could be taken. The scripture may be any: the *Gita*, the *Bible*, the *Quoran*, the *Talmud*, the *Yoga Sutra*, so long as it is a source of un-failing strength. The *Gita* and the *Yoga Sutra* have been my scriptures.

Constant recital of the scripture—*svadhyaya*—is the preliminary lesson in Yoga.

it may come by the touch of God, which we call Grace.

The sacred recital of the scripture is a necessity; it cannot be dispensed with. There is nothing else that would, like the morning mist, nourish the spirit to open out to God.

The man, under the influence of Westernism, has failed himself because he has books to read, but no scripture to recite and unfold the Truth in him. And having lost this great source of vigour, his mind has become dried up like a withered bud. We need not, therefore, wonder at the present epoch which he has built; which Churchill rightly called "hideous".

A scripture, however great, is only a symbolic expression of the Truth which is in us. The recital will be a sterile exercise if it is not associated with experience. The recital has therefore to be accompanied by prayer, which thaws the ego-encrusted emotions and lets flow the life-giving waters.

Ultimately, therefore, the aspirant has to rise above the spoken or the written word—"above all that he has heard and has yet to hear", as Sri Krishna says—and live in experience sincere, humble and aspiring.

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A blind, literal obedience to the words of a scripture dries up the heart; then the Grace of God cannot touch it. It hinders the practice of Yoga.

That is why I cannot find any guidance when I read the commentaries on a scripture. Historically, as we know, the age of commentaries has never been a creative age. Experience in such ages is always replaced by learning which intellect places undue emphasis on and is always barren.

If taken literally, that is, without the help of prayers

or unaccompanied by widening experience, a scripture might give an insight into the general truths; for they remain constant from scripture to scripture and age to age. But individuals differ one from another. The temperament—*swabhava*—of each of us is a thing by itself. Every aspirant can only seek fulfilment, therefore, on the lines of his distinctive temperament. I must be prepared to find my own way for myself. This is the first freedom.

I find the way the truth that I gather from the scripture has to be worked out in actual life before I can go on to the next step. In the light of its teachings, I must try to approach every problem from my own starting-point, that is my own individual temperament and urges.

Every individual differs from another in receptivity. Each one of us should, therefore, be left free to find and follow his own path. That is the second freedom.

If this freedom were not there, constant recital of a scripture will be no more than “brain-washing”, not a creative effort of the spirit.

Let me repeat: The goal of *Yoga* in all ages and for all individuals has been the same. It is to live in God through experience; but it must be freely invited, so that He may unfold Himself in human life. The pestilential breath of psychological regimentation has always closed the gates which lead us to Him.

Each man must, therefore, be free to follow his own religion and to adopt the form and ritual which he honestly believes to be the best for his development. Sri Krishna says: “Whatever the deity he worships, ultimately the worship comes to Me”.

Following this path, every aspirant can go to Him in spite of his imperfect self. But he cannot proceed a step further if he is so vain as not to be conscious of his imperfections.

When he has shed his vanity, he comes to know his limitations. Then prayers well up from his heart. Aspirations to outgrow his imperfections then carry him to self-fulfilment by the heart opening out to God.

Then every word of the scripture lights the path to a higher experience. Then Grace descends.

He who chooses God, in this way, is chosen by Him.

How can I explain all this to my visitor?

LXXXIII

BARODA REVISITED—AN EGYPTIAN PRINCESS —ROOM NO. 20

RAJ BHAVAN, LUCKNOW
September 11, 1955

ON the morning of July 6, I heard a cheery, resonant, and affectionate voice shouting "Kanubhai"—a name the sound of which has almost reached vanishing-point in my ears. The burly frame of my cousin Pranalal Munshi—lame leg and all—heaved itself into the sitting room of the saloon at the Baroda Railway Station.

It was at this very railway station that the owner of this same voice accompanied by "Kanubhai"—a delicate, shrinking fourteen-year-old boy—landed on January 2 1902, to join the College and conquer the world. We had then just passed our Matriculation examination.

Pranalalbai was followed into the saloon by my niece, more my younger sister, her husband (again an old friend) and their family, including a chubby little grandson.

Baroda is no longer the attractive capital of a rich State, once the pride of Sir Sayaji Rao Gaekwad. It is the headquarters of a Bombay district, shrunk in importance,

to hear the *katha*, as the Puranic recital was called; the road in front became an open-air theatre; the windows of the surrounding houses, opera boxes.

The *Bhatt* recited the *katha*, which was in verse; explained many parts of it, added a flourish here, a touch there to move or tickle the audience; improvised new stories and introduced lively anecdotes. The audience sat, hour after hour, absorbed in the recital.

The description of a Puranic incident in the mouth of a competent *Bhatt* was not a story retold; it assumed a fresh form and contemporary colour. At an interesting point in the recital, he would stop and ask who among his listeners was willing to provide his next day's dinner! Normally he received invitations from more than one hospitable townsman. Having made sure of the morrow, he would proceed with the *katha* till after midnight, sometimes till the early hours of the morning.

The session continued for a month, sometimes longer. Its length depended, as a rule, upon the *Bhatt's* ability to attract a good audience and upon the hospitable nature of the locality. After the session was over, the *Bhatt* was feasted, carried in a procession through the town, and presented with a purse as a send-off.

Once I described the services of a *galaria Bhatt* thus: "He opened the floodgates of his soul; he sang of his hereditary culture. He inspired *pathashalas*; he offered prayers from village to village; he recited *kathas* from street to street; he made his songs popular in every home. He kept alive religion and a sense of historic continuity. He preserved language, literature, inspiration and ideals. And thanks to him, the immortal spirit of the culture, breaking the bonds of political subjection, triumphed in the land."

It is said that Premanand lived for as long as

ninety-eight years and that he left a number of disciples. Fifty-seven works are attributed to him. A supreme master of the art of narrative poetry, the Puranic episodes became in his hands the literature of the people, woven with pictures of contemporary life. They were full, vivid, colourful, painted with the brush of a master.

It was, therefore, with deep feelings that I stepped into the Wadi, where I am sure Premanand will often have feasted his caste-men, for in one of his works of doubtful authenticity his son says: "He (Premanand) made rivers of ghee to flow and God himself built the banks of sugar".

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On my way to the College, the events which had converted my college into a university came to my mind.

In 1925 Dr. K. G. Naik and myself founded an association for the sponsoring of a university in Gujarat. As Fellows of the University of Bombay, we fought for it in the Senate. I met Sir Sayaji Rao Gaekwad and his then Prime Minister, Sir Manubhai Mehta, and enlisted their sympathy. As a result, His Highness appointed us members of the Baroda University Commission in 1926. But when the report was ready, it suffered an eclipse; Maunbhai Metha had left the service of Baroda.

In 1943, Maharaja Pratap Singh Rao Gaekwad revived the idea at my request and appointed another Commission. This body, of which I was the Chairman, duly made its report. When the State was integrated with the Province of Bombay, Dr. Jivraj Mehta, then the Prime Minister of the State, made appropriate financial arrangements. His wife, Shrimati Hansabehn, now its Vice-Chancellor, has been fulfilling our dream. Naturally, therefore, I was very anxious to see the University.

When we drove into the park—it was called Kamati-

bagh fifty years ago—old memories came back to me: how I had gazed with admiration at the noble statue of His Highness; how I had wandered over the Museum, leisurely examining the exhibits; how I had often come to the terrace to read, recite and dream; and how in its zoo I first made an acquaintance with the animal-world in all its variety.

The zoo is still well kept. I was introduced to its latest foreign arrivals—Mr. and Mrs. Orang Outang and Mr. and Mrs. Golden Monkey.

The old pavilion, to which Sir Sayaji Rao used to come for the weekend, is now a Health Museum. With the Museum itself is associated a University School of Museology, the science and art of running a museum, if you please.

The Vice-Chancellor was good enough to meet me at the gate. When I saw this well-arranged and well-documented Museum, with its exhibits displayed in handsome cases, I could not help thinking of the Lucknow Museum, which though one of the best so far as exhibits go, is one of the worst in point of space, light and arrangement. But we shall shortly be having a new building.

As soon as I went into the Museum, I enquired after my old friend, the Egyptian Princess. I could not resist the temptation of meeting her after many years.

I have forgotten when she first came to Baroda; but when she did arrive, it was a great day for me. I happened to be in Baroda—I am not sure whether it was before or after I left College—and I immediately marched off to meet her. After that I called on her so often that I could see her dark leathery toe—the only part of her body exposed to view—in my dreams.

The Egyptian Princess has now been shifted to another room. There she lies, four thousand years old, the

Here in front was the broken-up tennis court on which I learnt to handle the raequet. It is now covered by a vast plinth on which there will soon arise a magnificent library. The old cricket ground, a little further off, is now covered with the Science Institute.

On the wall in the gallery, however, there were the familiar initials 'K.M.M.' carved by me. I stood there for a moment thinking of the old, old days. I recaptured for a fleeting moment the forgotten joys, emotions and hopes, which once were mine. It was like a peep into the life in a previous birth.

Many of the old friends, now no more, materialised before my humid eyes in living shape. I could see the cot on which I slept; the little *sigdi* on which we prepared our fortnightly tea; the table on which I read Shakespeare, Kalidas, Plato, Aristotle, and Kant; the stool in the corner where the solitary boy sat and dreamt of the future, crying his heart out in sheer loneliness.

There was a dull ache in my heart as I woke up to reality. The fresh world which stood before me then is gone, never to return, leaving only a memory like a path of living light behind.

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From there the Vice-Chancellor took me to some of the new institutions, including the University schools of painting, sculpture and dramatics. In the College of Home Economics—a very well-run institution—I saw some would-be lady graduates looking after other people's children, trying to play with them and to learn the art of being good mothers, a rare thing in these days for college girls. I hope they will look after their own children with the same solicitude.

Fine new buildings were springing up on all sides.

I met professors and students, from all parts of the country. English has not been abandoned, nor has Hindi been ignored. Evidently they have not yet disregarded the advice in that behalf which was tendered to them by the Chairman of the Organising Committee of the University.

The programme, as usual, was endless. Back to the saloon for a little rest; then off to Pranalal Munshi's to meet his family; then to my niece's; thereafter to the Congress House to meet old friends. At last came the function of the day, for which I had come to Baroda, the sixtieth birthday celebrations of my friend, Ambubhai Purani, over which I was to preside.

The Puranis and the Munshis, both from Broach, had been intimate friends for countless generations. Chotubhai Purani, Ambubhai's elder brother, was my friend in the College.

In 1904, under the inspiration of Sri Aurobindo, a small group of students pledged themselves to militant nationalism and independence. Chotubhai among them pledged himself to restore the physical vitality of Gujarati youth, which had fallen somewhat low in past decades.

Ambubhai soon joined his elder brother. Both the brothers, in the face of heavy odds, founded the *akhadas*, physical culture institutes, all over Gujarat. Ambubhai left the work when he joined the Aurobindo Ashram in 1923. Chotubhai continued the work till his death.

Chotubhai joined the Congress, but was too deeply imbued with Sri Aurobindo's political philosophy to be a pucca Gandhian. When the satyagraha movement came, he went underground, organised a band of workers, captured arms from police *chaukis*, took risks of which we,

who were safely housed in jails, never even dreamt. For a time, he practically established an enclave of independence in the districts of Broach and Baroda. He was a patriot.

Ambubhai is now one of the leading disciples of Sri Aurobindo. He preaches Integral Yoga with challenging bellicosity and is a curious blend of pugnacious bull-dog-gishness and child-like simplicity.

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I went to dinner with His Highness. I had known his father, his grandfather and his great-grand father, Sir Sayaji Rao.

In the first decade of this century, we worshipped Sayaji Rao as a great patriot. In our childish way we thought he would be the Victor Emmanuel of free India. The Maharaja was very kind to me; he looked upon me as one of the students of his College who had made good. The first time I had been inside the Lakshmi Vilas Palace was when we had celebrated his Golden Jubilee with a torchlight procession. And when the procession ended in the Palace grounds, we were permitted to roam about in the different rooms for a little while.

Then came the last function, an address to the students in the Jivraj Mehta Hostel. Fifty odd years slipped from my shoulders. I talked and laughed as if I was one of them, and so bade good-bye to Baroda.

THE GREAT MARTYRDOM

RAJ BHAVAN, NAINI TAL
September 25, 1955

ON the morning of January 29, 1948 I reached Delhi and put up, as usual, at Birla House. Gandhiji and his entourage were the only guests at the House, the host himself being absent.

In the evening, I went to report to Gandhiji as to what was happening in Hyderabad. He heard me patiently. Then Laik Ali, the then Prime Minister of the Nizam, arrived. I introduced him to Gandhiji and left. Our next business appointment was for 7 p.m. on the 30th, an appointment which I was not destined to keep.

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On the afternoon of the 30th, I had long talks about the situation with the Sardar whom I found in a very unhappy mood. He had been undergoing almost unbearable strain for days. For the first time in thirty years, differences had arisen between him and Gandhiji. Gandhiji had made distant references to them in his afternoon prayer speeches. Even the Sardar had hinted at them in a speech in Bombay.

Throughout the previous year, the Sardar had borne a very heavy load on his shoulders. He had taken great decisions which he had implemented with unique vigour. He had seen the wisdom of Partition and had accepted it. He had directed the work of several Ministries and had solved most of the complicated problems resulting from Partition. He had borne the brunt of the crisis created by the incoming refugees and by the weakening order in the

conveyed by the word '*patit*' or fallen from his high estate; that was, he was a reactionary, a traitor to the Congress, which meant, to the country: Q.E.D! Many a smaller man had been damned by such whispers. This time the target was very high indeed and Gandhiji was deeply concerned about it. He was anxious that nothing should divide the Sardar and Panditji, for in their unity lay the future of the country.

The talk between Gandhiji and the Sardar took longer than had been expected. Gandhiji, always so meticulous about time, was rather late for the prayers. He got up hurriedly and prepared himself. With his hands placed as usual on the shoulders of his grand-daughter-in-law Abha and his grand-daughter Manu, he proceeded, as was his wont, from the rear door of his room to the spot in the Birla House gardens where the prayers were held.

Suddenly a man broke through the ranks of the people who were standing reverentially on either side with folded hands. He appeared to fall at Gandhiji's feet. One of the girls tried to prevent him from doing so, but the man pushed her aside. Gandhiji's prayer book and rosary, which were in her hands, fell to the ground and she stooped to pick them up.

The man faced Gandhiji, whipped out a pistol and fired three shots in quick succession. At the first, Gandhiji staggered. At the second, he collapsed. On his lips were the words he loved most: '*He Ram*'.

The gardener of Birla House tried to stop the assailant; others overpowered him. Two bullets passed through the abdomen and came out at the back; the third one remained lodged in the lungs.

Thus the mighty one fell.



From the Sardar's office I had gone to the States Ministry to meet V. P. Menon. It must have been at about 5-30 p.m. when, as I was coming down the staircase of the Secretariat, I met one of the chauffeurs from Birla House. He was climbing the stairs, two steps at a time.

"Come, Sir, come! Gandhiji has been killed", he cried. I thought he was mad.

We rushed to Birla House. When I reached Gandhiji's room, he was lying on his bed, with blood trickling from his side. The Sardar sat close by, with an arm round the shoulders of a sobbing Panditji. Abha and Manu were weeping hysterically; Maniben was reciting the *Bhagavad-Gita*. Dr. Jivraj had just finished examining Gandhiji. Pyarelal was sitting on one side of the bed regarding Gandhiji with anxious eyes. Further off, a little group sat huddled, tears running down their cheeks.

I sat down near the Sardar. The doctor who was examining Gandhiji got up. "No use", he said, and shook his head.

I was dazed. I could not think; it was all so unreal.

I had looked in for a few seconds in the morning to pay my respects before I left. Hale and hearty, he was writing something. He had smiled at me and had accepted my *namaskar* with the familiar wave of his hand.

Now, "no use!" I was dry-eyed. The emotion which moves the heart and brings tears was numb. The silence of the room was broken by sobs and chanting.

Congress leaders, ministers and others began to arrive. No member of the Birla family was there at the time; so I collected the servants, had the compound gate closed against the gathering crowd and requested various friends to stand there to let in persons of importance. The police had arrived in the meanwhile and taken charge.

The first impact of the event was terrible. We had

been told that the assailant was a Muslim and this opened up a ghastly prospect. The next day rivers of blood would flow in both India and Pakistan. Then, on inquiry, I was assured by the Birla House gardener, who claimed to have caught the assailant, that the murderer was a Hindu.

My memory went back to a conversation which Bapu had had with some of us months before.

Someone had said, "a Muslim will kill you some day, Bapu".

"No Muslim will ever kill me", he said. "If I am murdered, it will be by the hand of a Hindu." His perspicacity was almost prophetic.

* * * *

A little later, some of us met in the Library. I remember only Lord Mountbatten, Panditji, the Sardar, Maulana Saheb, Gadgil, Jivraj, besides myself as being present; but there were several others also.

"We must arrange for his lying-in-state for a few days", suggested Lord Mountbatten. "People could then come from all parts of the country to offer him their last homage."

Some of us demurred. "Hindu sentiment throughout the country would be offended", I said. "It would be considered sacrilegious."

Someone—it may have been Gadgil—said, "If death has taken place after sunset, we can keep the dead body in the house no longer than noon of the next day."

In the meantime Pyarelal came in. "Bapu told me definitely that after his death, he was to be cremated according to the Hindu rites", he said. That clinched the matter. The funeral was fixed for the next morning.

H. M. Patel, a military officer, and I went to select the spot where cremation should take place. We selected the Rajghat as it could accommodate a future monument, and that is where Gandhiji's *samadhi* stands at present.

I returned to Birla House at two in the morning. I could not close my eyes; I was too stunned. I went and sat for some time in the room where Gandhiji lay.

The whole night long crowds were collecting outside. I found their shouts annoying. Surely they could feel the gravity, if not the solemnity, of the occasion. From early morning, crowds kept arriving. They roamed through the house and pressed towards Gandhiji's room to have his last *darshan*. I posted volunteers to regulate the crowds, formed a queue of visitors to the room in which the body was lying, and had the remaining rooms locked up. I had to be, in Campbell Johnson's words, 'a self-appointed organiser'. The crowds outside the house were insisting on having a *darshan* of Gandhiji and in the end we took the body upstairs and placed it on the balcony. It was a frantic multitude of crying women, hysteric children, sobbing men and curious *darshan-wallas*.

At last, we placed the body on a gun-carriage and covered it with the national flag. Gandhiji's face was serene. His eyes appeared closed as if in prayer. The Sardar and Gandhiji's son, Devadas, sat near the body with Sardar Baldeo Singh in front. The girls stood by the side. The carriage moved on. We had arranged for the maintenance of order on the roads but pressing and ever more pressing crowds made it impossible to maintain it.

The carriage moved on through the Kingsway of Imperial Delhi with the military pomp of an Emperor's funeral. At the same time, the spontaneous grief of vast

crowds made it what in fact it was—the saviour's last journey. The greatest living man had walked out of life in a way few had done before him.

Sri Krishna had died full of age and divine honours, but by the arrow of an obscure hunter. Socrates had died of poison, the victim of the hatred of his own people. Jesus had died on the cross crucified by the venom of his own people.

Gandhiji died at the hands of one of his own people whom he had led from darkness unto light. He died at the height of his popularity and power and while enjoying the spiritual leadership not only of India but of the whole world. He died in a manner which befitted a spiritual leader of all time, while going to prayers, with the name of God on his lips.

As he lived, so he died—with majesty and grace—and the undying halo of a martyr was about him.

* * * *

By that evening, when the funeral was over, I had recovered from the stunning effect of the blow. I felt alone, terrifically alone, almost desolate. For a moment I felt crushed. There was no one left to whose guidance and abiding affection I could look.

Panditji and the Sardar also suddenly awoke to a new responsibility. They could not forsake the people who looked to them both for guidance.

In death, Gandhiji had worked a miracle, even as he had done so many times in life.

* * * *

In these times few can realise what a terrible calamity widowhood then was. Girls of high-class Hindu families, who had mostly been married in childhood, could not remarry if their husbands died. They were doomed to spend the rest of their lives with their parents under the most rigid monastic control. On festive occasions they were walking omens of evil, to be shunned by all. The home where they lived had to be cheerless. My father, for instance, never sang a song or played upon *tabla* as he had been used to do after this calamity overtook us.

I have a vivid memory of two days in the week or fortnight when my blood boiled with rage and anguish. Custom enjoined tonsure for the widows. The day before the barber came to shave my sisters and on the day itself, everyone in the house was wretched. My sisters sobbed aloud both days and my mother's eyes were swollen with tears. When my sisters sat with heads bent before the barber, they cried as if their hearts would break; they had such a horror of the trial. And these wretched days followed at inevitable intervals. After my father's death a few years later, my mother, past middle-age though she was, broke the tyranny of this brutal custom.

My mother found an escape from all this by writing profusely. She could neither spell words correctly nor did she know the use of fullstop or comma. But she poured out her heart spontaneously in poems, *bhajans*, notes and discourses. To do so was a temperamental necessity for her.

My mother also wrote out summaries of the English novels, the stories of which my father told her.

In addition, she always kept accounts. She was very particular about money. She kept track of every pie that came in or was spent in little booklets which she stitched into shape herself. At the end of every year, and of every five years, the results were carried into balance-sheets.

In her autobiography, Mother wrote about herself as if she was someone else, referring to herself by her name Tapi, the Gujarati corruption of the Puranic Tapti, the daughter of the Sun-God.

* * *

The narrative begins in the early decades of the nineteenth century.

“Rupbai was charming, intelligent and wise. She ran the frugal household of her husband carefully. In addition, she tailored clothes for others; that brought a little additional income to the family.

“She was slim and fair-complexioned. When she was well-advanced in years, a daughter was born to her, who was named Kesar.

“Kesar was married to Chimanlal, a descendant of Nandlal Munshi, who had in old days received the grant of ‘Munshigiri’ from the Mughal Emperors.

“Rupbai was very poor. When her husband died, she had not even money enough to perform his last rites and had to borrow from a relative for the purpose.

“On Shravan Shukla Saptami, Samvat 1911 (A.D. 1855), Kesar gave birth to a daughter who was given the name of Tapi. The child was healthy and had inherited the fair complexion of her mother. Her nose was pointed. Her eyes were like those of her father.

“When Tapi was four-and-a-half months old, her mother died. Rupbai then began to bring her up. Her father was young. His elder brother (who held a high office in the Baroda Service) engaged for her a maid-servant, who was paid Rs. 4/- per month, besides being given her food. Whenever the maid-servant was absent, Rupbai fed the child herself. Even the neighbours in their

family lost prestige, and he himself was branded as an undesirable. This custom was in vogue even sixty years ago. When I was eight years old as a new fledged Brahman, I rode in a procession followed by a three-year-old wife-to-be.

This occasion, however, was not without its peculiar troubles. Mother, dressed in a gold cloth dress, had to be carried to the Heights on a mare. The dress was borrowed from a relative, who at the last moment, refused to lend it. Moolchandbhai was very angry.

“Is he the only man with money?”, he shouted, and promptly called for a tailor. Brocade was immediately purchased, cut to shape and hurriedly stitched.

This unexpected event delayed the departure of my mother to Munshi Heights to join the procession. In the meantime, the mare, hired for the occasion, which had been sent for her, had been taken away for some other procession. Mares were always in short supply for such occasions in Broach. Grandfather sent a palanquin instead, to fetch the bride.

A young uncle of my mother's was indignant. “Go and tell Narbheram to send a mare for the bride,” he shouted. “If he cannot arrange one, he must carry his son in the procession by himself. I shall not allow my niece to be taken in a palanquin”. At last, a mare was procured and wearing her new garments, mother joined the procession.

What a shuddering prospect! If a mare had not arrived in time, mother would not have joined the procession; the betrothal would have been broken, and I should have remained unborn! An English king shouted: “My kingdom for a horse!” Had I known of this incident, I would have shouted: “A birth for a mare.”

Within a few months of this event, Rupbai died and my mother went to live with her father's sister. The narrative proceeds:—

“In 1863 Tapi was married to Maneklal. Both the Munshi families celebrated the occasion with rejoicing and feasts. Fire-works were displayed; music and dancing parties were held.

“By then, the first school for girls had been started in Broach. It was held in a portion of the boys' school. The pupils who attended it were provided with slates and pens free. Tapi studied there upto the third standard.

“After her marriage, Tapi went to Dohad where her father was employed, and continued her studies. On his return from office, her father gave her some tuition. Tapi, in her turn, taught her step-mother how to read and write.”

Mother was then sent to Broach to live with Rukmini, the daughter of Moolchandbhai, a hard-hearted lady who disliked both my mother and her father. Then continues the narrative:

“The uncle who loved Tapi was in service far away. Her father's sister was the only other person who cared for her.

“But, when Tapi was eleven years old, her father's sister died too.

“Without a mother, uncared for by her father, helpless Tapi lived at the mercy of Rukmini. When the family went on a pilgrimage, Tapi was treated no better than a dependant. She was made to work very hard indeed. Whenever there was a death or some difficulty among the relatives, she was sent to help them and there again she had to work hard. If any of the ladies in the family were in child-birth, she had to work as an attendant. She had also to look after Rukmini's two daughters, give them their

daily bath, feed them, lull them to sleep and wash their clothes. Even when she went out to a caste feast, she had to take them with her.

“*Ashad Shukla Ekadashi* is a sacred day on which Tapi kept her fast and vigil. As a result, she got fever. No medical aid was given to her and her temperature persisted.

“Then followed the month of Shraavan, when feasts are generally held almost every day. The daughters of her uncle went out for dinner every day, leaving Tapi alone. Even on the Janmashtami day (the birthday of Sri Krishna), a day of great rejoicing, Tapi had high temperature, but she was left alone in the house. The doors of the house could not be left open for fear of an intruder. So her cousins locked the doors from outside and left the keys with a neighbour.

“Tapi was alone in the house. Her temperature came down a little and she began to cry. The love which her mother and her father’s sister bore her came back to her mind. She cried ‘Oh, God, if my mother or father’s sister had been alive, they would never have left me alone in such a condition. At least one of them would have stayed by my side. If they had wanted to go out, they would have done so by turns. Who cares for me now? There is no one to whom I can even open my mouth.’ She went on crying piteously, but there was no one to listen to her.

“But God is great. He is everywhere. The front door was suddenly opened and a lady came in. She called Tapi by name and removed the cloth with which she had covered her face. Masi (Mother’s cousin sister) was standing there. She gave Tapi water to drink and made her sit up. She said, ‘My child, I was passing by the way; I found the doors locked; I felt you could not have gone out with such high fever on you. The neighbours told me that all your cousins had gone out to dinner and had left

you locked indoors. Could anyone have left you alone in this condition? Suppose you had died in the meantime. I will take you with me and keep you with my brother and look after you.'

"Masi dressed Tapi, lifted her in her arms and carried her to her brother's house."

There Mother was given treatment. It took her two months to recover from her illness.

In 1867 my mother was twelve years old. She was then sent, according to the custom then prevailing, to her husband's house. This did not mean that she was allowed to meet my father or to talk to him. The narrative continues:—

"When Tapi went to her husband's house, her only possessions were a *sari*, a *choli* and a few odds and ends. Maneklal was then fifteen years old and was studying English. As there were no facilities in Broach for further study, it was decided to send him to Ahmedabad.

"When Maneklal arrived at the station to catch the train, Tapi and her step-mother with two of her sons were already there; they were leaving for Baroda by the same train. For the first time Maneklal and Tapi had a chance of seeing each other, and they liked what they saw. Now and then they even exchanged glances with each other. This continued till Tapi and her step-mother left the train at Baroda.

"The climate of Ahmedabad did not suit Maneklal. He fell ill and had to give up his studies. He returned to Broach and was soon busy nursing his father, who had also fallen ill."

"In the meantime, Dayana, (my grandmother), had a fall and was confined to bed. The charge of the house was taken over by my father's elder sister, the fiery Rukhiba. Tapi's lot was pitiable. She had to suffer

endless abuses and insults, and to work at one house or the other the whole day," says the autobiography.

In those days—why, even fifty years ago—the daughter of a respectable family could not spend the evening at the house of her father-in-law. She would come away to her parents in the afternoon and, after a pleasant time, would take her evening meal, dress herself in nice clothes and a little later, would be escorted back to her husband's house. The custom was deep-rooted. If a girl did not go to her father's house in the evening to take her meals, her family and with it, herself, would be looked down upon. My mother continues the story of her woes:

"Tapi could not spend the evening on the Munshi Heights, lest her father's prestige, and with it her own, should suffer. But when she went to her father's house, her cousin Rukmini would see that she had only hard work and harsher words. To escape this evil, Tapi adopted a little stratagem. She would leave her father-in-law's house in the afternoon and proceed to her father's. There she would tell her cousin that she would be taking her evening meal at her father-in-law's house. Then she would come to the house of her mother's sister; there also she would refuse to take the meal which was offered. She would say that she had taken it at her father's house. Then late in the evening she would go to her father-in-law's house, where again she would say that she had already taken her meals at her father's house."

In this way, my mother, a girl of fourteen, a child as we count the age now, lived for months on one meal a day in order to maintain her father's and her own prestige.

Her trials, however, came to an end.

One afternoon, mother was leaving to attend the wedding festivities at a neighbour's house. As was her wont,

she began to take Rukmini's little son with her. Rukmini was wild with rage. She abused mother and snatched the boy away from her. Mother felt hurt, humiliated and crushed. She left her father's house and went to the house of her husband's younger sister, the only soul who loved her. Then she went to her father-in-law's house and had a change of clothes, a humiliating affair. It was too much for her. She could not find happiness. When she met my father, she broke down and told him her story with tears; how her world was treating her; how she had foregone her evening meal for months.

My father consoled her and promised her that she would have to suffer no longer.

And in this way was laid the foundation of a deep love, rare for those times, which remained unbroken till 1903 when my father died.

LXXXVI

A LANDMARK NOVEL—ITS AUTHOR— MODERN ATTITUDE TO LIFE

RAJ BHAVAN, LUCKNOW
October 23, 1955.

I AM writing to you about a great novel, a landmark in modern Gujarati fiction and its author.

Born in Nadiad a hundred years ago, Govardhanram belonged to the Nagar caste which has an ancient history going back to the Classical Age of the Gupta Empire. In the course of fifteen hundred years, it has thrown up statesmen, warriors and men of learning, the names of some of whom have survived in old records. Among them was Someshwar, the author of *Kirtikaumudi*, a historic *kavya*

and the priest of the royal Vaghelas who saved Gujarat in the 13th century.

Thirty years before Govardhanram was born, a new life had dawned for Gujarat. In 1828, the first Gujarati daily newspaper was published in Bombay. Soon after that, the Elphinstone Institute was founded, where the first generation of Bombayites studied English and established intellectual contact with the West. Dadabhai Naoroji was their friend, philosopher and guide.

This handful of men who studied at this Institute, developed a burning zeal to re-build life on new foundations. Narmad, the first of the moderns in Gujarati literature and a darling of the Buddhi Vardhaka Sabha, founded by these young enthusiasts, revelled in rebellious thoughts and sang wildly of love and adventure.

Then came the Great Revolt of 1857 and the face of India was changed. In that year, the University of Bombay was founded and the intellectual horizon of Western India began to expand.

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When Govardhanram was born in 1855, Nadiad, his home-town, was a citadel of high orthodoxy, dominated by devout Brahmans. Some of them were learned; some, specialised in state-craft in Kathiawad (now Saurashtra); some, like his father, carried on business in Bombay.

Govardhanram's father, however, lost heavily in business and, plunged from opulence into poverty, dedicated the rest of his life to the worship of God. Meanwhile, his mother remained strong-minded and worldly-wise.

In 1861, Bankimchandra Chattopadhyaya, the father of the modern Indian Renaissance, published his first novel, *Durgeshnandini* and it was at this time that the first breath of the new literary impulse also swept over Gujarat. In

1865 Narmad published a collection of his Gujarati works. In 1866 was published the first novel, and in 1867 the first adaptation of a Moliere play in Gujarati.

Govardhanram joined the Elphinstone College at the age of seventeen. There he was to receive the inspiring guidance of Dr. Bhandarkar, the most profound of Indian scholars, and of principal Wordsworth, the great educationist. He also came under the influence of the budding patriots, Ranade and Telang.

In this world of high aspirations, Govardhanram acquired a zest for learning and an enthusiasm for the uplift of his world. His studies ranged over a vast field, which included Sanskrit literature, Old Gujarati and English, the history of India, England, Rome and Greece and the philosophy of both India and Europe.

The first object of the university curriculum in those days was the development of the mind and the formation of character. Restricted and specialised courses, more informative than formative, had not yet come into fashion.

Govardhanram also came under the influence of Mansukhram, an older cousin of his. A man of the world, a scholar and an author, Mansukhram had rescued old Gujarati literature from oblivion and founded the 'Astodaya' school of thought, which was pledged to the revival of the ancient order of things. His house in Bombay was a great centre of attraction for the literary, men of learning, officials and ministers of states.

Though Govardhanram learnt many things from Mansukhram, he had a rare maturity of outlook even in his youth. His examination of all that was old and new was dispassionate enough to enable him to sift the eternal from the transient. He came to the conclusion that life and character could only be satisfactorily built upon old cultural

foundations and that revolution was destructive, never creative.

Govardhanram took his B.A. degree in 1875. For want of means, he served in the Bhavnagar State for some years, so that it was 1884 before he took his LL.B. degree. He began his practice as a lawyer on the Appellate Side of the Bombay High Court in 1885 and in ten years he had risen to the top of the profession and earned enough to pay off his father's debts.

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Even from boyhood, Govardhanram had to face trials. His family was poor; his home was dominated by a pseudo-saint and his mother could scarcely be said to err on the side of softness.

Before Govardhanram was born, his mother had agreed with a friend of hers that, should they give birth to children of different sexes, the two should be wedded. The children were of different sexes and the marriage duly took place in 1868. As is not uncommon in Hindu families, there was endless conflict between his mother and his wife and the soft-hearted son and husband suffered endless torture.

Govardhanram had a loving temperament. In the college he made friends with whom he was deeply attached. In his family circle, however, where he wanted to love and be loved, he was unfortunate. When he was only nineteen, his wife, to whom he was devotedly attached, died. This gave him a great shock. His tears found expression in Sanskrit and Gujarati verse. He almost made up his mind to leave the world and become a sannyasi. But this temporary mood gave place to a stern decision to dedicate his life to high purposes.

At the age of twenty-one, when most men are looking

forward to a life of happy adventure, he took three pledges: "I will not take service, but will follow an independent profession; I will earn enough to pay off my father's debts; when I reach the age of forty, I will retire and dedicate myself to literature." At the age of twenty-two, he took the decision to lead the ascetic life of *Pravritimaya San-yasa*, that is to say, to dedicate himself to selfless activities. He became a *Karmayogi* and scrupulously fulfilled the pledges taken in immature years.

Govardhanram married again and had children, but fate had little mercy for the cravings of his heart. At the age of thirty, death took his sister, whom he not only loved dearly, but who had inspired him to write his great novel. The anguish of his heart again found expression in a poetic outburst and he sang: "The very purpose for which mine eyes saw light is gone."

At the age of forty-seven, one of his daughters, to whom he was passionately attached, also died. His diary records the event with pathetic simplicity: "At 5-30 p.m. my poor Lilavati died after a strainless, spotless life of suffering."

Govardhanram once wrote: "To the man who seeks pleasure in the work of others, work is duty". And in spite of financial struggles, family calamities, general ill-health and serious illnesses, he never allowed himself to be deflected from his goal. His life was one of unshed tears, but the sweetness of his temper remained unembittered and his sense of duty never wavered. Tirelessly he studied, wrote, and gave of his best to Gujarat.

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Narmad, the first of modern Gujarat's literary men, had a romantic temperament which was characterised by free movements of the imagination, a deep-seated horror of

convention and an inveterate tendency to exaggeration. He believed in the dignity of man and in his right to fight, struggle and love as he wished as well as in the divine right of the literary artist to be a law unto himself and to sally forth in quest of beauty on untrodden paths.

His temperament was egotistic; his creative power limited, and he was denied the sense of delicacy. Therefore, whatever he wrote was more or less superficial.

In 1887, a year after Narmad's death, two works of genuine creative art appeared in Gujarati. One was Govardhanram's novel, *Saraswatichandra*, Part I, and the other was Narsirao's *Kusum-mala*, a collection of poems.

Saraswatichandra, which was ultimately published in four parts, is not a single novel, but four different novels under one name, tied together as one work by a very thin plot.

Part I of this voluminous work is a novel by itself. It is a saga of the new life of India in the eighties of the last century, with all its beauty and ugliness. With this, Gujarati literature stepped into that glamorous world of Romanticism, which Rousseau had been the first to explore.

Saraswatichandra, the son of a rich merchant of Bombay and himself a young lawyer, loves his fiancée, Kumud Sundari dearly. He is however too sensitive to fight for her. Instigated by his step-mother, his father reprimands him for his fondness for Kumud. The hyper-sensitive young man leaves his home and bride-to-be to embark on an aimless journey under an assumed name.

On his disappearance, the sweet and accomplished Kumud is married to a stupid and dissolute son of Budhidhan, a high official in Suvarnapura, a state in Kathiawad. Curious to discover how Kumud reacts to her new situation, the hero visits Suvarnapura under his assumed

name. Once there, accident brings him into contact with Buddhidhan, whose hospitality he accepts.

The lovers meet under the roof of Buddhidhan, but Saraswatichandra's presence in the house makes Kumud doubly wretched. Tragic in her dignity and self-restraint, she seeks him at midnight to make a last appeal to him not to waste his life in aimless wanderings. Her pathetic struggle with herself is the great feature of the book.

When Kumud Sundari comes into Saraswatichandra's room, he pretends to be asleep. However, he lets her take from his hands some verses addressed to her. Some of them run as follows :

“My noble love! You have lived through untold sufferings. But forget the unforgettable. Submit to the decrees of fate. . . . I am now irresponsible, moving about in changing guise. I am like a roving butterfly. I will wing myself at will as the birds do. I will do as do the waves of the sea. Neither high nor low will I move; my flight will be like the clouds, unsupported and aimless.”

Kumud begs the hero to go back to his normal life, but in vain. Next day he leaves Buddhidhan's house to resume his wanderings.



In this work Govardhanram portrays for us the little world of his time: diplomats steeped in the ruthless intrigues of Kathiawad; the noble old-world woman who loves her children and worships her husband, the typical selfish step-mother and the ill-educated businessman.

Saraswatichandra is the product of the new university education. A visionary, studious of self-perfection awakened to an exaggerated sense of independence, he is too self-righteous to adjust himself to the realities of life and too

timid to face its conflicts with courage. He always wishes to do right, but usually ends by doing wrong.

Kumud Sundari, the heroine, is a new woman. She is hypersensitive and is filled with the longings of ethereal love. But she has also the characteristic self-restraint and modesty of the Indian woman. In spite of the intensity of her passion, she keeps her love unsullied by any earthly lapse. She has the strength to face the emotional crisis with firmness.

In this novel the author has detached his inner experiences from the context of real life, has placed them in an independent world of their own and has recreated them for us in the experiences of his imaginary character. While this world, as it should be in genuine creative literature, is covered by an illusion of reality, it never sinks into naked realism and is never found devoid of the colour and harmony which imagination imparts to a work of art.

In a novel like this, romanticism is the appropriate medium. It is the positive expression of the modern attitude to life which accepts the intrinsic reactions of the human heart as fundamental.

This attitude, which constitutes modernity, arises from the courage of man to face emotional, intellectual, social and spiritual truths as they are.

With this courageous attitude, romanticism approaches the three mysteries of life: man's relationship with man; man's relations with the supernatural powers; and man's relations with woman. It finds life itself in all its varied richness the supreme end of creative art, and makes the inner life of the individual the central theme of literature.

Govardhanram, in this novel, was the first of the great authors of modern India to display the courage to face this inner experience and in doing so, to tear asunder the veil

which had enveloped him. He opened the portals of his heart and in doing so made us masters of our own.

* * * *

It is in this novel also that Gujarati prose became, for the first time, a fitting medium for the conveyance of inner experience. In order to achieve this end, the author had to press into service the traditional style of Sanskrit prose works, the vigour and expressiveness of the English language, the idiom of the old-Gujarati masters and the homely phrases current in the ordinary life of the day. These elements, which often tended to flow apart in this novel, were to attain a vigorous harmony thirteen years later in Part IV of the work.

This book was hailed by Gujarat with great enthusiasm, for it was the first outstanding novel of real life in the language. Love, romance and adventure had at last been artistically presented to the growing reading public in a Gujarati form by means of full-length portraits of real men and women.

In 1892 Govardhanram published the second, and in 1896 the third part of his work.

In 1898, true to the pledge that he had taken years before, Govardhanram retired at the height of his professional career and devoted the rest of his life to literature.

In 1900 was published the fifth and the final part of the work. Parts III and IV were intended, as the author himself says, to evolve a harmony out of "the varied conflicts of life and thought at present visible all over India" and to bring about a fusion, not only of the two civilizations of the East and West, but of a far different Indian civilization.

All his life, Govardhanram had been preparing for the

final effort. He had studied literature and philosophy. He had examined the underlying values in domestic relations and social and political institutions. He had tried to understand the urge towards religion and God.

His approach was characterised by a rare maturity. His early conflicts had given him the power to understand and appreciate conflicting points of view with sympathy. He had viewed the past and the new, and evolved a gospel of judicial adjustment with the new life and its problems. Naturally, therefore, before he had reached the age of fifty, he had come to be accepted as a sage in Gujarati life.

Alas that it was not given to him to feel the boundless joy which heeds no challenge, nor the sense of fulfilment which comes of the dreaming of mighty dreams, for this aspect of the romantic temperament was inaccessible to him.

In 1905 he was elected the president of the first Gujarati Literary Conference, and in his presidential address he gave expression to the new consciousness which had been coming over Gujarat.

In 1907 when he died, what he had planned, thought and taught, had become woven into the mind of Gujarat. And no greater success can a man achieve.

I consider it to be my great good fortune that it is given to me to pay my humble tribute to one of the great architects of Gujarati life, when Gujarat celebrates his centenary on October 26.

A FANTASTIC CASE—THE RATLAM CONSPIRACY
—AND THE COURT

RAJ BHAVAN, LUCKNOW
November 6, 1955

OF the several strange cases which I have conducted, the strangest was that of the "Kachauri"; a case in which one of those eatables was a deciding factor. If you come from Gujarat or Rajasthan, you would at once know what a delicacy *kachauri* is. If you do not, go there and eat it.

The manner in which I undertook, argued and won the "Kachuri" case was more fantastic—believe it or not—than anything in a Gilbert and Sullivan opera.

* * * *

In the middle of December 1941, Kanaiyalal Vaidya, an office-bearer of the States Peoples' Congress, brought me a letter from Gandhiji. It asked me to appear on behalf of the appellants in the conspiracy case, then before the Privy Council of Ratlam, a small princely state now merged in Madhya Bharat. "By advocacy you can only achieve what is possible", wrote Gandhiji, "but by your going there the poor prisoners will find some comfort. Meet the officers there and spread the cult of mercy even by going out of your (professional) field".

The case was fixed—I think—for December 20th; I may be in error by a day or two.

In this case, seven or eight persons, including a local doctor and lawyer, had been tried, convicted and sentenced, some to no less than seven years' rigorous imprisonment. The charges against them included the charge of attempting to overthrow the lawfully-established Government of His Highness the Maharaja Sajjan Singh of

Ratlam. One of the accused had died in jail. The people were terror-stricken. The Praja Mandal was practically dead. No local lawyer had the courage to come forward to defend the accused. Even a Bombay lawyer who had come to defend the accused in the Sessions Court had to leave Ratlam in a hurry because of a threat conveyed to him. The less said about the nature of this threat, the better.

With these words Kanaiyalal flung at me—no other word is appropriate—a huge pile of papers. The judgment—thank God—was in English. The depositions of dozens of witnesses and scores of the documents were in Hindi: not typed or well-written, but scrawled in those hieroglyphics which each individual writer of Hindi invents for himself when he begins to write the Devanagari script without the top-line.

What prevents them from adopting the clear, legible Gujarati form of the Devanagari script without the top-line is difficult to understand. At a recent conference held at Lucknow, the general opinion was that the standardised Gujarati form should be adopted whenever Devanagari was written without the top-line. There was considerable opinion in favour of it; but there was strong opposition, too. Perhaps it was a case of local pride.

I was in despair. I had to be in Idar to conduct a heavy appeal the day following the date on which the Ratlam case was fixed. How on earth was I going to do the two heavy cases at the same time? And how was I going to wade through this huge pile of indecipherable documents? But Gandhiji's wishes were always commands.

I wired to the Maharaja of Ratlam—I did not know him personally then—to grant me an adjournment of the case. In a few hours the reply came that no adjournment would be granted.

I then wired to His Highness to be kind enough to accommodate me in the State Guest House. The next day came the reply. The State Guest House was not available, but accommodation was reserved for me in a hotel with the distinguished name of 'Savoy'.

I also contacted on the phone Moolji Sheth, the proprietor of the Sajjan Mills at Ratlam, who was a great friend of mine. He had considerable influence with His Highness and knew Ratlam inside out. I had committed a mistake in taking up this brief, he said. No one in Ratlam could associate himself with the defence. The State was determined to dismiss the appeal. A trial had only been staged because there was an uproar in the Press and the Resident wanted conviction in proper form. But, as a result of my telegram, His Highness had personally come to the Savoy Hotel and seen to it that rooms were reserved for me.

I sought the assistance of J. M. Shelat, one of my ablest juniors—we call them "devils" in Bombay—now the Principal Judge of the City Civil & Sessions Court there, and handed him the file of papers in the case.

* * * *

On the morning of the 20th—I will take that as the date—Shelat and I arrived in Ratlam. Moolji Sheth was at the Station to receive me; so was Kanaiyalal. No one else was there; not even the *munim* of a leading Marwari firm, who for years had never failed to bring me a hot cup of milk whenever I passed through the Ratlam station by the Frontier Mail. Evidently the authorities had made it plain to Ratlam that I was as much an "untouchable" as my clients had been during the trial. His Highness, however, had been good enough to place a car at my disposal.

In spite of all this, Kanaiyalal had secured the

services of two lawyers from Indore to help me. But when we went into our first consultation, the prospect appeared dismal beyond words. We were told that His Highness was a good-natured and soft-hearted man, but the British Resident had dropped a hint that something must be done about the Praja Mandal leaders. The Maharaja had therefore entrusted the affairs to Shivji, his Defence Minister, who, charged with this all-important commission, had outdone himself. Local lawyers were prevented from appearing for the accused and the entire machinery of the State had worked to secure their conviction. During the trial of the case, no member of the public had been allowed to pass by the Court premises and the trial had lasted for a whole year. Bail not having been granted, the accused had been in jail all the time and one of them had died. The judgment of the Sessions Court, I was told, had been written by an Indore lawyer under the direction of the Home Minister of the State himself. One of the accused had drawn the portrait of the first accused and that had been sufficient evidence to convict him.

Shivji, the central figure in the prosecution, belonged to that caste which has for generations supplied trusted palace adherents to the princes of Saurashtra and their families. In the Sirohi case, a few years later, I learnt how the grand-parents of Shivji had come to Ratlam with a Saurashtra princess who was to be married to the ruler.

Shivji was the confidant and life-long companion of His Highness; also his comrade on the battle-fronts of World War I and on the innumerable polo-grounds where His Highness had led Indian teams to victory. However, Shivji had not wasted his youth in receiving much in the way of education. He had been brought up with the Maharaja, was loyal to him to the core, and was the only person upon whom His Highness could implicitly rely. Shivji

was a mighty person; for, he rarely forgot that, by virtue of the Maharaja's confidence, he had absolute rights over the people of Ratlam.

The hotel in which we were lodged belonged to Shivji. Spies were all over the place. It was impossible to hold consultations without some obliging waiter hovering about us. The situation was to the last degree intriguing.

* * * *

I secured an immediate appointment with the Dewan, a retired officer of the U.P., cadre, who was politeness itself.

"I feel very proud, Mr. Munshi, that you are going to appear before me", he said. "I once had the honour of having Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru argue a case before me".

"I never had the honour to appear with or against Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru in a court of law", I replied, not to be behind-hand in courtesy. "But I am proud that I am appearing before a judge in whose court Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru once appeared".

Then I told the Dewan the plight I was in. I could not do justice to the case in the four or five days that had been given to me for its preparation. I wanted an adjournment.

"I cannot give you any adjournment whatever happens", he said.

"Then you must make your choice", I said. "You know that the case has created a sensation in the Press. I am appearing for the accused at the instance of Gandhiji. If you do not give me time to read my brief, I shall ask for an adjournment in open Court. If you still refuse to give me an adjournment, I shall withdraw from the case altogether. This—your refusal—will be advertised

all over the country and I assure you that neither the Ratlam Government nor the Court will come out well of the encounter”.

My argument went home. The Dewan thought for a while. “Look here, Mr. Munshi”, he said, “we are in a difficulty. On the 1st of January, if the appeal is not being disposed of by us, it will go before a joint bench under a new arrangement. So whatever happens, we are determined to decide this case before the 31st of December.”

I grasped his point; the case was too bad to go before an outside bench.

“I am not here to inconvenience you”, I said. “Give me an adjournment for five days. I shall finish my case at Idar and return to Ratlam. And I promise you that even if it takes whole days and nights we will finish the appeal before the 30th. You can then deliver your judgment on the 31st.” The Dewan agreed.

In the evening I paid my courtesy call on His Highness. His mother having come from Saurashtra, he spoke Gujarati fluently. Our conversation revolved round polo, of which I knew next to nothing. He showed me with pride the trophies which he had won in tournaments all over the world. His Highness impressed me considerably. I was sure that if he had had the choice, he would not have made his people unhappy.

I wanted to call on Shivji, the formidable Defence Minister also, but he had gone on a tour.

* * * *

The same evening we left for Idar. With the assistance of a Hindi-speaking assistant, Shelat began to struggle bravely with the record. His knowledge of Hindi was even more limited than mine, for it extended only to the Sanskrit words common to Hindi and

Gujarati—what may be termed the basic national language. North Indians do not seem to appreciate this fact, but the only element in Hindi which has led us to accept it as our National Language is the Sanskrit vocabulary.

Shelat—my “devil” for some years—had mastered the technique of wading through many ponderous briefs of mine and making accurate notes in a manner suited to my requirements. Many a time I have conducted long cases with the aid of his notes, as he well knew the processes of my mind. While I was busy with the Idar case, I thoroughly enjoyed his frantic efforts, morning, noon and night, to evolve some sense out of that prolix record.

As soon as I had finished the Idar case, he began to spoon-feed me from his notes. This process continued that same evening at Idar; as also in the train and during the four-hour halt in the bug-ridden waiting room at Baroda where we changed trains for Ratlam. When we reached our destination, we had scarcely a wink of sleep; my eyes were burning and my body, aching.

On our return to Shivji's Hotel in Ratlam, the atmosphere had changed a little. Some Gujarati residents were waiting for me with garlands. Moolji Sheth told me that the lawyers wanted to attend the Court to hear me; would I please make some arrangement for them? I conveyed a message to the lawyers to apply in a body to the Dewan for permission to attend the Court. The application was granted.

Immediately we were faced with—what is called in the language of the U.N.O.—procedural difficulties. The Dewan had decided that the Court should be held from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. With the greatest difficulty I induced him to change the time from 8 to 11 a.m.

“Would you mind Mr. Munshi, if, while hearing your arguments, I glanced through the columns of the *Times*

of *India?*” asked the Dewan. “I do not like the idea of being late with the current news.” I said I had no objection.

The other difficulty was about our dress. We were expected to be garbed in the formal dress of the State with a saffron safa (turban) tied over our heads. However, the rule was relaxed on our paying a fee of Rs. 3/- each. Shelat was miserable. He had never seen me in a saffron safa and as a loyal junior, he wanted to have the luxury of his senior adorned with a flaming headgear.

The Court had been set up in a small ante-room of His Highness's Palace. But in order to invest it with judicial dignity, the huge gold-plated sofas and chairs and velvet curtains had been removed. Furniture of a kind generally found in cheap restaurants in a small town, had been moved into the court room. Forensic dignity had been provided by the spreading of a red cloth over our shabby table.

Our opponent was a lawyer from Indore who had been specially engaged. He took Shelat into his confidence; the fees he would be earning in this case were to be adjusted against the debt owing to the State by his father.

* * * *

Dressed in gown and bands and a Gandhi cap, I made my bow to the Court. Of the three Judges who formed the Bench, the Dewan busied himself now and then with the *Times of India* which he out of courtesy held below the table. Throughout the trial the Revenue Minister contributed an unfading, pleasant smile; he was little but a cheerful spectator, out to enjoy whatever happened.

The Home Minister, however, to whom a wicked rumour—I am sure, untrue—had attributed the final shape of the lower court's judgment, knew the case inside

out. In the beginning he did his best to lose patience, but I soon succeeded in injecting some into him.

The Dewan was an outsider. Forced as he had been in the State by the Resident, his presence in Ratlam had been deeply resented by the party led by the Defence Minister, and I could see that any hit at the prosecution provoked an ill-concealed chuckle on his part. Once when I characterized the prosecution as "baseless and a waste of public time and money", the Dewan with evident disgust, turned to the Home Minister and whispered loudly enough for us to hear, "Saksena, that is one for you." I was not slow to utilise these revelations.

At the end of the first day's hearing, the local lawyers who had been permitted to listen to my arguments, introduced themselves to me and I invited all of them to tea next evening.

From the Court I straightway drove to the *pedhi* of my Marwari client. The whole bazar had collected on the roadside to see me step out of the car. The *munim*, who had been informed of my intended visit, was profuse in his apologies for not having received me before. He had cups of hot milk waiting for us.

When we returned to Shivji's Hotel, we found that there was no chance of our being able to hold consultations in privacy. So we, the lawyers, went for a long, long walk, holding consultation in the manner of the peripatetic philosophers of Greece.

* * * *

Naturally you will ask: "But where is the *kachauri*, the deciding factor in the case?" You cannot have it unless you have the patience to wait for my next Letter. I shall then continue the narrative of this case and its Gilbertian finale.

LXXXVIII

LIVING ON RAILS—THE SARNATH BUDDHA —THE FLOODED DISTRICTS

RAJ BHAVAN, LUCKNOW

November 20, 1955

I HAVE been fourteen days on rails. Do you know what that means? It means a fascinating change in your life. Your bed-room, bath-room, dining-room and office are compressed into a few square feet of space. What a small space do we really need!

Day after day you spend your time passing through green fields and flooded river-banks. You halt at stations amidst clattering wheels and puffing engines. Now and then, when the train stops at a station, you are surrounded by the clatter of voices—the shrill impatient cries of ladies, the shouts of men and the laughter of children—all anxious to board a train or to get out of it.

The peace of your nights is shattered by piercing shrieks which passing engines emit from their whistles—urgent, pained or frightened.

Living night and day in the train, you are at first disturbed by these unfamiliar sights and sounds, but gradually they sink into your senses and you forget about them. Like the music of the spheres, this music as of a disturbed soul, becomes part of your existence.

Then there is the ceaseless patter of the rain; the sudden gusts of wind which may bring streams of water through your closed windows; the difficulty of not stumbling over each other in the narrow passages, even though we were only two; the waiters struggling in the narrow space between the chairs to serve you in orthodox European style. It is a new life indeed!

I prefaced my tour of the flood-affected areas in the Eastern districts of Uttar Pradesh by a visit to Sarnath. The place was being put into shape for next year's celebrations which are connected with the 2500th birth anniversary of Lord Buddha.

At Mulagandhakativihara I paid my homage to His relics. Then I went over the ground which was once that Deer Park where the Lord delivered his first sermon to his four disciples, and set the wheel of righteousness revolving.

I visited the original site of the Asoka Pillar with the lion capital, which is now in the Museum at Sarnath. The remains of the column are still lying there. I also saw the place where the famous image of the Sarnath Buddha had first been installed.

I then paid a visit to the ancient shrine of Sarnath, the name of which is derived from Saranganath—the Lord of the Deer. The place where it stands is picturesque. The tank in front has been re-excavated by villagers by *shramdan*, but the old temple is sadly neglected.

Then we visited the Sarnath Museum and were photographed at the feet of the famous giant statue of Buddha which was dedicated by Friar Bala. Then I stood before that wonderful image of the Sarnath Buddha and gazed at it in admiration.

I was struck by the purity of its lines which are so human, yet without any earthly taint. It is like a full-blown lotus in its delicacy and linear grace.

The eyes, perfect in shape, are closed in contemplation of a beauty which cannot be seen by mortal eyes. The eyelids look sensitive enough to open at any moment. The mouth, so delicately shaped, is lovely. It is not the face of an ascetic, nor of a man of learning, nor even of a handsome lover. It is more eloquent than the words of noble

meaning which issued from it. And with its hint of a smile, it glows with the light of a fadeless, joyous serenity.

It has a surpassing tenderness which is neither pity, nor compassion, such as we dream of as having been on the face of a long-lost loving mother. It speaks in sweet and silent accents of a bliss, self-experienced, yet infectious.

As I looked at the face, the lips seemed to me to part in a half-smile. The eyelids flickered, and the music of a world which knows no sorrow was about me.

* * * *

After a short visit to Delhi and Lucknow, we left on the 28th of August for Balrampur in the Gonda district, where we were to be the guests of the Maharaja of Balrampur, once one of the big Taluqdars of Uttar Pradesh. A very generous man, he has endowed a splendid College, one of the few to which I have been able to give affiliation with real pleasure. It is well-housed, well-financed, well-furnished—none of which characteristics are usually to be found with new Colleges in Uttar Pradesh.

Balrampur, the seat of the Maharaja and his ancestors, is only a small town, but it is very well laid out and can boast of some fine buildings. Though his *taluqdari* is gone, the Maharaja takes pride in the town and continues to give generously for the maintenance of its charm. It is a pity that such places as this, which are well-built and laid-out, should fall on evil days. The handsome buildings should be utilised for educational and other purposes.

Incidentally, I was surprised to find that the Maharaja is descended from Somavamshi Mansukhmate, the ruler of Pavagarh in Gujarat. One of his adventurous ancestors, who was entrusted with the task of clearing the eastern districts of forests by the Sultan of Delhi, did his

job so well that he was allowed to rule over what he had reclaimed.

It is wonderful how in strange places throughout India we may still see the interweaving of old traditions in a single network.

On the 29th we went to Sravasti, where for twenty-five years Lord Buddha spent four months of every year.

It is also a sacred place associated with Lord Mahavir. Being one of the chief places of Buddhistic pilgrimage, the roads are being repaired, jungles cleared and dharmashalas built for the pilgrims who will come next year to visit the shrines.

We left the main road on an elephant and went round the sacred spots associated with the ruins of the old monastery. I should have liked to go across to visit the ruins of another monastery which Lord Mahavir used to visit, but as we crossed the rice fields, our elephant trumpeted a deep note of refusal and declined to put his foot further forward. He sensed a danger which we could not see and so we returned.

* * * *

The eastern districts of Uttar Pradesh, bounded in the North by Nepal and in the South by the river Ghagra are the drainage area of the Himalayas, still in the process of geological formation. The rain that falls on the Himalayas runs down over this area through hundreds of little *nalas* and streams and scores of rivulets and in the monsoon their waters pour into rivers such as the Rapti, which empties itself into the Ghagra; and Ghagra in its turn joins the Ganga to make it mightier than ever.

Because of heavy rainfall in Nepal and the adjacent districts during the last few days of July, all these channels overflowed their banks. The rivers were flooded, the

overflow could find no escape and miles of rural areas came under water. Roads and bunds were breached and a large number of houses collapsed. Many villages came to be eroded; quite a number were marooned and people had to be rescued from them with great difficulty.

When the rains came the calamity must have been overwhelming. Imagine for a moment: The family has just risen from its evening meal. The rains begin to pour down in torrents. The roof leaks; the lights go off; the cattle have to be brought into the house out of the deluge. After a time, the incessant rain penetrates through the mudwalls of the house. Men, women and children fly from it with the cattle and all their belongings. The downpour continues with ever-increasing ferocity. Roads and gullies are flooded; the rivers rise apace. Village sites are already under water and hundreds of villagers, unable to escape in time, climb shivering to tree-tops to share their hospitality with cobras.

Though the floods had been receding for a month, the towns of Gonda, Basti and Gorakhpur were still heavily water-logged and parts of Basti and Gorakhpur appeared more like houses built in the middle of a river than on land. At all times, their open drains are filthy; now, they were water-logged and would remain so for months.

On the 30th of August we came to the very heavily affected district of Basti. In the morning we went to the village which contains the ancient shrine of Bhadesharnath. The destitute populations of the flooded villages turned out in large numbers. Kuano, ordinarily a small rivulet, had overflowed its banks and looked like the Ganga.

By means of motor-launches and with some difficulty, we reached the flood-affected village of Jogipur. Men,

women and children had collected there from the surrounding country.

Apart from the floods, the condition of these villages shocked me beyond words. Few of the men had anything to wear but a narrow loincloth and the women possessed one sari apiece and no more. The children had nothing on at all. The eyes of most of them were afflicted by trachoma or some other disease and they had never been to school.

After distributing clothes and other necessities, our party re-embarked in the launches and went down-stream to another village, again the home of poverty and hopelessness. After that, village after village told the same story!

On the afternoon of the 31st, we went to the Nadua Camp, where two thousand people from the flooded villages had collected to receive their weekly rations. Here again, there was a distribution of clothes.

On the night of 29th July, for instance, the Rapti, normally a shallow river but now in angry flood, breaks through the Nadua Bund in Gorakhpur. That same night, seven hundred men of the army and the police reach the spot in jeeps. Sandbags are improvised and heaped against the bund and they work in the dark till break of dawn. In the unceasing rain, the lights they have brought with them are extinguished. The rains, however, continue to lash the bund in fury. The villagers, wise in experience, seek safety in flight. Next day, the bund gives way and fifty villages are inundated.

In many parts of these districts, the situation is the same. Families and their cattle seek asylum with hospitable neighbours. For a day or two, they have no food and no fodder. Then the administration springs into activity. Boats are despatched to rescue marooned villagers. Relief

camps are organised where the Health Department and the Red Cross Society set up stalls for medical and health services and free food, clothing, milk powder and multi-vitamin tablets are distributed amongst the sufferers.

* * * *

On September 1st I visited two well-organised camps in Gorakhpur, one housed in the University building, the other in the Gurkha Recruiting Centre. Between them they had given hospitality to about seven hundred persons and their cattle. Shri Hanumanprasad Poddar of the Gita Press, Gorakhpur, had been supplying free food to these camps. Provision had also been made by Government for medical attendance and the supply of clothes. The women in the camps were being trained in spinning, and primary classes had been opened for children. There were also community prayers. But the direst poverty was writ on every man, woman and child.

The same day I paid a visit to Kushinagar, visiting Hatimpur Centre in the Deoria district.

In the evening of the 1st of September, we went by a rail-car to Ghun Ghun Kotha and Manjharua villages. The people from several places round had come there for rations, clothes and medical treatment. In this area, the swollen Rapti and Rohin rivers had met to form an eleven mile expanse of water and we saw several villages heavily eroded by the floods. These two rivers had changed course and, as a result, twenty-eight villages in the district had lost all their agricultural, and pasture lands.

How to find suitable land for the rehabilitation of the displaced villagers is the most difficult part of the problem of floods. The district is over-populated and there is hardly any vacant land for fresh village sites. Rivers have

shifted their courses; villages have been submerged; at the same time, new lands have appeared in the villages on the opposite bank. This is sure to lead to all kinds of conflict.

These districts are proverbially poverty-stricken and prolific. Poor in physique, afflicted by disease, always on the verge of starvation and wretched beyond words, these men, women and children, battling against nature, cling to their tiny farms for want of anything else for them to do. There is so much water and so little of cleanliness. Oh God! When will these conditions improve? When will such parts of the country change?

When I went to these districts, there was a hope that some of the crops might be saved. But in September, floods came again and I am told that those that were standing were all but destroyed.

We are passing through strange times. Floods have inundated at most the whole of North India from the Punjab to Bengal and from Delhi to Bengal. They have raised tremendous problems and put the energy and resources of our people to a supreme test.

Our planners have done the wisest thing in concentrating first on the prosperity of the rural areas, for the hopes of ten million people rest on it and with it the hope of a great future for us all.

THE "KACHAURI" CASE—THE COMIC OPERA
THE HAPPY END

RAJ BHAVAN, LUCKNOW
December 4, 1955

As I promised to you in my Letter No. 87, I resume the narrative of the Ratlam Conspiracy, which I have styled the "Kachauri Case".

The next day, we met the accused in the jail, a disgusting and vermin-infested place. They sat huddled together for they were shivering with cold that winter morning.

* * * *

The atmosphere in the Court remained the same: the Dewan now and then reading *The Times of India* which he held on his lap below the table, the Home Minister hostile, the Revenue Minister all smiles.

The same evening, I gave tea to the local lawyers, who were happy that the ring-fence had been destroyed.

As I proceeded with my argument, I referred to the evidence which went to show that the accused were preparing for the violent overthrow of His Highness' Government.

"What were the weapons?", I asked.

"Rifles", returned the advocate of the State.

I asked for an inspection of them but the Home Minister refused to give it.

The next day, as I had become suspicious, I made a formal application for the inspection of the rifles. I used rather strong language, of which I am sometimes fond, and the Dewan granted the application. The Home Minister

also acquiesced in thinking that the Dewan might be prejudiced if the inspection was withheld. The Home Minister rose from his chair, caused the bundle of exhibits to be opened and pointed out the weapons.

I walked over to the bundle, picked up one of the guns, held it up for the inspection of the Court and said: "My Lords, you will see that this is a toy-gun of Japanese make and available in the market for a rupee or two. The prosecution has evidently proceeded on the footing that the Court does not know what a 'rifle' means."

The Dewan glanced maliciously at the Home Minister, and "not all the king's horses nor all the king's men" could stop the crowded Court from bursting into laughter.

Encouraged by this discovery I asked for the target and ammunition exhibited in the case. The Home Minister walked up to the bundle of exhibits again and I followed suit. When the bundle was opened, it was seen to contain a heap of burnt match-sticks and a cheap calendar which showed the map of India with the town of Ratlam marked in red. And not a mark on the target to show that any match-stick had touched it!

The situation was becoming comic opera.

The only evidence against another accused, who had been sentenced to one year's rigorous imprisonment, was that he had drawn the portrait of the first accused. The criticism of the evidence on which this man had been convicted furnished another occasion for a burst of uproarious laughter which not even the frown of the Home Minister could control.

* * * *

Within two or three days the atmosphere in Ratlam had changed. The lawyers gave me a return party, to which they invited the judges of the Court and several

members of the public. The *munim* of my Marwari client also summoned up the courage to give a party and as our car proceeded through the town, it was obliged to stop now and then so that we could be offered *atar*.

On about the fourth day, the Gujarati residents gave us a dinner. Just as we were sitting down to it, someone ran in crying "Shivjibhai has come. Shivjibhai has come. He wants to see Mr. Munshi." A shiver ran down the spine of most of the people present; the Defence Minister had come to arrest me. I told one of my hosts to invite Shivji inside so that he might join us at the dinner. The reply that came back was that as he was not properly dressed, he would like to meet me outside.

Accompanied by Moolji Sheth I went out of the dining hall to find a big motor car standing in front of the gate: near it stood its owner in a *kurta* and a jacket of green velvet. Moolji Sheth whispered in my ear, "Shivji-bhai". Though I did not like this visitation, I assumed as cheerful an air as I could and walked up to him. "Hallo, Shivjibhai," I said. "I have been trying to meet you all these days, but never could."

Shivji replied in Gujarati: "Munshiji, I was out on tour. I am very sorry that I could not meet you before."

We walked a few paces away by ourselves. Moolji Sheth stood at a distance, a picture of unhappiness. Shivji looked every inch what he was reputed to be: an ill-educated and egregiously self-important palace favourite. But, for the moment, he appeared deflated.

"Munshiji, please accept my apologies. His Highness has taken me to task for not being hospitable to a distinguished man like you. He says that I have ruined the prestige of Ratlam by my bad manners. You must, therefore, come to tea with me tomorrow."

The next day, after Court rose, Shivji's car took me to his richly-furnished house. His welcome, a curious blend of Gujarati warmth and Malvi ceremoniousness, was effusive. Three of us, the host, his *charan* (bard) and myself, all three Gujaratis, sat down in front of tables heavily laden with tea and coffee pots, sweets and fruits. Shivji and the bard were the fans of my historical romances and they were ecstatic in praise of my heroes and heroines. I had to do my best to look as if I was lapping up their compliments greedily.

The bard then recited a few heroic poems. As we proceeded with our tea, Shivji pressed me to eat one of the *kachauris* which lay on the table in heaps. For years, I had not taken the smallest morsel of food between lunch and dinner. I explained to my host how my health would suffer if I broke the rule. But Shivji would not accept a "no". He had the best cook in Rajasthan, a world specialist in the making of *kachauris*, and these he had had specially made for me.

I thought of the men rotting in that vermin-infested jail and decided to eat a *kachauri*. For once, Shivji was right. It was the finest of its kind. But it was flavoured with green chillies and pepper, and I knew that for three days to come my system would be in flames. But duty was duty. "Better to die doing one's duty", Shri Krishna has said, and the lawyer's duty was to save his clients—even by setting fire to his system.

When the bard left us, Shivjibhai's attitude suddenly changed. He was meek, humble and flattering "Munshiji, the whole of my life and reputation is in your hands", he said in an appealing voice. "We started this prosecution because the Resident wanted it. I did my best. But now His Highness is very angry with me. The Resident also thinks that I have bungled things and he too is angry with me.

People say that I am their enemy. Gandhiji thinks that I am a wicked man. Look at this world: I wanted to oblige everybody, but I am now the scape-goat of everyone. Please save me. My life is in your hands." On and on he went in this exaggerated fashion.

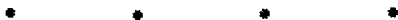
"Look here, Shivjibhai", I replied, "I have not come here to harm anyone. I only want justice to be done to my clients. If you leave it to me, I shall see that your reputation does not suffer. On the contrary, the reputation of the Privy Council of Ratlam will be enhanced and so will the reputation of His Highness."

He replied: "Please find a solution." I said, I would. "Will you come to His Highness at midnight? We do not want the Dewan to know anything of this."

"Certainly", I said.

I will be at the hotel at 11-45 to-night," promised Shivji.

We parted as friends, and he saw me off with many effusive compliments.



At 11.45 Shivji came to the hotel, with his big motor car close-curtained as for the use of pardanashin ladies. We drove to the palace which we entered by a backdoor and, after climbing up a servants' staircase, we found ourselves in the presence of His Highness who was awaiting me.

He greeted me warmly. Then, for about twenty minutes, he abused Shivaji to both his heart's content and mine. "Shivji is a wicked man", he said. "He has put me into this difficulty. I have always been a good ruler and looked upon my people as my children. But Shivji has ruined me by mismanaging this case. Now the Governor-General is making enquiries into the proceedings.

Gandhiji has sent you here. My good name is in the mud''.

I did my best to soothe his feelings. I told him that I was in Ratlam to save the accused, but at the same time, I was anxious to save His Highness' reputation.

“If you ask me”, I said, “I will give you my frank opinion about the merits of the case. There is no evidence against accused numbers. They should be acquitted. The conviction of the rest deserves to be confirmed, but the sentences on accused numbers . . . are absurdly heavy. They should be reduced substantially. As regards the rest of the accused, in no event could their sentences be more than three years in view of the precedent of the Meerut Conspiracy Case. If this is done, it would establish that the prosecution was justified and your Court independent.”

I do not know whether it was proper for me as counsel for the accused to give my honest opinion about the merits of the case. But if I had to help them at all, that was the only way.

Then I added: “If Your Highness is anxious to take a parental view of your subjects, the sentences of those who have been convicted for less than three years could be remitted on the birthday of Your Highness' daughter, which falls about a fortnight hence. After a further two months Your Highness' own birthday is going to be celebrated. This is a great occasion on which Your Highness, if you should be so pleased, may exercise the prerogative of mercy. The sentences of the rest can then be remitted. This will bring universal satisfaction. The professional agitator who has advocated some kind of sabotage is an outsider. If your Highness is dissatisfied with him after his sentence is remitted, he can be externed from the State.”

His Highness was delighted. While bidding me

good-bye, he turned to Shivji saying "Everything Munshiji has said must be carried out."

Shivji folded his hands, bowed low and said: "*Hukum.*"

* * * *

As soon as I got up the next morning, I told Shelat to gather all the papers and fling them away.

We went to the Court and I resumed my address. But a miracle had taken place. A magic change had come over the Home Minister. He was all smiles. No sooner did I make a point than he saw it and not only saw it but saw it clearly: "Yes, Mr. Munshi, perfectly right; I see your point," he would say and add "Page so-and-so of the records supports you and so does Exhibit so-and-so."

With visibility thus improved, the Home Minister not only saw point after point but also saw new ones as well. The Dewan was the only person who felt dazed.

The weather and the wind both having turned favourable, my case sailed briskly along with the Home Minister now as my pilot. By the evening we had demolished between us the best part of the prosecution case.

The change had been so sudden and unexpected that when, next day, the lawyer for the State rose to reply, he did not know where he stood. The Home Minister pounced upon him, criticised the prosecution in no uncertain terms and tore the judgment of the Lower Court to shreds. Within two hours the Government Advocate had nothing left to say. His case had been smashed by the Home Minister or rather by the '*kachauri*'.

The sudden collapse of the prosecution case had a sensational effect on the town. Many important citizens turned out to meet me and we had quite a crowd to give us a send-off at the Ratlam station when we left for Bombay.

Thus ended the '*kachauri*' case.

The judgment was delivered shortly after. My formula, with appropriate changes, was enshrined in the order of the Court. In about three months' time all the accused were free. When Kanaiyalal reported to Gandhiji on the *kachauri* case, he wrote me an exceedingly nice letter.

The professional etiquette in England affords a lady-lawyer to shed tears—of course, professional—to secure a verdict for her client. Why should I not eat a *kachauri* to secure the same result?

* * * *

The '*kachauri*' case, however, gave me a friend in His Highness, than whom a gentler man it would be difficult to find. Born a polo-player and not a ruler, he had only Shivaji as his stand-by in the wilderness of intrigues which surrounded him.

Some little time after the case, the Resident directed His Highness to extern Shivji from Ratlam. Heartbroken, Shivji left, came to Bombay and fell seriously ill. Presently, true to his friend, His Highness came to Bombay on a long visit.

A few months later, His Highness left Bombay with the dying Shivji in his saloon. The Frontier Mail halted at Ratlam the next morning. Shivji opened his eyes. Regaining consciousness for a moment he asked what station it was. "It is Ratlam" said the nurse. His eyes opened wide. He looked at His Highness who was standing near him, gave him a smile of affection and devotion, and expired.

A FRAGRANT TOWN—KANAUJ, A GRAVE OF
VANISHED EMPIRES

RAJ BHAVAN, LUCKNOW

December 18, 1955

SOME years ago, when I had been called to Kanpur for professional purposes, I asked a friend how far Kanauj was, as I was anxious to go there.

“Go to Kanauj!” exclaimed my friend in surprise. “What on earth do you want to go to that village for?”

Just then I was studying the Gujarat of the period when it was a part of the Empire of Kanauj. How could I convince him that I was already there in my imagination?

* * * *

On October 17, I went to Kanauj to inaugurate its Festival. The little town, with a population of about 27,000, is fifty-three miles from Kanpur and stands on the national highway that runs between Calcutta and Delhi.

As we approached it, we saw green fields rich with crops of potato and tobacco. It is a very fertile area, which enjoys in particular a reputation for producing excellent *attar*.

In Kanauj, *attar* is everywhere. As we entered the Municipal limits, I sniffed: the air was laden with the heavy smell of sandalwood oil. As I stepped into the half-built hospital, which had been converted into the Governor's Camp for the occasion, it was applied to my hand and my clothes. Visitors presented me with elegant little cases of it, as a sort of visiting card. The garlands and bouquets were sprinkled with it. It exuded from the clothes of everyone I met. All public gatherings—I

attended several—were invariably enveloped in a cloud of the aroma. Even at the At Home, I had a suspicion that the sugar I put into my tea-cup had the *attar* touch.

There you are. If you have never been to an *attar* town, go to Kanauj.

In his ecstatic description of Kanauj, Rajasekhara forgot to mention that it was fragrant. But Kusumpur, one of the names of the city, would seem to indicate that in the days of its glory it was already a flower garden. It may be that *attar* was not manufactured then, for it was the Sultans of Delhi who taught the people the art of making it as a solatium for the thousands of temples which they had laid in the dust.



When I reached this obscure little town, I was reminded of its past as the metropolis of India from which triumphant armies had marched to conquest; as the home of men who had founded and lost its Empires, of the poets and scholars who had thronged in its palaces, of the beauties who had sung in it and loved and inspired; as the city of a thousand wonderfully sculptured temples, the spires of which had touched the heavens. I was also reminded of the conquerors, who, from time to time, had coveted, crushed and sacked it and of the vandal hands which had made of it more than once, a vast funeral pyre.

Now Kanauj lies forgotten. Its environs are nothing but the grave of vanished glory.

From post-Vedic times, Kanauj was the centre of Indo-Aryan culture. It was reputed to be the capital of Gadhi, the father of Vishwamitra. The surrounding region, which was also called Panchala, extended from Kalpi, where Vyasa was born, to Naimisharanya in the

north, where his *Mahabharata* was recited. Draupadi was born at nearby Kampilya.

Though Kanauj continued to be an important town until the Gupta period, its political significance only dates from the sixth century, when Ishanavarma Maukhari, its king (c. A.D. 554) drove the Huns out of Madhyadesh, then, as now, the heart of India.

In the time of Ishanavarma's grandson, Grihavarman, Kanauj was invaded by the kings of Bengal and Malava. Grihavarman died in battle. His rescue was attempted by Rajyavardhan, the crown prince of Thaneshwar and the brother of his queen, but he also was killed. The younger prince of Thaneshwar, Shri Harsha, then marched on Kanauj, drove back the invaders, made it his capital, and on the ruins of the Maukhari kingdom, built the empire of Madhyadesha.

During Shri Harsha's rule (A.D. 606-647), Kanauj grew into the foremost city of India. It was the home of his biographer, Bana, the greatest prose-writer in Sanskrit, and was visited by the famous Chinese pilgrim, Hieun Tsang, who has left us a vivid picture of the emperor's personality and court.

On Shri Harsha's death, his empire disintegrated and darkness descended on Kanauj for the next fifty years. When it lights up again, Yashovarman is found ruling over it and Bhavabhuti, our greatest dramatist after Kalidasa, and Vakpati, the author of *Gaudavaho*, are living under his patronage.

Yashovarman joined hands with Lalitaditya of Kashmir in arresting the raids of the Arabs and the Tibetans. But the allies soon fell out and Lalitaditya marched on Kanauj to shatter its power once again.

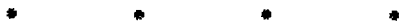
At the beginning of the eighth century, though Kanauj still enjoyed its metropolitan and symbolic

importance as the capital of India, an obscure king, Indrayudha, was ruling over it.

It was about this time that the Arabs conquered Sind. A few years later, Junayad, its governor, sent two armies under orders of the Caliph Hasham of Baghdad to conquer India. The army that invaded the north, overran Saurashtra and Gurjaradesa, but upon reaching Ujjayini, its progress was barred by the redoubtable Nagabhata of the Pratihara dynasty, who fought the invading army and destroyed it.

The successors of Nagabhata waxed powerful. Nagabhata II, the grandson of the first king of that name, entered the race for all-India supremacy which was being run by the Pala Kings of Bengal and the Rashtrakutas of the South. Kanauj was the coveted trophy, for the victor Nagabhata won it and made it his capital.

For one hundred and fifty years, four Pratihara emperors in succession ruled at Kanauj. Of them, Mihira Bhoja (A.D. 836-888) or Adi Varaha, the grandson of Nagabhata II, was the greatest. Arab travellers have left us a description of the strength and splendour of Kanauj under the king, whom they called Baurah (Varaha). When he died in A.D. 888, he left an empire to his son Mahendrapala, which extended from Sind to West Bengal. It was larger than the empire of Shri Harsha, if not of that of the Guptas.



Under the Pratiharas, Kanauj reached the zenith of its power and culture.

The spirit of the age found its expression in the relating of *Varnashrama-dharma*, which was dynamic, to a virile concept of Aryavarta. Aryavarta, says Medhatithi, the commentator on *Manusmriti*, who flourished during

the ninth century, is not limited by fixed geographical boundaries, nor is it confined to the four corners of India; it is so called because foreigners, though they frequently invaded the country, were not able to abide in it. No sanctity attaches to Brahmavarta as such; it would be a foreign land, if it were subjugated by foreigners who lived there. Impurity does not attach to the land, but to the people. Aryavarta extends wheresoever the *dharma* is enforced and maintained.

This concept was in active operation. The Pratihara emperors reconquered Sind, and it was reconverted to Hinduism. This period also saw the rise of the Shailendra Empire in Java, Sumatra and the Malaya Peninsula (c. A.D. 778-13th century), the dynasty of Panduranga (c. A.D. 757-860), of the Bhrigus (c. A.D. 802-877) and of Indravarman (c. A.D. 977-1001) in Kambuja, the dynasty of Sanjaya (c. A.D. 732-928) in Central Java, and that of Sinkok (c. A.D. 929-1007) in Eastern Java.

The dynamic outlook of the age of *Varnashramadharma* is attested by the Arab chroniclers and the *Devala-smriti*. Even though converted to an alien religion, such Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras, as had been forced to do forbidden or unclean things, could all be reclaimed by purification. A woman who had been carried away by the *mlechchas* could become pure by isolation for a few days and abstention from food for three nights.

Medhatithi accords to women a position which is in refreshing contrast to that given by some of the later authorities who wrote for the succeeding Era of Resistance. Women could perform all the *Samskaras*, but might not recite Vedic *mantras*. At partition, brothers were to give a sister a one-fourth share.

A wife is given by God, not bought like cattle or

gold, in the market; a husband has, therefore, no ownership over his wife. Before a wife could be compelled to serve her husband, he must have the necessary qualifications, amongst which was a loving attitude towards her. According to Medhatithi, the practice of *sati* is nothing but suicide, and as such is not permissible.

The high position in society which was occupied by the woman of the period is borne out from other contemporary sources. Shilamahadevi, the wife of the Rashtrakuta emperor Dhruva, enjoyed the privilege of bestowing large gifts without her husband's consent. Several queens of the Kara dynasty ruled in Orissa, while Sugandha and Didda of Kashmir, administered extensive kingdoms as dowager queens.

There were learned women as well as women administrators. Ubhaya-bharati, or Saraswati, wife of Mandana-mishra, who acted as an arbitrator in her husband's disputations with Shankaracharya, was herself a learned scholar.

We have a glimpse of the social conditions in Kanauj in the works of Rajasekhara, an ardent lover of his home town. Its women did not lag behind its men in point of education. According to the poet, there were several poetesses in Kanauj. "Culture is connected with the soul and not with the sex", he says. He had met princesses and poetesses, the daughters of prime ministers, courtesans and the wives of court-jesters, who were all "well-versed in science".

The poet's wife, Avantisundari, was an exceptionally accomplished woman and he quotes her thrice in *Kavya-mimamsa*. His *Karpuramanjari* was produced at her request and Hemachandra quotes three of her Prakrit stanzas.

Some of the kings whose names have come down to

us were highly educated; several of them were accomplished poets and nearly all of them were patrons of learning.

Every branch of literature was assiduously cultivated. There were *kavyas* in plenty and epics, romances and *champus* were composed in large numbers. Lexicography was fostered as were grammar, poetics, metrics and rhetorics.

Literary activities were also pursued in Prakrita and Apabhramsa. Works of considerable value were composed in Kannada and Tamil. But of all the authors of the period, Shankaracharya was the greatest. In addition to his philosophic works, he wrote poems of a high order.

The last literary phase of the age of Kanauj is represented by Rajasekhara himself. He lived in the reign of Mihira Bhoja, and was the court-poet and teacher of Mahendrapala and Mahipala. His works give us a vivid glimpse of himself and his times.

Rajasekhara had a partiality for Lata (South Gujarat), from which I come. According to him, it was "the crest of the earth". Its people detested Sanskrit, but spoke the most elegant Prakrita. Its women were noted for their beauty and elegance of speech while its poets possessed distinctive literary traits and favoured the style called "Lati" of which humour was the speciality.

According to the poet, the people of Antarvedi, the region enclosed by the Ganga and the Yamuna, the centre of which was Kanauj, were the ornaments of the land. They liked new and elegant literary works, the compositions of its poets were well constructed and their recitations were as sweet as honey. To him the city was the centre of the universe. As the home of the imperial Ikshavakus, who were descended from Lakshman, the brother

of Shri Ramachandra, it was a sacred place, a centre from which radiated power, fashion and culture.

* * * *

Mihira Bhoja was succeeded by his son Mahendrapala, a fearless military genius, who extended the empire by adding to it the Karnal district in the Punjab, the Nepalese *terai* and the Rajshahi district of Bengal. In A.D. 910 he was succeeded by Mahipala, who, like his father, was educated by the poet Rajasekhara.

During the reign of Mahipala, two Rashtrakuta emperors in succession invaded the north and occupied Kanauj. The last raid of Krishna III in A.D. 940 gave a shattering blow to the Pratihara Empire. Madhyadesha lay mauled and bleeding. But these efforts cost the Rashtrakuta Empire its very existence, for one after another feudatories claimed their independence. The country, therefore, had no outstanding and dominating military power and the Aryavarta consciousness was submerged beneath regional sovereignties.

In the fateful year A.D. 997, Abul-Qasim Mahmud, son of Subuktigin, developed a marvellous striking power, captured Ghazni and turned his attention to India.

In A.D. 1018, Mahmud sacked Kanauj. Rajyapala, its ruler, though styled *Raghukulabhu-chakravarti* "the world emperor of Raghu's family" was no more than a name. He submitted to the conqueror and, upon the invader's withdrawal, the dynasty of the Pratihara-Gurjareswaras was put an end to by the Chandela king, the most formidable of the erstwhile feudatories of the empire.

Kanauj was in ruins. Fifty years later, it reappears as the capital of a small kingdom ruled over by Chandra-deva. The last of his dynasty was Jayachandra,

maligned by Chand Bardai and folklore as the traitor who betrayed India to Ghori. In fact, however, Jayachandra was a brave and patriotic warrior. In A.D. 1194, he died bravely while fighting Shahbuddin Ghuri, and Qutb-uddin, Ghuri's general, destroyed Kanauj.

Thus ends the story of Imperial Kanauj.



On the 18th of October, I laid the foundation-stone of the museum at Kanauj. I climbed up to the top of a mound known as Raja Jayachand's Qila and took a spade and dug into the ground for all I was worth. In this way was inaugurated the excavation work of the Archaeological Department on the Kanauj mound.

The so-called Qila evidently must have been a twelfth century fortress on a pre-existing mound of about sixty feet in height.

Even on the surface, one of the officers of the Archaeological Department had found pieces of N. B. P. Ware of the Mauryan period and of pottery doubtfully identified with the Painted Grey Ware of the Vedic Aryans.

The ground is littered with defaced pieces of sculptures which must once have been beautiful. The few pieces which have so far been recovered intact are very promising; a dancing Ganesha and a Shiva-Parvati, sensitively carved, are masterpieces of the Pratihara period; and so is a Kartikeya with its exquisite smile, which is thought to be of the time of the Guptas. If more such fragments of sculptured images are found—as they are sure to be—they will not only add to our knowledge of Kanauj, but will establish the continuity of the artistic tradition of North India from the Gupta period till the 13th century.

AM BORN—FIGHT WITH FOOD—THE APPLE OF
DISCORD

RAJ BHAVAN, LUCKNOW

January 1, 1956

IN the Kulapati's Letter No. 85, I introduced you to Mother through her autobiography. You know all about Tapi's childhood, her marriage and her old-world courtship by Father.

By this time, the readers of these Letters are familiar with the Munshi Heights, believed, fifty years ago by the Bhargava Brahmans of Broach, to be the centre of the universe.

My father Maneklal, the third son of Narbheram Munshi, had only studied English upto the fifth standard. But I inherited from him well-thumbed copies of Blair's Belles Letters, Chambers's Elocution, Chambers's Encyclopaedia of English Literature, Locke's Essay on Human Understanding, Shateley's Rhetoric, the Poems of Milton and Longfellow, the Holy Bible and Webster's Dictionary. His notes on the margin of the pages of these books showed the seriousness with which he had studied them and I myself cannot imagine a better curriculum for humanistic studies than these volumes.

* * * *

I have already mentioned how Father and Mother became fond of each other. But their early domestic life was not without its passing clouds, particularly as Father had inherited the quick temper of the Munshis.

According to the fashion in our caste, young ladies—Mother was no more than fifteen at the time—put

vermilion paste on their forehead on festive occasions. Father disliked this custom. Carried away by social conventions, however, Mother invariably wore the paste on festive occasions.

Mother notes :

“Tapi put on the vermilion paste against the wishes of her husband. When she went up to their bed-room at night, Maneklal, who was angry, closed the doors of the room in her face. Maneklal would not open the door, nor would Tapi complain of this treatment to any one else. So, night after night, Tapi went up ostensibly to her bed-room, but spent the nights on the floor in front of the closed doors. At last, Maneklal repented and opened the door and called Tapi in.

“No one was told of this incident. A few days after, however, Maneklal had an attack of typhoid. It was so severe that he could not even move his limbs. Tapi did not leave him unattended even for a minute. She nursed him in the way he liked. This made him happy and relieved the rigour of his illness. Thus the bonds of love were strengthened between them. Both realised that they were one, partners in sorrow and happiness. Gradually, their love deepened. Separation even for a moment became unwelcome.”

Tulja, the youngest sister of my father, was a very affectionate girl and was devoted to Mother. She fell ill and on account of the irrational way in which Rukhiba, the eldest of the sisters—more of her hereafter—treated her, she died in childbed. The autobiography runs :

“Tapi was much grieved at the death of Tulja as she was her dear friend. They sat, sang, and went to the temple together. Together they dined, bathed, fasted, attended feasts and passed most of their time. But such was Tapi's luck.”

On February 23, 1873, Father went to Ahmedabad to take up the job of a clerk in the Collector's office. Some days later, he was appointed Sub-Registrar, which carried a salary of twenty-five rupees per month.

The year 1887 saw an end to most of the troubles of my parents and Mother writes:

"Tapi went to Godhara. She reached there at 7 by the direct line of the railways. When she reached home at eight, food was ready. Both husband and wife had their dinner. Then they talked till late, wrapt in great love. This was the first occasion in their life when there was peace and happiness. Their good stars were at their zenith. Maneklal had risen to a high position starting from a very subordinate post. They were free of all worries. Two of their daughters had been married. The third was only seven years of age. They had no debts to pay. God had given them everything."

The result of this happy moment was rather unexpected: myself—at least that was Mother's impression. I can now easily understand how it becomes difficult for me to repress my romantic tendencies.



The autobiography then describes the Pournima of Paush Samvat 1944, December 30, 1887. It seems that every incident of the day was impressed vividly on Mother's memory. She writes:

"Tapi had great faith in God and always followed the righteous path. So to-day she reaped the fruits of her faith and her devotion to her husband. There was nothing surprising in that she should feel happy about the birth of a son. Day and night she had prayed to God thus: 'Oh Lord, my husband has always been dutiful in supporting and maintaining his wife. It is the duty of a devoted wife

to serve her husband. When she begets a son, he becomes free from his debt to his ancestors. By Your Grace, Oh God, I perform all my duties scrupulously, and if a son is not born to me, it is only my sheer ill-luck.' ”

Now, that which she had looked forward to for years had arrived. So she thanked God over and over again.

As luck would have it, a few days after my birth, my father was appointed a Mamlatdar, one of the high ranks in Government service then open to an Indian. Mother notes: “Tapi now felt the joys which Yashoda felt during the childhood of Lord Krishna as described by the poets.”

* * * *

I have been told on very good authority that I had the faculty of impressing on everyone who came near me that I was a prodigy. With all the failures which I have had since then, I am surprised that I should have managed to do so.

Evidently the gods grudged my coming into this world. For years past Mother had prayed to our guardian god, Mahadevji, for a son, and every time she had taken vows as to what she would and would not do if her prayer was granted. But, annoyed at being treated with disregard by the gods, she vowed this time that if she got a son, she would take no vows whatsoever. And I was born.

Being a highly prized child, every one of the family tried to do his or her best by me. This gave me the habit early in life of getting everything done the way I wished. If ever anyone—sister, wife or friend—failed to fall in with this demand, I would feel like smashing up everything, or if I could not do so, I would feel almost suffocated. Life would then appear worthless to me and I would even harbour secret intentions of giving it up.

From the beginning, my greatest enemy was food I

simply could not eat. Meal-times were torture for all concerned. If food was brought before me, I would start crying. But for some reason, they all decided that I should be kept alive.

So, Mother, my sisters and the neighbours often got together to see that I was kept alive. One would try to feed me; another would ring a bell; a third would hold me on her lap; a fourth would whistle or sing a song. Sometimes I would be taken in procession from room to room or house to house. If during this process I forgot to cry, a bit of food would be pushed into my mouth. I would swallow it without knowing it and everyone was happy.

Ever since then, food has been a problem for me. If I ever doubted this fact, it was brought home to me even as late as in 1950-52, when I handed the portfolio of Food and Agriculture.

Then for two years, I moved heaven and earth to fight the food scarcity in the country. I failed, or at any rate most people thought so.

Within a few weeks of taking office, my successor found that the country was full of food and promptly introduced decontrol. Even in the surveys of the Planning Commission, I discovered to my great surprise that during 1951-53 food production had made remarkable progress.

My ancient enemy—food—though vanquished in my time, never let me or rather others discover it.

* * * *

One of my earliest memories is of a fearful night at Surat. I am tossing with fever on a small bed. A mosquito net is spread over me like a tent. I feel as if I am surrounded on all sides by burning embers. My little head is about to burst for some one is hammering at my temples. I cannot even open my eyes.

A familiar sound is heard. My little heart beats quickly. My head is caressed very softly, fondly, with inexpressible love. I know the sound and the touch. I had known them from birth. In a weak, quivering voice I cry "Mother". A cherished voice replies: "Kanu, I have come." I open my eyes with great difficulty. The lamp on the table is burning softly. By my side on the bed, I see Father and Mother sitting, talking in very low voices. Tears run from their eyes. I am curious. A question floats up into my consciousness: "Why are they weeping?"

My weak body is faint and my eyes are closed.

In the morning, when I wake up, I call for Mother. At once, Father comes to me from his bed and says: "Kanu, your mother came here last night, but she has gone back to Broach. I am here." And he takes me up in his arms.

The memory of that night in 1894 is still vivid. Father was then the Mamlatdar of Surat, where we lived near a Vaishnav temple. A great calamity had befallen us in the last few months. Two of my sisters—one 17 and the other 15—had become widows. Mother could not leave them alone at Broach. But her only son was dangerously ill: so, defying the conventions of her world, and forgetting all her sorrows, she had come to me.

I too was not to leave them so easily. I recovered from my illness.

Our family was thus shrouded in grief for a considerable time. Father, however, worked hard at his job and he was recognised as one of the few able and conscientious officers in Gujarat.

Father was never tempted into the vagaries which characterised some of the other Munshis. All that I ever heard about his younger days was that he once took to drinking with a friend. But mother persuaded him to take

a vow never to touch alcohol again and this he kept for the rest of his life.

Father was well versed in music, as a young Munshi of the Heights should be. But after the calamity which had befallen my sisters, he never sang again. He was never known to visit the house of a dancing girl, as his brothers did. He enjoyed reading English novels or sitting at home and telling Mother all about them or about the events of the day.

The love and confidence between Father and Mother almost reached the ideal. They had no secrets from each other nor had either of them a more intimate friend. At times, Father would grow irritated and angry; it was a family trait. But Mother knew the art of soothing the ire of the Munshis.

The ladies of the Munshi Heights always had a hard time keeping their lords and masters happy. Mother, however, was an adept in that art.

In that age, the devotion of the wife to the husband was taken for granted, but hardly any husband worried about the feelings of his wife. Father was an exception.

Rukhiba, the ferocious, said contemptuously of him: "Who does not know that Manakabhai is a henpecked husband?"

* * * *

There is the famous Greek legend that King Peleus gave a feast into the midst of which the apple of discord was thrown. On it was inscribed "For the most beautiful goddess." Paris was appointed the judge in the beauty contest between Juno, Diana and Venus and like the gay dog he was, he awarded the apple to Venus, because she promised him the most beautiful woman in the world. To redeem the promise, he had to secure Helen; the Greeks

had to invest Troy for twelve years in order to recover her; Troy had to be defeated and Paris killed. The Greeks won the war and recovered Helen, but lost everything they had. All that remains of this war is what Homer sang of it in immortal rhyme.

I was the apple of discord thrown into the Munshi Heights. As a result, the epic war of the Munshis began. Alas! No Homer sang of it nor was there a Helen of Troy.

XCII

THE ORIGIN AND PURPOSE OF INDIAN ART

RAJ BHAVAN, LUCKNOW
January 15, 1956

I CANNOT write about Indian Art as a student but only as one who enjoys its beauty and senses its greatness. Nowhere have I found the genius of India reflected with greater beauty than in its literature and sculpture. And nowhere has it been expressed with such unbroken continuity as in the latter.

It is difficult for me to agree with the view of various eminent scholars that Indian Art is religious. It is neither religious in the sense in which the European Art of the Middle Ages was religious; nor is it secular in the modern sense of giving no more than aesthetic pleasure. If India did not look at life in compartments, nor did its art. Our forefathers viewed existence as a whole—matter, life, mind and spirit, each involved in the other, each integrated with the other in a harmonious pattern.

Our outlook on life was based on an all-pervasive *Dharma* with four fundamental values or *Purusharthas*; *Dharma*, in the narrow sense of religious merit; *Artha*, the

attainment of desires; *Kama*, desire; and *Moksha*, the absolute integration of personality which released a man from the bondage of desires.

Both the literary and plastic arts of India have, for their aim, the fulfilment of one or the other of the *Puru-sharthas*, which must be brought into a homogeneous pattern, with the integration of the human personality as its end. In this scheme of things, nothing is omitted; even sin has a place as no more than an obstacle to be overcome.

The amorous sport of Radha and Krishna in the *Gita-Govind*, the terrifying vendetta in the *Dusshasana Rudhir-pana*, have as much a place in literature as the Apocalypse in the XIth Canto of the *Bhagavad-Gita* and the search for the All-pervading Consciousness in the *Brahmasutra*. Similarly, this unrestricted vision of existence is symbolised in art as much by the curving beauty of the foliage, the grace of the proud-stepping lion, as by the chaste nudity of the Yakshini, the ecstatic embrace of amorous lovers and the perfect calm of the liberated soul.



In India, Art found its home in the temple which was not only the physical core, but the soul of the community. It was not a monastery of the ascetic, nor the fortress of the priest claiming semi-divine powers, but the home of *Dharma*. The shapes and forms of its sculpture and the colour on its walls only recorded the heart-beats and the spiritual aspirations of a vigorous racial life.

This meaning and significance of the temple has persisted from age to age, though its materials have changed from bamboo to wood, from wood to rock, from rock to stone, brick and marble.

When the worshipper spies the spire of the temple at a distance, he breathes a sigh of relief. The journey's end

has come. As he passes through ancient trees, or looks at the river running by, or at the lake in front, the beauty of nature uplifts his soul and the sordid world is left behind, if not forgotten. As he comes nearer, he is overwhelmed by the massive front of the temple, and then by its high-springing spire. The shapes and figures of gods, men, animals and foliage on the temple walls spring before his eyes into vivid form. The varied richness of Creation is about him. Then, as he observes one figure after another and follows with interest the successive meaning of the Puranic episodes depicted on the walls, his sub-conscious mind embraces both the history and the hopes of his race. He recognises his favourite gods. His heart turns to them in thankfulness or expectation. He becomes one with them.

As he enters the temple, he is overcome by the grandeur of the inner dome. His pilgrimage culminates in the *Garbha-griha*, the inner shrine. Its coolness and fragrance, so different from the moving experience that is his, suppresses for a moment the vital movements of his body. Out of the surrounding darkness there rises before him the almost imperceptible outline of the deity as the flickering lights throw shifting shadows on it. He is overwhelmed by his own insignificance. He sees the deity, the embodied fulfilment of the aspirations which have so far remained inarticulate in him. He feels that he is in a higher world which is surcharged with divine power. He bows before the deity. He feels himself in the presence of God.

Indian Art has to be viewed as associated with the spiritual needs of the hundreds of generations the temple was intended to serve.

* * * *

The traditions of Indian Art have been continuous. In the course of time, they have assimilated new elements :

rejected old ones; evolved fresh conventions; elevated crude popular art into stylised perfection; given back the perfection in some form or the other, even to the crude art of the toy-maker. But their central purpose, and its association with the temple, have remained the same throughout.

Any division of Indian Art, as of the north or of the south, region-wise or dynasty-wise, is misleading.

When the human agency which was at work is taken into account, no other course was possible. Throughout the period we are dealing with, except in the case of Indo-Persian art under the different Sultanates of the Mughal Empire, the architect was a Brahmana. The 'Shilpa-Shastra' was as much his monopoly as were rituals or medicine. Throughout the country, he had a single heritage inspired by a mission.

The artisans who worked under the architect also belonged to certain caste-guilds which specialised in temple-building. His skill and technique were perfected by training, handed down from generation to generation. And it was the caste-guilds to which such artisans belonged that were pressed into service by the royal dynasties which were anxious to build great monuments in all parts of India. The details of the plan and technique varied from region to region, but the differences arose either because of external influences, as in the North-West of India or on account of the local traditions, or of the needs which had to be woven into art.

From the rise of the Harappa Culture five thousand years ago, till the seventeenth century when it was broken, the tradition was a living inspiration, not a dead ritual; and except in those parts of the country where Hindu art came to be denied the patronage both of the Courts as well as of the rich patrons, vitality was imparted by the

architect or the guild, by means of a change in emphasis or shape; by a re-orientation which became necessary on account of some great ruling movement, or by the genius of some great individual artist.

Though each craftsman was no more than a link in the chain of the traditional heritage which was derived from Vishwakarma, the ancient father of art, the skill and reputation of the best of them lay in the making of an image which should be instinct with life and movement. In this creative process, he had not merely to carve a copy of an older image out of stone, but to convey to his contemporaries the significance of the life and mission of the god for whom the image stood. Even that was not enough. The image had to take the soul of the worshipper to a higher plane. The craftsman had, therefore, not only to bring out the dominant character and mood of the deity, but to symbolise a soul in action so that it could speak to the worshipper and to move him to his depth and give him the hope and solace of his life.

I have not been able to reconcile myself to the view that Indian Art tried only to reveal a spiritual attitude. It was certainly not other-worldly, like the Christian art of Medieval Europe nor was its purpose necessarily to induce an inner vision. Its main achievement lay in the portrayal of life in all its variety of emotions, situations and needs. It projected the personality of the deity in relation to the movement to life.

* * * *

The roots of Indian Art can be traced to the paleolithic and neolithic ages. However, when we come to the chalcolithic age of about 5000 years ago, in which both stone and copper implements were in use, we find in India an art comparatively well-advanced for the then age of

man on earth. The culture, of which it was the expression, misnamed the Indus Valley Civilisation, dominated the river-valley settlements in the whole of Northern and Western India from the Punjab to Saurashtra.

It was a mature art as we find it in the two torsos of red stone and grey slate found at Harappa, the terra-cotta figurines of the nude Mother Goddess with heavy bust, thin waist and rounded hips, dressed in elaborate head-dress, *Mekhala* or the girdle and ornaments or *Chhanavira*, the characteristics which we see in the female figures in all succeeding centuries; in the bust of the fat priest clad in a painted mantle, perhaps the ancestor of the stone Yakshini; in the seals depicting Shiva as Pashupati, which are the earliest known ancestors of the Shiva icons and images which adorn a million temples in the present century.

It is more than likely, as is held by many scholars, that the people of the Harappa Culture had close contacts with the early Sumerians, particularly the proto and pre-Sumerians of Kish. Coomaraswamy suggests the possibility that India was the cradle of the art which later found expression in the richer art of Syria and Western Asia as a whole. It is equally possible that the early chalcolithic culture extended over the whole area, from the Adriatic to Japan from 4000 B.C. to 3000 B.C., and that the early arts of India, Sumer and Babylonia were its regional developments.

* * * *

The progress of art is always associated with the sweeping movements of the Spirit so that it would be misleading to divide it.

The Harappa Culture (*circa* 2750 B.C. to 1500 B.C.) during which the art of India first took shape, was

followed by the Vedic period (1500 B.C. to 600 B.C.).

The recent excavations in Rupar, Hastinapur, Delhi and Mathura, disclose that at about 1500 B.C. the Harappa Culture was moving in a south-easterly direction from the Indus valley through Saurashtra. At that time, the basin of the Ganga was occupied by the people whose characteristic material evidence is the ochre-coloured ware.

A century or two later, the Punjab and the valleys of the Saraswati and of the Ganga, came to be occupied by the people using the Painted Grey-Ware, now identified as the Vedic Aryans. There is ample evidence to show that the Vedic Aryans, once settled in the valleys of the Punjab rivers and of the Ganga, the Yamuna and the Chambal, had adopted the forms and cult effigies of the pre-historic non-Aryan culture to interpret their own religious ideas.

The principal object of worship of the Vedic Aryans was fire as installed in the sacrificial altar, the pre-historic ancestor of the temple. But effigies of the Vedic gods are also alluded to in the *Rigveda*, where there is a reference to one of Indra and to another of Varuna, clad in a golden mantle. The Rudra of the *Rigveda* is fierce and 'destructive like a terrible beast.' He is a 'bull,' 'exalted,' 'the strongest among the strong,' 'rapid and swift.' He is 'the unageing *Asura*,' the '*Asura* of heaven ruling heroes,' 'Lord (Isana) of the whole world.' He is also the 'wise,' 'beneficent,' 'auspicious,' Siva. He is described as possessing 'firm limbs, beautiful lips, a fat belly and brown colour' and as being 'decked with gold ornaments and a multi-form necklace.' He is *trayambaka*. His painted image is also described.

Here we have a complete image of Siva, both in words and in icon.

In the *Rigveda*, the Mother Goddess was worshipped in two aspects: *Prithvi* and *Aditi*, representing the mother; *Usha*, and later, *saraswati*, the virgin. When the non-Aryan cults were elevated into the Shiva and Shakti cult, the Mother Goddess became *Amba* the Mother, and *Lalita* the charmer of the Shakti cult.

The effigy of the Mother Goddess, as known to Pre-Aryan India, was adopted as the embodiment of some Vedic deity—perhaps *Aditi*. Material evidence to support this belief, however, has not been found so far. The coloured image of the nude goddess, recovered from the Vedic mound at Lauriya Nandangadh, has the unmistakable characteristics of the Harappan Goddess Mother, the predominant breasts, the large rounded hips and the girdle, *mekhala*, which was recognised as sacred in the *Atharva Veda*.

Though this effigy is sometimes placed about 800 B.C., it is not likely to be older than 400 B.C., as similar images were found in the *stupa* at Piprawa (400 B.C.) and Tilpat, near Delhi, at the same level.

We find from the terra-cottas the form and design of sculpture of the later Maurya, Shunga and Andhra periods were also in vogue in post-Vedic and Pre-Mauryan times, about 600 B.C. The Harappa Culture was, therefore, related on the one hand to that of the early Sumerian and Babylonian and on the other to the Mauryan Art of India.

XCIH

THE CHALLENGING PROBLEMS OF THE DAY

RAJ BHAVAN, LUCKNOW

January 29, 1956

ON January 2, 1956 Panditji inaugurated the 43rd Session of the Science Congress at Agra. In a sense it was an important gathering, meeting as it did for the first time after the Geneva Conference.

If Science can answer the challenge of the times, I have no doubt that we will live to see a better and more prosperous India within a short time.

Scientists are a close-knit community. Whether they work individually or in groups, as between them they have a common understanding of methods and a common purpose. Their work, however, vitally affects mankind as a whole. One could not, therefore, help taking note of their recent achievements, for they are calculated to bring the future on which the hopes of man are anchored.

Of all the events that have taken place in the world of science during the last few months, the Geneva Conference on the peaceful uses of atomic energy has been of monumental importance. That Conference has had a tremendous impact on world opinion. For the first time, mankind realised, may be to some extent, the implications of the revolution which was taking place in matters of health, medicine, agriculture, industry and power.

Dr. Bhabha, our distinguished scientist and the President of the Conference, prophesied that in twenty years' time thermo-nuclear reactions would be tamed. The progress which this atomic age is likely to make within the next twenty-five years, even if no new discoveries are made in this field, can best be measured by the fact that by then

U. K. is likely to turn out fifty to sixty million kilowatts, and U.S.A. 120 to 175 million kilowatts of electric power from nuclear plants.

This achievement is bound to be reflected in some degree or the other in the less advanced countries and would solve the major problem of power. Possibly, it might enable wastelands and deserts of the world to be reclaimed to some extent.

A vast field is also opened up by the recently acquired knowledge of the process of photo-synthesis which is likely to provide more food and a renewable source of fuel by utilising solar energy.

This prospect, which the scientists might even bring nearer, has a direct bearing on what I consider the most urgent problem which faces man.



Two persons are born with every second that passes. In every twenty-four hours, the population of the world increases by a hundred thousand; in a year it would increase by 36.5 millions.

In the overcrowded and underfed parts of the world, the population in India and Japan annually increases by 1.3 per cent; in Egypt by 2.3 per cent; in Ceylon by 2.8 per cent. In 1981 India would have a population of 52 million. Some demographic studies go further. They forecast that in 1987, that is thirty-two years from now, the world will reach an 'explosion' point with a population of 6.6 billion—about 250 per cent increase over its present population. Even as things are, the population trends threaten, if they do not undermine, the world economy.

It would be suicidal to deny the existence of the threat; it will be fatal to quarrel over diagnosis and

remedies. What is wanted is a frank recognition of the coming danger which, I am afraid, is lacking.

There is, therefore, urgent necessity of having a free and frank discussion at the highest scientific level on the joint problem of population growth and world resources. And to no country is this discussion more important than to India with her poor standard of nutrition and rapid rise in population.

This problem arises from 'under achievements' in food and power production and 'over achievement' in preventive medicine and cannot be solved by social movements or political action. It would require the broad vision of a thinker, as much as the highest skill of the scientist, to meet this danger.

Human ingenuity has only two courses left to meet this danger.

I rule out the third and the most horrible course, a series of atomic wars; for this relief, we are indebted to some statesmen of our day, of whom our Prime Minister is the most outstanding.

The first of the two other courses is effective birth control on a mass scale. But there is almost a universal desire for more children in overpopulated countries with sub-nutritional standards. The tenets of several religions forbid birth control. Encouragement to motherhood is given by several large countries. It would, therefore, be unsafe to assume that this course is likely to lead to appreciable results within the limited time at the disposal of mankind.

While our Five-Year Plans, for instance, are sure to bring new acreage under the plough and increase food production, they will hardly keep pace with the growth of population.

The second and perhaps the more effective course,

therefore, is the discovery of new sources of food by some unexpected use of nuclear energy.

* * * *

There is another problem which is as serious as the first, but more delicate and of greater far-reaching importance. While man's power over nature has increased steadily during the last hundred years, the spiritual aspiration of man is progressively being stifled.

By their steadfast devotion to work, the scientists have stolen the secret of nature and given the H-Bomb to man. At the same time, it is placed in hands which are scarcely trustworthy, if the past experience is any guide.

When asked about the weapons with which World War III would be fought, Einstein who scribbled a cryptic formula and changed the face of the world, is reported to have replied: "I don't know what weapons will be used in any World War III. But I can predict what weapons will be used in World War IV—stones."

The cause of this unfortunate state of affairs is that the progress of Science has thriven on an apotheosis of the experimental method. As a result, it was taken for granted for a long time that the Universe could easily be explained without taking into account anything but material causes.

But, one of the most hopeful features of modern trends in Science, which also began with Einstein, has been the realisation that this old attitude has to be given up. Eminent scientists have also begun to look beyond the borderline of what we call 'matter' to the realms in which it is no more than an outer manifestation.

The necessity for this revision was never brought into

greater relief than at the Geneva Conference. The scientists who, a few years ago, claimed to have reached the absolute truth by revealing to us the nuclear energy and splitting the atom began to wonder if they have done the right thing. Several of them wished and prayed that they had never done so.

This re-assertion of the moral values in the affairs of man, which had been disregarded if not decried for a long time, is to my mind the first step in bridging the gulf between what is called the 'scientific truth' and the spiritual aspiration of man.

At the same time, a non-scientific world is moving towards the correlation of the two truths, rejecting belief and dogmas that are contrary to the facts and laws of nature and finding a much more fundamental basis for faith.

The salvation of mankind, therefore, lies in the scientist moving closer to discover the unity between the physical reality as tested by scientific methods and the fundamental aspirations expressed through conscience, love and faith so that the discovery of science can be handled by men morally equipped to use them.

Free India has embarked upon an elaborate programme of scientific research. At the same time, the roots of our collective being lie strongly imbedded in the spiritual heritage of our race. India alone can resolve this conflict and save the future of man.

SOCIAL FOSSILS—A TRAVELLING GOD—
WIVES WITH MULTIPLE HUSBANDS

RAJ BHAVAN, LUCKNOW
February 12, 1956

HE would be a bold man, indeed, who would say "I know India." Like Panditji, everyone of us must go on discovering it day after day.

Two years ago, when I toured Jaunsar-Bawar in the Dehra Dun district of Uttar Pradesh, as well as some parts of Tehri-Garhwal, I came across a strange community, a fossil of the age of the *Mahabharata*. I also went to a couple of their villages, visited some of their shrines, witnessed their dances, and collected some information about them.



These interesting communities live in the lower Himalayas at a height from 3,000 to 7,000 feet. All of them, except the Kinnars, are divided into four castes; the Brahmanas; the Rajputs who call themselves Khasas, a name which they share with many communities in Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh; the Doms, grouped in several castes, of which the Bagjis or professional musicians are the most important; and lastly, the Koltas, the descendants of the aborigines, the survivors of the race belonging to the pre-historic Kol culture.

The areas in which these communities live are Jaunsar-Bawar in the Dehra Dun district, the Upper Rawin Jaunpur in the Tehri-Garhwal district, the Upper Rampur Bushar in the Himachal Pradesh, the Spitti and Lohal in the Punjab.

Though these communities generally share a common way of life, each of them has traditions and customs peculiar to itself. Their way of life is in many ways anti-deluvian.

These communities are therefore of considerable anthropological and sociological importance. If they were to be studied in the context of the different cultural strata recorded in our ancient literary works, and particularly the *Mahabharata*, they would certainly throw considerable light on the early stages of the social evolution of man particularly in India.

There is a 'staggering' of cultures in India. Its tradition of toleration has so far enabled pockets of communities with widely divergent ways of life to live happily in isolated self-sufficiency. Their pockets represent different stages of culture, often removed from each other by centuries in point of evolution. Yet, there is an undercurrent of harmony running between them and those parts of the country where life is more fluid.

The most interesting features of the life of these communities are their pantheon, their polyandrous customs and their history.

Ethnologically, the Khasas appear to be Aryans and call themselves Rajputs. Inter-marriage between the Brahmanas and these Rajputs is very frequent; thus both of them constitute one group.

Most of the Gods worshipped by these communities are of Hindu origin, though several have been metamorphosed beyond recognition. Their principal deity, however, is Mahasu.

* * * *

Mhasu, with his three brothers, lived in Kashmir. Ages ago, a demon called Kirbir Dana was spreading

terror throughout Jaunsar-Bawar. As in the epic story of the Pandavas, the demon was eating up the members of the family of a Brahmana. His name was Una Bhat. Ultimately, with his three sons and one daughter, he fled to the forests on the banks of the Yamuna, planning to take his revenge on the demon.

One night, the Mahasu brothers appeared to Una Bhat in a dream and advised him to proceed to Kashmir and invoke their aid. Una set out for Kashmir the next day and ultimately succeeded in persuading the Mahasus to come to Jaunsar-Bawar and destroy the demon. Una was told by the Mahasus to return to his own country and, as a parting gift, the Chalda (that is, the moving), one of the four Mahasus, gave Una a handful of rice, an earthen vessel and his own staff and told him that when he was hungry, he had only to strike the staff on the earth to find the rice ready cooked in the vessel.

On the way, Una arrived at Mendrat where, according to the instructions given, he threw some rice into the Tons river, rendering the demon Kirbir harmless.

On the first Sunday after his arrival in Jaunsar-Bawar, Una yoked an unbroken heifer to a plough and had it driven by an unmarried boy, who had never driven the plough before. As he had been told, the plough turned golden and the share silver. Five furrows were ploughed in each of which a stone image appeared. These represented the four Mahasus and their mother Deolari. The first to appear was Basak, with his thigh transfixing by a plough share. Then came Pibasaka with a wound in his ear; then Baitha with an injured eye. Chalda alone appeared hale and hearty.

The first three remained in temples dedicated to them, while Chalda had to be taken in procession from one Khut to another.

Deolari, the mother, appeared in the fifth furrow and a temple for her image was erected in a field.

Una worshipped the Mahasus and ordered his youngest son, who became a *deopujari*, to serve them. The second son was directed to strike a gong and became a Rajput, while the third son became a musician, or Bagji. The two Mahasus, Basak and Pibasaka, left for Garhwal, while Baitha and Chalda remained behind. The temple at Henol is dedicated to Baitha, while Chalda is always on the move.

A friend of mine, who had been to the Temple of Mahasu at Henol, described it to me. It had four compartments, one leading into the other. The first room contains an altar; in the next are arranged *dhols* and *ransingas*, the drums and bugles, the sacred musical instruments which are played upon by the Bagjis at most social and religious functions. The third room contains a multitude of images of the Hindu Gods. In the fourth, Mahasu is enthroned with his three brothers and one sister, all their images being made of metal.

I also went to a temple of Mahasu in one of the villages I visited. It was a wooden structure, as temples all over India must have been, before stone came to be used twenty-five hundred years ago. I crawled up a very narrow wooden staircase into the one-roomed shrine, entering it by a very low, narrow door. A number of symbols, images and musical instruments were placed all round the wall. In the centre of the room was Mahasu, surrounded by a crowd of images.

In every temple, Mahasu has attached to him a *pujari*, the man who does *puja* (worship) and a *thani* or *mali*, through whom he speaks to his people. The *mali's* job is very strenuous. When he has to invoke Mahasu, he first goes on a fast; then, sitting in front of the deity, he prays. Slowly, the *mali* starts trembling and his head shakes till

he is almost unconscious. Mahasu then takes possession of him and speaks through his mouth.

I tried to induce the *mali* of the temple I visited to invoke Mahasu for my benefit. But I had no luck. After a certain amount of effort he told me that Mahasu did not want to speak to me. It was very unkind of him; perhaps I was not fit to be spoken to.



In most of the areas, apart from Mahasu, the favourite deities are the Pandava brothers, the heroes of the *Mahabharata*. Time seems to have stood still in these parts of the Himalayas after the Pandavas climbed to Heaven by Satopantha, a snow-peak near Mana, the last village on the Indo-Tibetan border.

Many important spots in these areas have associations with one or the other of the five sons of Pandu. Some of the Khasa villages have temples dedicated to the Pandavas, called *Pandavon-ki-chauri*, and the courtyards of most of the temples are called *Pandavon-ka-Angan*.

Bhima is the most popular of the Pandava deities of this region, all of whom are very touchy and ready to take offence at the slightest lapse or misdeed.

The main feature of the social and religious festivals of these areas is the Pandava Dance, in which most of the people in these villages join. The persons who act as the five Pandavas are held in high esteem, and the Bagjis, the musicians, play a very important part on such occasions.

Bhima, as the hero of the festivals, has to perform prodigies of dance heroics on such occasions. The man who impersonates him is selected with great care, and he has to prepare himself for the part for days beforehand. During the dance, his strength, endurance and agility, are

severely tested. It is believed that on such occasions, Bhima himself takes possession of the dancer who, after the festival, enjoys the privilege of wearing a silver bracelet as a mark of distinction.

How the communities of Jaunsar-Bawar and the adjoining areas came to worship the Pandavas, is a very interesting question. No doubt, after his retirement, their father Pandu lived in the Himalayas with his wives, Kunti and Madri. The Pandavas were also born there, possibly near the place called Pandukeshwar, on the way to Badrinath. When Kunti enjoined that all the five brothers should take Draupadi as their common wife—a flagrantly unorthodox affair in Aryavarta—she may have been following the custom of the Himalayan regions where she had lived with her husband.

The most intriguing parts of these areas are the few villages called Fateh-parvat, in the Upper Rawin of Jaunpur, in the Tehri-Garhwal district. Their presiding deity is Duryodhan. He is the god and king of the people, and is offered tribute. Here his enemies, the Pandavas, are the demons.

In Fateh-parvat, Duryodhan is true to his reputation. If you visit any of its villages and fail to offer a buffalo, a goat, or even a rupee to Duryodhan, he will see to it that you suffer some permanent injury. He even orders his people, through the *thani*, of course, to steal a buffalo from the neighbouring villages or to kill someone.

Duryodhan in life was highly political-minded and even as a god, his tastes have remained unchanged.

During the last general elections, party organisers approached the headman of these villages for votes. The community was in distress. They had never heard such importunities before, and they did not know exactly what they should do. So the *pujari* invoked Duryodhan who,

through the *thani*; commanded that all the votes should be cast for a particular candidate.

It is difficult to explain why, of all the heroes of the *Mahabharata*, the wicked Duryodhan came to be worshipped. Did some of his adherents escape to the Himalayas after the battle of Bharata and found this colony? Or, was there a war between the Pandava-worshipping Khasas and the Fateh-parvat Khasas who, having won a victory, forswore allegiance to the gods of the enemies and accepted their enemy, Duryodhan, as their guardian deity?

* * * *

The marriage customs of the Khasas and other members of these communities are most interesting. They observe Manu's Law. *Anuloma* marriage, i.e. a marriage between a high-caste man and a lower-caste woman, is valid; *pratiloma* marriage, i.e. a marriage between a high-caste woman and a lower-caste man is ordinarily not; at the same time, in many of these areas, *pratiloma* is permitted between the Brahmanas and the Rajputs.

All the Khasa areas of U.P., Himachal Pradesh and East Punjab, are polyandrous. In Jaunsar-Bawar, the bride generally goes through a marriage ceremony with the eldest of the brothers, but becomes the wife of them all. There is both polyandry and polygyny. The eldest brother, however, is the master of the household. While in his presence, the younger brothers do not even talk to the common wife. Whatever domestic felicity they enjoy with her has to be found under the open skies.

In Bawar, on the other hand, every brother has a day allotted to him for consorting with his wife. The wife, however, has an alternative. She can get rid of her multiple masters by going away to her parents; then, after seeking divorce from the first set of husbands and with the

consent of her parents, she is free to choose any other man she likes. The new bridegroom, however, has to pay a bride-price to the husbands.

Among the Khasas of Jubbal and Girupar in Sirmaur district, polyandry is restricted only to two brothers. If there is a third, he must marry another wife.

The impact of modern civilisation is putting a great strain on the people of Jaunsar-Bawar. Recently, I heard of an educated Khasa girl refusing to live with any of the brothers of the person she had married. This young woman insisted that, if in accordance with custom she was called upon to live with them, she would return to her father's house and live with any lover she likes.

I heard another report of a curious case. A boy from Jaunsar-Bawar came to a school in Dehra Dun. The whole class began to tease the poor boy by asking him: "How many fathers have you got?" He innocently answered "Four" and his classmates made fun of him.



In an area in the Himachal Pradesh adjacent to the Khasa area lives the community of Kanowars or Kinnars. Ethnologically, they are different from the Khasas and have an interesting cultural pattern of their own. The spiritual heads of the community are the Lamas.

The eldest of the brothers is not only the husband of a common wife but the owner of all the property of the family. No partition of the family property is permitted and the younger brothers have no rights over the children.

The Kinnars thus have one common trait with the Jaunsaris, polyandry. True to their classical description, *ashva-turaga-mukhah*, their faces are long and not unlike horses. At the Vaishakhi fair, when they hold a community dance, every Kinnar wears the mask of a horse. The

Kinnar women have very sweet, musical voices, which explains the word *kinnara-kanthi*—musically throated like a Kinnari—so often used in Sanskrit literature.

Kalidasa has left admiring references to the dances and songs of the Kinnars. *Harivamsa* refers to them as dressing themselves in flowers and leaves. Bana has described them as experts in music and dance, and even to-day, the Kinnars sing, dance and smile and possess a happy temperament.

There is, however, no polygamy amongst the Kinnars. If one of the brothers marries another woman, he has to go out of the family and live separately.

The Kinnar women work very hard. With polyandry and no polygamy, a large number of girls remain unmarried and become *jomoes*, that is, become dedicated to the *devata* (deity). If a *jomo* marries, the husband has to pay a fine to the *devata*. The parents value these *jomoes* very much for the household work that they do while unmarried.

The Kinnars are a highly moral tribe, and I was told that the women, in particular, are very loyal to their husbands. Evidently, they have been well-known for their morality from ancient times, for Bhishma in the *Shantiparva* said that they are very moral and can be kept as servants in the *antahpura*, women's apartments.

So these are the people whom Grandfather Bhishma had met and come to appreciate. Now, three thousand years later, they form the remarkable primitive society which has neither forgotten its culture nor left its ancestral home under the shadow of the eternal snows; a people who sing and dance and lead a merry life, blissfully ignorant of the fact that their fellow-men have left joy behind and embarked upon a perilous journey to atomic extinction.

What a wonderful land is India!

ALLAHABAD STUDENTS—UNIVERSITY
EDUCATION—FALLING STANDARDS
AND GROWING INDISCIPLINE

RAJ BHAVAN, LUCKNOW

February 26, 1956

I RETURNED to Allahabad again for the Convocation of Allahabad University, which was to be held on December 10.

Many things had happened since the last Convocation held on March 3, 1955 when a few students tried to break up the Convocation, shouted foul abuses at the Chancellor and his wife, and attempted to interfere with the electric wiring system. But for a few hundred brave boys, who formed moving walls around Shri Sri Prakasa, Governor of Madras, our guest, and myself, as we journeyed to and from the academic procession, we would have been badly hurt by the mad rush of those few students.

A committee of enquiry found eight boys guilty of gross misconduct and expelled them from the University for varying terms. They formed an 'Action Committee' to coerce the authorities to take them back.

Then came a new Vice-Chancellor, strong, tactful and sympathetic. He had to face a well-organised demonstration by the students. On one occasion he was surrounded for hours by a crowd of students. They tried to break down his resistance by hunger-strikes, a disgusting form of coercion, which has as little to do with Gandhiji's fasts as Bottom's face had to do with the donkey's head which he put on in *Midsummer Night's Dream*!

The Vice-Chancellor stood firm, as every one should,

where principles are concerned. The University had to be closed. When the University re-opened, the majority of students realised the futility of obeying the calls of self-constituted 'Action Committees.'

Three expelled students on making amends were re-admitted to the University.

The Convocation, this time, however, was a happy and solemn affair. Everybody was in good humour. The students distinguished themselves by exemplary behaviour and re-captured the lost reputation of Allahabad University. A professor of the University of thirty-three years' standing told me that, during all the years that he was connected with the Allahabad University, he had never seen such an excellent convocation.

I joined in several functions of the students, and everywhere the prevailing atmosphere was a happy one. The tension had evidently been relieved. Several hundred students came to the Government House party.

The Union was led this year by sensible young men, particularly its President, a charming young man, who took a responsible view of his duties.

The Committee invited me to a Union meeting at which about five thousand students had gathered. The President, with rare straightforwardness, asked to be forgiven for their lapses. "You are like a father; you should forgive us," he said.

"There is no question of forgiveness," I said. I knew that this kind of trouble was the result of an overcrowded university which does not provide any outlet for the fresh energy of youth and where extraneous influences are ready to use the slightest grievance against any authority.

For an hour, we had a most pleasant reunion. The

students and myself were very happy—to use Tennyson's lines—

"Blessing on the falling out
Which all the more endears
When we fall out with those we love
And kiss again with tear."

* * * *

On the 18th January, in my Inaugural Address at the 31st Annual Meeting of the Inter-University Board at Aligarh, I made a frank survey of the University problems. For, never during the last thirty years, during which I have been connected with them, have they been so complicated and their solution so urgent.

These problems have been diagnosed time and again by eminent educationists. A concerted move, however, has yet to be made on a countrywide basis to alter the content and direction of university education so as to fit it into the conditions and needs of Free India.

* * * *

Our 920 institutions—universities, colleges and institutes—catering for higher education, with their 4,65,974 students, form an organised sector of our life. But the general pattern of education they provide was devised under conditions totally different from those which prevail at present, or are likely to prevail in the near future. Except in parts, therefore, the pattern is out of date and a new pattern is urgently called for.

In most progressive nations, higher education is directed to inculcate the values for which the nation stands so that the students can be trained to stand by them in later life.

Even during the 90 years from 1857 to 1947, universities in India developed certain values which were

derived from the impact of the West, particularly from England. This led to a desire to explore the values of our ancient culture and to restore it to a new vitality, and to our burning desire to reconstruct the past greatness of the country with a view to capturing a free and glorious future.

Since 1947 India has entered a new stage in its life. It has developed certain well-defined values of a fundamental character. As a nation, we are pledged to a democratic way of life, to the Rule of Law, to religious freedom and free institutions, to the equality of the sexes. Our Constitution has also done a great deal to broaden our sense of freedom and toleration.

Learning the lessons of history, we value our tolerant, many-sided life. While desiring to eliminate casteism, communalism and religious fanaticism, we insist upon national unity and solidarity. We recognise as a fundamental value that our strength and inspirations are derived from our unique literary, cultural and spiritual heritage.

Gandhism, in which our spiritual heritage culminated in this century, exercises a considerable influence over those who are in the vanguard of national progress. Its non-violent achievements have created for us a great tradition. Its spiritual content has given to our voice the power to be heard with respect, if not with conviction, by the nations of the earth.

In spite of the importance which we attach to these values, the universities have yet to take effective steps to inculcate the traditions of liberal democracy so that young India may not be induced to vote for or suffer tyranny. Nor are specific studies conducted in our cultural heritage, not even in Gandhism, with a view to inculcate their fundamental values and inspire students to a sense of mission.

The neglect of humanistic studies and classical

education, particularly in Sanskrit which is the source of our unity and moral strength, generally fails to provide for our younger generation the touchstone with which to test their own judgment and conduct.

This is regrettable from more than one point of view. Our policy of free and friendly intercourse with all nations exposes young Indians to the impact of ideologies fundamentally opposed to our national values. They are preached with fanatic aggressiveness and, unprovided with the touchstone of fundamental national values, our young men are unable to test their merit or efficacy.

In fact, the curricula in the universities have been the subject of constant experimentation. What we need is an overall plan for adjusting the claims of different subjects so as to bring the essential values into relief. But premature specialisation precludes the students from acquiring the necessary grounding in basic formative subjects. While there is an absence of training which will enable the students to grasp higher values, they are made to carry a heavy load of mere informative knowledge.

There is also a gap between the intellectual equipment of the graduate with the equipment essential for pursuing the careers open to them. Unlike advanced countries, enrolment in scientific and technical courses bears a negligible proportion to the total enrolment. More students go in for arts courses, partly because for want of rooms in technical institutions and partly because of the old world idea of the value of what is called 'gentlemanly education.' The graduate, therefore, finds himself a misfit in the context of modern life.

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In this connection I would like to refer to two important features of our university life: the fall in the standards

of higher education and the rapid growth of indiscipline among the students.

My remarks, it can legitimately be said, apply only to some universities or some parts of the country. But we must not forget that the strength of the chain depends upon its weakest link.

The causes of these unfortunate developments of falling standards and growing indiscipline have to be found, not in something inherent in the students, most of whom are well-behaved aspiring young men, but in the conditions which have been created since 1939.

Since 1939 there has been a great rush of students to the universities and colleges. This is due to a legitimate desire for improving the status of the family and the wide prospects of employment opened up, first by the World War II and thereafter by freedom.

During most of these years, there was a shortage of building materials and of equipment for laboratories and libraries. Though more and more universities and colleges came into existence, education came to be imparted under conditions of material inadequacy.

The condition of some of these institutions presents a painful contrast to the lavishly furnished cinema houses and the luxurious homes of the rich. They, therefore, create a sense of frustration and react upon teaching and discipline.

One contributory factor to this situation, I regret to say, is the imponderable atmosphere which, while emphasising other phases of national development, considers the claims of higher education as subsidiary. Instances of indiscipline and complaints of falling standards, more often than not, remain unnoticed; and if noticed at all, they are viewed by the public as a passing phase. But the

deterioration of standards and discipline is a long-term process. Once it begins, it would inevitably lead to the complete collapse of intellectual and moral standards.

Again, under the democratic process of our Constitution, higher education gets a fair deal only if a State Government makes special effort to give it ample support. The view commonly held by the average politician that freedom has been won by the sacrifice of the masses, and that highly educated persons played no vital part in it has greatly prejudiced the cause of universities. This popular opinion is reflected in the priorities given to different heads of expenditure by the Governments.

The Planning Commission is thinking in terms of 4,800 crores of rupees to be spent under the Second Five-Year Plan for the material advancement of the country; rightly too, for that is the basic need. But I wish our Governments could spend five crores straightaway on rescuing our universities and colleges from the dire effects of material inadequacy and, at the same time, resist the temptation to start new universities without providing ample resources.

To take but one instance. The Allahabad University was originally intended for about 1,500 students. If it were to be brought up to its pre-war level of accommodation, equipment, libraries and laboratories for 7,600 students as at present, on an estimate I made last year it would cost no less than fifty lakhs of rupees non-recurring expenditure and double the present grant.

I know that our Governments, in view of their more urgent commitments, find it difficult to find this money. But I equally know what will follow if this commitment is treated as less than a first priority: standards will continue to fall; indiscipline might grow; young intellectuals will

grow up under a sense of frustration or resentment. And you know with what result.

* * * *

The number of the teaching personnel in most universities and colleges is below its pre-war level; it is too small to permit close personal contact with the students. In many cases, its efficiency is also below its pre-war level.

The emoluments of teachers compare unfavourably with those employed in the administrative and private services. The best brains, formerly available to the teaching profession, are no longer so.

As a result of popular pressure, English is being progressively eliminated as a medium of higher studies. Its study is also neglected, it is said, in the interest of Indian languages. The growing vacuum, however, cannot be filled by Indian languages with the necessary precision and flexibility. Necessary literature of the appropriate standard in Indian languages is not available. The teachers continue to lecture in broken English, or in an Indian language loaded with English technical words; and students, even at the post-graduate stage, have scarcely sufficient knowledge of the language to fully understand what they are being taught.

I know that I am speaking on a subject which evokes considerable emotional partisanship. But for over a century English has been our language—the language or medium of intercourse between the educated, the language of law, scholarship and literary inspiration. I have not the least doubt that, if it continues to be hastily replaced by any Indian language as it is done at present, the standards will continue to fall.

Any hope that English will continue to help in the evolution of higher thought and expression in the

Universities by making it a second language, I am afraid, is illusory. How many of us are able to understand or express ourselves in the second language—say, Sanskrit or Persian—which we studied as an optional subject?

I am of the view, as I have said on many occasions that if English has to be replaced, it should only be done to the extent to which Hindi becomes a rich and effective vehicle of higher thought. But that is not the same thing as saying that English should be replaced now and here by Hindi or any other Indian language however ill-equipped it may be for the purpose. That is why I have often pleaded that English should be retained as a medium of higher education and Hindi brought in as a co-existent but subsidiary medium at this stage so that, in course of time, Hindi may become as effective as English, when English might become a subsidiary medium and in the end eliminated, if it is in the interest of the country to do so.

In pre-war days, the standards in universities were maintained by the presence of teachers—Indian and foreign—who had been trained in leading British Universities. Their number is becoming negligible, while there is no compensating influx of visiting teachers and scholars. As a result, the stimulus to academic standards, which their presence provided in the past, has disappeared.

But we must realise that in the modern world we cannot do with second-class university education. We should, therefore, take prompt steps to ensure in every department of studies the highest standards, if necessary, by sending promising young teachers abroad and inviting first-rate professors to visit our universities.

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The first flush of freedom has also produced in immature minds a reaction against strenuous work associated

with disciplined student life. There is a widespread belief, both among the teachers and the students as well as educated men generally, that discipline is a kind of tyranny imposed by authorities and is inconsistent with life in a free country.

The old idea that the life of the student should stand detached from pleasures has gone. The demoralising effects of films and literature glorifying crime and easy sex relations—coming particularly from U.S.A. and by imitation produced in India—have been undermining the moral inhibitions of the younger generations, with the result that the university student taking the law into his own hands has been accepted as nothing abnormal. Teachers, examiners and invigilators are known to have been manhandled—in some cases even murdered—by students whom they reprimanded or caught in the acts of committing some moral lapse.

While the great majority of students are individually well-behaved, in some parts of the country they, as a group, tend to develop collective aggressiveness to enforce their demands, however unreasonable they may be.

This aggressiveness is due to several factors. The contact of the teachers with the student is thin; his moral influence has become negligible, particularly in the overcrowded residential universities.

The syllabus, as a rule, does not provide any constructive or artistic channel, into which the urge for collective action, natural in the youth of a free country, could be directed.

Further, the student, when acting aggressively in defiance of authority, has a feeling that public opinion would thereby consider him a hero while the large mass of average students lack the moral fibre to stand up against the mass hysteria induced by slogans imported by

extraneous agencies.

A lapse from good behaviour is a lapse. If it is connived at, moral standards decay, social conduct deteriorates, society begins to disintegrate. It is time that the public conscience is awakened to the moral danger which lies in sympathising with acts of indiscipline and misbehaviour on the part of our students.

Carried away by the passion for political partisanship, so common in modern times in free countries, teachers sometimes not only take to active political life but assume, even in their position as university teachers, the role of opposition leaders to the university authorities or become recruiting agents for political parties.

The employment of students as instruments of political agitation—whatever merit it might have had when we were struggling for freedom—has no place in a free country with a democratic life. Such employment in these days develops, on the one hand, an attitude of general indiscipline, and on the other, a general slackness of control over them resulting in lowering of standards.



A movement for reorganising universities should, as I conceive, have three basic lines of progress.

As a part of the national programme of reconstruction, the existing institutions of higher education should be financially stabilised and facilities such as of libraries, laboratories and hostels should be provided on an adequate scale; and, in this respect, no distinction should be made between residential universities and affiliated colleges.

The University Grants Commission, while giving assistance to new departments, should also see that the existing departments are fully equipped and the standard of education is properly maintained.

Secondly, the curricula in all the faculties must be so framed that every student acquires an elementary background of the heritage of India and a modicum of humanistic studies.

In this connection I cannot but draw your attention to the necessity of introducing in the early stages the elementary study of the history and heritage of India; for, they alone will provide that sense of unity and continuity indispensable for national growth as also the necessary literary, cultural and spiritual background essential for enabling India to play its part in the world of the future.

Thirdly, collective activities of a constructive or artistic character, which would satisfy the urge in the younger generation to participate in the creative life of the country, should form an integral part of the curriculum. Mere extra-curricular activities will not alter the direction of education, nor will the teachers who have not the vision to appreciate such activities, be helpful.

Recently, the N.C.C. and the Youth Camps have been doing good work; but if they are to succeed in re-shaping the pattern of higher education, they should be made compulsory for all students. Their activities should be so framed as to train the students into acquiring not only the values prized by the nation but a sense of mission to translate them into individual and collective life.

Unless, therefore, a new pattern of education suited to conditions in the country which is functioning as a free nation is introduced, universities will never be able to assume the leadership of thought and action which is their due.

THRICE SACRED TIRUPATI—AN ARCH-
SCIENTIST—NIGHT PLANESRAJ BHAVAN, LUCKNOW
March 11, 1956

IT was on the afternoon of November 10, 1955 that we sped along the hundred-mile road which leads from Madras to Tirupati. On the way, we passed through ranges of hills that spread out like the hooded coils of a mighty serpent. No wonder the ancient imagination saw in them Adi Shesha, the primeval Serpent of Eternity.

We reached Tirupati after sunset. I had never expected it to be such a large town. Lit by electricity and decorated with arches, buntings and welcoming slogans, it looked like a dancer dressed in frills and shining with jewels, standing ready to perform against the dark backdrop of the sacred Tirumalai Hills.

From a distance we could see a starry staircase reaching up to the heavens. It was the well-paved footpath that leads to the shrine of Lord Venkateswara. Leaving the town behind us, we proceeded up the hill by the motor road which winds round and round it.

We reached a height of over three thousand feet above the town. Coolness was in the air. Passing the turning which leads to the shrine, we reached the Guest House, where my friend Sri Trivedi, the Governor of Andhra, was waiting for me with his wife.

After dinner, I was led to a tiny but well-built house, one of several which have been put up by the Temple Trust for the benefit of visitors. I slept like a top.



The Venkatachala Hill, which is one of the Tirumalai or Tirupati Hills, is thrice sacred.

At the beginning of Creation, Adi Shesha the Serpent of Eternity, coiled itself round Mount Meru in a trial of strength against Vayu, the god of Wind. Vayu tried to blow the mighty serpent off the Mount and, in the course of the struggle, a piece of Meru was broken off and fell on the banks of the Swarnamukhi to become Venkatachala.

Being a piece of golden Mount Meru, it had always been a very lovely spot and still is. And when Lord Vishnu in His incarnation as the Divine Boar, rescued the Earth from chaos, it was on Venkatachala that he settled with his consorts after a long search for a beautiful spot. Since then, they have lived happily in the Adi Varaha Temple.

At a later period, the primeval Sage, Bhrigu stepped in. This is an individual in whom I am very much interested. The members of the caste in which I happened to have been born have—alas! I have been an ex-communicated member for years—always assured me that we are all descended from him in an unbroken line.

Bhrigu is the first arch-scientist known to man. Of course, that accomplishment was in addition to many others. This discovery once came in very handy to me. A young lady who claimed Bhrigu lineage was about to marry a young Brahman who was not so fortunately descended. But the bridegroom's family was very proud of the blueness of its Brahman's blood, and had not taken very warmly to the idea of the match. The young lady mentioned the matter to me and I replied: "Look, my child, go to the elders of your would-be family-in-law and tell them in my name thus: 'If our ancestor Bhrigu, with his wonderful scientific skill, had not brought down the fire from heaven, as is attested by the Vedas themselves, we should still be shuddering in the frozen caves of the Ice

Age; there would have been no sacrificial fire; no Brahman, no Rishi, no sacramental marriage and neither of you would have had any chance to marry.’”

I had no idea whether the young lady told her would-be “in-laws” of this discovery in my very words, but I know she was cheerfully accepted by the family.

The Venkatachala Hill also owes its sacredness to this ancestor of mine. For, once, when differences arose between the gods as to who out of the Trinity—Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva—was the greatest, Sage Bhrigu was appointed umpire to decide their rival claims. That was to be my misfortune as you will discover later.

The sage went first to Brahma and, showing a slight degree of disrespect, brought forth the ire of the Creator. Bhrigu declared Brahma l.b.w.

Then Bhrigu went to Kailas where Lord Shiva was making love to his Consort Parvati. When Parvati saw the sage approaching, she felt a little shy, and Shiva was angry at the intrusion. The umpire withdrew. The gods shouted, “How is that, Umpire?” “Out”, he declared.

When the sage, however, went to the Ocean of Milk, where Vishnu was reclining calm and unruffled on the thousand-hooded Shesha, he was obliged to devise a sterner test. This was to kick Lord Vishnu on the chest. In spite of this, Vishnu remained calm as the Serpent of Eternity and sweet as the Ocean of Milk on which He was swinging. He moved away from His spouse Lakshmi who, as was Her eternal occupation, was shampooing His feet, and welcoming the sage effusively, offered an apology for hurting the foot of so venerable a person. With that He rubbed the sole of the sage’s foot, and, clever as He was, quietly removed the mark of the lotus.

I had heard of this episode from my infancy and well knew the magic effect of this cunning trick on my

primeval ancestor and his descendants. The lotus-mark having been taken away from Bhrigu's feet, none of his descendants could be rich. This I knew to my cost.

All my life, I have thought that this episode ended there. But when I went to Tirupati, I learnt that it did not.

There was no place for wrath in Lord Vishnu's nature so that He felt no loss of prestige when the sage kicked Him. But, as you know, a woman is more jealous of her husband's prestige than is the husband himself because, without it, she cannot turn up her nose at impertinent neighbours. The Goddess Lakshmi was no exception to this rule. She was very angry that the sage should have gone unpunished after insulting Her Lord.

When Lord Vishnu did not accept Her point of view, She flew into a rage and left Him to go down to live on Earth at Karavirapuri—the present Kolhapur.

Vishnu could conquer wrath, but not love, for He himself is nothing but Love Incarnate. So He thought of retiring to a quiet, romantic place where He could indulge in love-longings, and, if possible, write a poem or two. So down He came to Venkatachala under the name of Sri Srinivasa.

The Goddess also felt miserable without Her Lord. She therefore took birth as a daughter of Akasaraja, the king of Thondamandalam, and was named Sri Padmavati. As always happened in those ancient days, the beautiful Padmavati, now grown into a young woman, was sporting with her maids in a forest, where at the appropriate moment, a wild elephant rushed at them. The handsome Prince, Sri Srinivasa, was of course out hunting and so, being conveniently ready to hand, overpowered the angry beast and drove him back into the forest.

Then the same thing, which always happens in such

cases, happened. The old love sprang up between Sri Srinivasa and Sri Padmavati with fresh vigour, and began to follow the usual course—separation, pining, vows, sighs and messages by handy intermediaries.

In the end, the wise parents married Sri Padmavati to Sri Srinivasa and the happy divinities came and lived happily ever after on these Hills.

So now you know why Venkatachala is thrice sacred, and why there are no less than twenty-four *tirthas* on these Hills. Even Saraswati, the Goddess of Learning, was lured here to become the spring called Swami Pushkarini. On unimpeachable Puranic authority I am in a position to assure you that one day in the year, Swami Pushkarini is joined by all the sacred rivers on earth, including the Ganga, the Yamuna and the Saraswati.

So, if you are in a hurry to get rid of your blacker sins, dip yourself in Swami Pushkarini. That is the place for you.

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I was delighted to see the progress made by the Sanskrit Vishva Parishad.

When the Sardar decided on the reconstruction of the Temple of Somnath, we were all anxious that it should be restored to its ancient glory. It was therefore decided that a Sanskrit University should be associated with the new building. The Sardar was confident that he would be able to raise a crore of rupees—Rs. 50 lakhs for the Temple and Rs. 50 lakhs for the University. But Lord Somnath willed otherwise. The Sardar died when he had only collected about 28 lakhs of rupees, barely enough to reconstruct the Temple itself.

On May 11, 1951, however, when the Jyotirlinga of Somnath was installed in the new Temple, the Trust convened a conference of Sanskrit Pandits and Professors,

presided over by the Rajpramukh of Travancore-Cochin and when it was resolved to establish a World Academy of Sanskrit, our Rashtrapatiji graciously accepted the office of its President. Meanwhile, the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan was to pay the penalty for my having sold the idea of a Sanskrit University. For, the Trust could not start one and the Sankritists, who had gathered there, quietly transferred the burden to those who were working for the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan.

The second session of the Sanskrit Vishva Parishad was held in the year 1952 in Banaras, and the third in Nagpur in 1954. The Parishad had awakened a consciousness, at least to some extent, that we should not allow Sanskrit to disappear by default.

It had 24 regional and 199 local branches as well as 68 Sanskrit Mandals and 84 Kendras. Its professors and organisers had toured several parts of the country and here we were for the fourth session at Tirupati, the Banaras of the South.

It had attracted a large number of delegates from many parts of India, but for want of accommodation the Reception Committee was compelled to cut down the number to 1,500. Three or four thousand additional visitors attended the Parishad.

Many distinguished people were present during the session, among them being Sri Trivedi, Dr. Harekrushna Mahtab, Governors, and several of Chief Ministers and Ministers of Education. The Rashtrapati, the guide, philosopher and friend of the Parishad, opened the proceedings.

The pandal was gay with banners, buntings and fluorescent lights and for three whole days the rhythm of well-accented, faultless Sanskrit fell on one's ears like the limpid flow of a Himalayan river.

The Resolutions, in substance, put the responsibility squarely on the shoulders of Governments, and, among other things, requested the Central Government to lend its support towards the maintenance of the great position that Sanskrit enjoys in our national life. The old patrons of Pathashalas—the princes, the zamindars and the rich people—have been, or are being so levelled down by Government that the Government which have inherited their resources cannot very well deny their responsibility of carrying forward the heritage which Sanskrit represented.

Some people frown upon Sanskrit by the most marvellous logic on earth. The study of Sanskrit, they say, is the study of the Hindu religion; the study of the Hindu religion is communalism; *ergo* communalism has no special place in India. I can only say—and with deep respect for those who hold this view—that this is nonsense. Without Sanskrit, India would be nothing but a bundle of different linguistic groups; without it, its languages would have no harmony, its people no proud heritage and no common culture. Without it India would have no moral backbone, no mission to preach and no message to deliver to mankind.

I wish those who deny that Sanskrit is a living language could have attended this Tirupati Session. They would have seen 5,000 men and women sitting hour after hour, all day long, for three whole days, listening responsively to Sanskrit being spoken with mastery by delegates from all parts of the country.



On the 13th, the President visited the shrine of Tirupati. Sri Trivedi, Sri Mahtab, myself and many others went with him. To us from the North, it was a pleasant surprise to see a shrine which the vandals had never attacked or demolished and which had been worshipped by

millions of devotees for twelve or fifteen centuries in unbroken continuity. Immemorial customs, going right back to the Alvars and to Ramanujacharya and other Acharyas, are still being followed there.

There is a fixed image of Sri Venkateswara in the central shrine and a moveable one for the procession. I was told that when the donations of the day are collected and their accounts made up, the moveable image is brought forward to supervise the process.

The image of Sri Venkateswara is of black stone. It is decked with rich ornaments and dress, and is studded with jewels here and there. As the flickering light of the *arti* was waved in front of the image, sparkling pin-points flashed from the body like divine rays, and particularly from the palm held up in the *abhayamudra*.

Tirupati is a rich shrine, having been lavishly endowed by the old kings, the Cholas, the Chalukyas, the Rayas and the Naiks. In front of the shrine stand the bronze statues of Krishna Deva Raya, the greatest of the Vijayanagar kings and his two wives. We were also shown the rich jewels and ornaments which were presented by famous kings and conquerors. There were dresses which Krishna Deva Raya himself had presented to the deity, and the pearl necklaces which had come from Raghobaji Bhonsle.

It was a crowded inner shrine in which we stood. We offered flowers and in our turn were given liquid of some kind. In the northern Indian temples we are given *charanamrit*, the water in which the deity's feet are bathed. So without looking at it too closely, I sipped it. It was the sandal paste liquid which had been applied to the forehead of the image.

What I admired about the administration of these Devasthanams was the way in which *Ishta* traditions of charity had been adjusted to modern needs. The Trust

runs a number of educational institutions including an oriental research institute, high schools, a poor house, a museum, a *goshala*, a college for boys and another for girls and a school for the training of those who wish to perform *harikathas*. Tirupati still draws to it the devoted and the learned from all parts of the country. It is the home of several eminent Indians, including Dr. Radhakrishnan.

It would have been a trial to take the fifty minutes' run up the hill twice or thrice a day. So, the management had been good enough to provide me with a room in one of the University buildings, where cheerful, smiling young college students, presided over by a learned lady Principal, looked after our convenience.

I wish I could have stayed on the Hills for a day or two more. I would have liked to see some of the *tirthas* and to take a dip in holy Swami Pushkarini so as to save myself the trouble of bathing in many of the other sacred rivers wherein I shall perhaps never have the luck to bathe. But I had to come back to Lucknow for the festival of Diwali.



The trip to Tirupati was rounded off by a very interesting experience.

I speeded back to Madras on the 13th and attended the party given by Governor Shri Sri Prakasa to the President, where we inhaled sulphur fumes from the fire-works.

At 11 p.m. I boarded the night-plane, the symbol of a generation to whom God has denied the sleep of the past and, therefore, peace. The night is intended for peace and sleep; not so in a plane. In the midst of whirling noise, I tried to crouch in my seat in various strange postures which would allow me neither to sleep nor keep awake.

I had already developed a slight fever and a kind

officer provided me with a bunker in which to stretch my weary limbs. That was, however, not the end of the story. At about 2 in the morning, I had to bundle out in the shivering cold of Nagpur where I spent an aimless hour and a half. Then back I went to the plane to spend another three hours in a vain attempt to sleep. In the early morning, we landed at Delhi where it was bitterly cold again.

I transferred myself to the plane for Lucknow. Reaching there, I plunged myself into arrears of work. In the evening, I mixed with the Diwali crowds which had come to the Raj Bhavan to see the lights and fire-works. More sulphur fumes; a bad cough; temperature. So, shivering, I straightway marched off to a bed to have repairs done to my body.

XCVII

THE RUSSIAN LEADERS—A VISIT TO THE TAJ— MARSHAL TITO'S VISIT—THE ROORKEE CONVOCATION

RAJ BHAVAN, LUCKNOW
March 25, 1956

ON November 17th, I went to Agra to receive Marshal Bulganin, the Russian Prime Minister, and Mr. Khrushchev, the Secretary of the U.S.S.R. Communist Party. Two days later, I presided over the Convocation of Agra University.

The couple of days preceding the visit of the Soviet leaders were exciting. People brought presents of all sorts, quite a few of which I had to reject. Several groups wanted to give receptions to the distinguished leaders but there-

was going to be no time for them. Various leading persons were complaining that they had not been given enough seats for the reception and I had to lend a sympathetic ear to their laments. A sense of proportion was generally lacking.

Local officials were busy arranging things, consulting the Protocol and debating on fine points of procedure, while Indian and Russian officers came over from Delhi, each one bringing new light to bear on the problems.

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Ultimately, on the 20th at 8-15 a.m. we went to the Kheria military aerodrome to receive the guests. The party which accompanied them had arrived by earlier aeroplanes. Marshal Bulganin and Mr. Khrushchev were to come by the last plane, but they came in the last but one. On their arrival at the aerodrome, I garlanded them both and Mummy presented them with bouquets. Then followed the introduction.

My instructions were clear: Marshal Bulganin and Mr. Khrushchev were both to be treated as equals. So, while returning from the aerodrome, I sat in the middle, with the Marshal on my right and Khrushchev on my left. The Russian interpreter—also a highly placed Security Officer as well—sat beside the driver.

Then began our little battle of languages. It was like an examination of witnesses on the Original Side of the Bombay High Court, where the counsel puts a question in English, the interpreter translates it into Gujarati, the witness answers in Gujarati and the interpreter translates the Gujarati reply into English for the benefit of the counsel. So I was at the familiar game once again.

As we passed through the town, both sides of the streets were full of people with an unlimited supply of

flowers. Everyone appeared to be anxious that the guests should well and truly receive the flowers that were flung by him or her at the car. A number of youngsters went so far as to roll the garlands up into balls and send them hurtling through the air as if the three of us were the stumps to be dislodged in a game of cricket.

The flowers came without cease. Once we were hit by enormous sun-flowers, each quarter of a pound in weight. At times, the poor Marshal held his hat as though it were the shield of a knight in some medieval tournament and Khrushchev put on a pair of glasses to prevent injury to his eyes. I also received an unjustifiable share of flowers—for they were not for me—and had constantly to hold up my hands to save my spectacles.

It was a lively crowd and, beneath bombardment of blossoms, the guests also contrived to look as cheerful as they could.

We drove directly to the Taj Mahal, one of the Seven Wonders of the world. The representative of the Archaeological Department was there to tell the guests all about it and interpreters stood in readiness to translate all that was said. The guests did their heroic utmost to absorb the voluminous information that was poured into their ears.

In speech and bearing, the Marshal appears a cultured European. Khrushchev is different, and makes a point of looking so. His bald head shining, he walked heavily as befits a member of the aristocracy of the proletariat. His face always wore a broad smile. His comments seemed simple or witty, but his questions were pointed and his remarks meaningful, while his eyes twinkled to show that he was enjoying them.

Both visitors looked at the Taj from many angles. Khrushchev turned to me and said: "It is very much to be admired but it is the product of slave labour." He

repeated the same remark in a speech which he made later.

I tried to convey to him that the generous emperor maintained 20,000 artists from all over Asia for seventeen years in a lavish manner to build this peerless monument to his lady-love. I wonder whether my remark passed the barrier of the interpreter.

In one of the little speeches which Marshal Bulganin made, he thanked me for my hospitality. Khrushchev repeated more than once that he was a miner, nevertheless he did not lack chivalry for he immediately took the microphone from the hands of the Marshal in order to express his gratitude to "Madame Munshi".

* * * *

We then visited the Fort of Akbar, where the guests were shown the place in which Shahjehan was imprisoned and the little mirror in which he could see the reflection of his beloved Taj. But what interested the guests more than anything else was a giant stone bowl. They wanted to know exactly what it was for. No one could answer accurately. I hazarded the guess that it might have been a drinking bowl for the elephants!

We ascended the steps to the balcony in which Jehangir and Shahjehan had sat on the peacock throne to address brilliant gatherings of nobles and glistening turbans and diamond-studded swords, and to listen to the recitation of their works by poets in melliferous Persian. The guardian angel of the old throne-room must have been shocked at what happened when we invaded its august interior.

We sat in ordinary chairs. A big gathering, drab and prosaic, sat in front of us. On its behalf, I gave small presents to the guests. Among them were two old-style gold-embroidered caps of Agra make.

When I offered these caps to the guests, I asked them

with some hesitation whether they would like to put them on. "Certainly" replied Khrushchev. I therefore placed the caps on the heads of the visitors. They laughed. The audience applauded. With the broadest of broad smiles on their faces the guests bowed to the audience. Yet more and more applause followed. Cameras flashed, while cap on head, Khrushchev thanked the citizens of Agra.

The distinguished Russian leaders were my guests at luncheon. At the table, we discussed a variety of subjects, of course through interpreters. The only lady in the party was Madam Rahamat Babaeva, a Deputy Minister from Uzbekistan. In talking to her, I drew upon my none too good knowledge of highly Persianised Urdu. She spoke fluent Persian. Next to her was seated one of our Ministers, who had said that he knew Urdu, but '*Kam, Kam*'. Between Persian and Urdu, we tried to enlighten each other, but the light which we threw on the subject-matter of our talk was rather dim.

Mummy asked Marshal Bulganin how many children he had. He said "Two". Immediately Khrushchev broke in with "I am a bourgeoisie. I have five". "I am your brother in calamity." I said "I have the same number". We all laughed.

We exchanged presents by making appropriate speeches. I spoke in Hindi of India's friendly relations with all the nations of the world. Marshal Bulganin pledged the eternal friendship of Russia for India in Russian: "friendship in light and darkness and even in calamity."

Khrushchev's speech was about industrialisation. When I presented our Russian guests with a miniature Taj, I said: "This is the handicraft speciality of Agra," whereupon Khrushchev came out with the remark: "Oh, it is the result of one man's labour. There is nothing like industrial products."

My mind naturally went back to Gandhiji and his love for the Charkha, and the support which the U.P. Government is giving to Cottage Industries.

When I saw my guests off with hearty handshakes at the aerodrome, I was given a hearty invitation to visit Russia.

The Russian leaders, in pursuit of their world policy, had come to make love to our people and they knew how to do it. At the same time, they are convinced that their way of life is superior to ours and that we have much to learn from them.

We learnt many things from the visitors. I have little doubt that they also have learnt a few things: how a colonial power could gracefully relinquish its hold over its possessions, leaving it free to develop on its own lines; how the Indian masses, without being regimented, could give a hearty reception to a foreign visitor; and how a backward but free country in seven years, can make rapid progress without paying any price in human suffering or cultural destruction.

This is perhaps the first occasion on which our people have been called upon to offer collective hospitality to distinguished foreigners and they did it with great discipline. They were keen to return the tremendous welcome which the Russian people had given to Panditji.



After the Russian leaders had left, my mind naturally went back to the visit of another distinguished European leader, Marshal Tito, who had also spent an entire day with us at Agra. For several hours, we were in the same car. Though a masterful personality, he carried himself with a disarming amiability and I soon felt as if we had known each other for years.

Mummy and I plied him with all sorts of questions, some of which verged on the inconvenient. For so formidable a leader, his answers were characterised by a rare frankness. At no time did we feel that we were talking to the maker and leader of a revolution, or to the architect and head of a nation which had resisted mighty powers with success.

Marshal Tito's remarks were penetratingly shrewd. He had a quick grasp of the world situation and described it aptly. Above all, we felt as though he were a friend in the midst of old friends.



The Convocation of Agra University on November 22nd passed off with due solemnity. In delivering the Convocation Address, Justice Chandrasekhara Aiyar lashed out at indiscipline.

I have come to the conclusion that discipline in affiliated colleges is decidedly better than in the residential universities—at any-rate in U.P. The Principals and teachers of the affiliated colleges feel a personal responsibility for running them whereas a residential university is like a radar-driven machine; it is expected to run by itself.

There was a new Vice-Chancellor at Agra. The Hindi Institute, which I helped to establish there, has begun to work under enthusiastic teachers. A school of Social Sciences will soon have been established. Agra University is looking up.

I also attended the usual functions which are held during Convocation Week. As usual, the most enjoyable of these was the dramatic entertainment staged by the young ladies of the Teachers' College at Dayalbagh. The specially prepared topical skit was by the two lady teachers who acted in it themselves as peasant women from the

Rohtak district and it was, as usual, uproariously enjoyable.

From Agra I went by the night train to Delhi where I was to spend a day on my way to Roorkee. When I arrived there on the 24th, after two successive nights in train, I again felt as deflated as a punctured tyre! So I got into bed to work off my arrears of sleep.

The University of Roorkee is like a well-conducted Western University. The climate, at this time of the year, is fine; the campus beautiful, with the Himalayan snows visible in the distance.

The main building of the University, an old structure, has an aristocratic look. The students are well-behaved. Sri Khosla, the most distinguished of our engineers and himself the product of this University, is the Vice-Chancellor. Under him, the University has been developing fast which shows how one man with vision and drive can lift an institution to the skies.

On November 25th, Panditji inaugurated the Water Resources Development Training Centre for students from Africa and Asian countries. This had evidently been decided upon at the Bandung Conference.

Panditji also opened a swimming pool, part of which was made by the *shramdan* of the students. Besides this, several large buildings for the housing of libraries are springing up.

The Convocation of Roorkee University provides the Indian engineers of the north with an occasion for staging a re-union. To them it is a sort of the Olympic Games of ancient Greece. Some of them happen to occupy high positions in the engineering world and are legitimately proud of their old Thomson College of Civil Engineering.

Roorkee University is now firmly set on its path as not only an all-India but an international centre. To

re-build India we want more and more engineers. With the Second Five Year Plan, we must give full support to this University, and I have little doubt that if we do, it will prove a source of pride to the country.

XCVIII

SHIVRATRI AT SAMASTIPUR—SHIVA AND SHAKTI—THE ETERNAL REFRAIN

RAJ BHAVAN, LUCKNOW
April 8, 1956

THE voice of Sri Satyanarayan Sinha, Minister of Parliamentary Affairs, was heard on the telephone: "Munshiji, you will have to come to Samastipur. We are celebrating *Kalidasa Samaroha* on Shivratri day. You have to inaugurate it."

"Samastipur! Where on earth is it?", I asked.

"It is my native town," he said.

No more geography for me! As it was Satyanarayan Babu's native town, it must be worth visiting.

So, on the 10th of March, I flew from Lucknow to Darbhanga where I was received by the brother of the Maharajadhiraj, an old friend of mine, then busy in Delhi with parliamentary work.

In the afternoon, I was to have joined the procession at Samastipur; but I just skipped it. So I lost my opportunity of riding on one of the twenty-one elephants parading the streets of the town.



Dr. Keskar and I started from Darbhanga at about 2-15 p.m. The road was filled with people going to and

from Shiva temples. On the way, we crossed the Bagmati and the Badi-Gandak and reached Samastipur.

The town wore a festive look. Among the numerous signs of welcome suspended across the road, I came across one which had a homely touch. In Gujarati language the slogan read: "*Bhale Padharya Kanaiyalalbhai.*" I was surprised. "Was it the wizardry of Satyanarayan Babu?" I asked myself. But immediately the reply came in the form of Gujarati merchants who greeted me with flowers.

About fifteen thousand villagers had gathered in a huge pandal to celebrate the festival. The meeting began with a prayer from Kalidasa's *Shakuntala*. The Chairman of the Reception Committee welcomed us. Dr. Keskar unveiled a plaster statue, I think of Lord Shiva. When I stood up to inaugurate the Samaroha, the mike, as generally happens, went out of order for a time.

I found it difficult to say anything exciting; nor could I address that audience on the work or art of Kalidasa. They were, however, interested in the fact, which previous speakers had told them, that Kalidasa came from Mithila and that somehow Samastipur had something or the other to do with it. A few miles away was a school that he attended and the temple where the Goddess Kali had granted him the gift of poesy.

I know of a similar temple and another Goddess with a similar reputation near Ujjain. But how could I tell this audience that Kalidasa was national in the noble sense of the word, that not a line in his works mentions the place where he was born or the region he came from, or who his patron Vikramaditya was?

He had been uniformly impartial to all regions, rivers, mountains, flowers and trees of India. But that did not matter. He had an intense love for the Himalayas, but that has been a common national trait. One may come

from any part of the country and yet claim Himalaya as one's own. The poetry, literature and culture of India are saturated with this love. But even that did not matter to the audience.

I, therefore, told the audience that Kalidasa belonged to the whole of India. He was the national poet *par excellence*. With Vyasa and Valmiki, he enjoyed the unique distinction of being India's representative on the literary olympus of the world where the immortals of moving words and ineffable vision dwelt.

I would be glad, indeed, I added, if Kalidasa was born in Mithila; perhaps the people of Mithila could prove it by raising a suitable monument to him. This, I said, would draw his admirers from all parts of the world to discover, what will never be known with certainty, that he was born in Mithila. Within a few generations, I was sure, the world would come to believe that Samastipur was his birth-place.

In his presidential address, Satyanarayan Babu described the richness of Kalidasa. But what he spoke out of the printed text was more fascinating than the text itself. He has a rare command of the *Ramayana* of Tulsidas; he knows the poems of the poets from Chandidas and even Jaffar by heart and could recite their verses with effect. On this occasion he let himself go, particularly on the theme of love and held the audience spell-bound.

I still follow the habit of my boyhood. On the Shivratri day, I go on a fruit-and-milk fast and visit a Shiva Temple for *darshan*. After the Samaroha and At Home, Satyanarayan Babu took me to the central shrine of Shiva in the town. I was told that the image had been increasing in size for years.

I kept on thinking of the art of Kalidasa which glistens like a thread of gold in the fabric of our culture.

Art is the creative expression of the fundamental values of a culture and should be viewed as one continuous process in the stream of time. If Indian culture is viewed in this way, it should not be difficult to learn the direction of the aesthetic urge as it is brought forth from time to time.

As I listen to the aesthetic harmony of Indian creative art, I hear, in spite of varying conditions and changing factors, one eternal refrain: the search for a richness of the innerself through seeking a co-ordinated fulfilment of our human urges. And it finds expression in the saga of Shiva and Parvati, which Kalidasa sings in words of incomparable beauty.

Kalidasa was a devout worshipper of Shiva. His three plays all begin with a prayer to Him. He begins his *Raghuvamsa* by an obeisance to Parvati and Parmeshwar, "linked like word and sense".

His imagination plays round Shiva and Parvati. He has described with exquisite fondness the Lord's characteristics and moods: his weapons, garb, the serpents which He wears, His world-shaking laughter.

The poet refers to His mount, Nandi, as also to the lion, Kumbhodara, the living footstool which the Lord uses in order to climb on the bull's back. In bewitching phrase he has described the love of Shiva and Parvati as also Kailasa and other mountain-tops on which He sports with Her. He also refers to His generosity and munificence, His omnipresence and omnipotence.

To the poet, Shiva is *Vishwagurorguruh*, the master of all the worshipful teachers of the world; also, the Lord of Yoga and the Supreme who pervades the Universe.

I find the same refrain when I view our plastic art, particularly our sculptures. The history of our sculptures began in some pre-historic period when neolithic man looked upon the *linga* and the *yoni* in reverential amazement as representing the creative power. These symbols have been recovered from the relics of the Harappa culture. There is nothing, however, to prove that during the heyday of that culture, or at any time later, these symbols had any physiological significance. It has been only left to the Freud-inspired scholars of the modern West to discover that, in spite of what the Indian himself may have thought about them, they conveyed a libidinous implication to the worshipper.

Iconographically, the parent of all sculptures of divinities in India is the Pashupati and the Mother Goddess of the Harappa culture. Shiva is philologically traced by some scholars to the Tamil *chivan* (red), the divinity who was known to the Vedic Aryans as Nila-lohita "the red one with the blue throat."

The name Uma, is probably *Ma*, the great Mother of the Asian and East Mediterranean people who was certainly a popular deity before the arrival of the Aryans in India. Pashupati was the lord of the animals; Uma the deity of plenty and fecundity, though whether they were associated with each other in iconographic worship, in the pre-historical period, it is difficult to say.

From the earliest times, these icons formed the basic norms of our artistic aspirations. In the following thirty centuries, they have been given a thousand shapes in art, literature, religion and philosophy; it is they alone, who unfold the mystery of our Collective Unconscious not only in its imaginative, emotional and aesthetic aspects, but in those of the intellect and aspirations as well.

The Harappa Pashupati may have been blended with

the Rudra of the Vedic Aryans long before the Vedic period reflected in the *Rigveda*. The description given of this deity is so vivid that it would not be surprising if the Vedic Aryans also worshipped an icon of Rudra. The Rudra of the *Rigveda* is fierce and "destructive like a terrible beast." He is a "bull," "exalted," "the strongest among the strong," "rapid and swift." He is "the unaging Asura," the "Asura of heaven ruling heroes," "Lord (*Ishana*) of the whole world." He is also the "wise," "beneficent," "auspicious" Shiva. He is described as possessing "firm limbs, beautiful lips, a fat belly and brown colour" and as being decked with "gold ornaments and a multi-form necklace." He is *Trayambaka*. Here we have an image of Shiva, in words, but as if carved of an icon. In *Yajurveda* we have the famous verse:

*Namah Shambhavaya cha mayobhuvaya cha namah
Shankaraya cha namah Shivaya cha Shivataraya cha.*

In the post-Vedic period, Shiva was the Great God (*Ishana*). The *Mantropanishad* of *Yajurveda* and the *Mahabharata* both refer to Shiva's exalted position in the pantheon. Patanjali's *Mahabhashya* (200 B.C.) also refers to the icons of Shiva and Skanda. It is possible that the Harappa Pashupati in Yogic posture might have been the ancestral form of the early icon of Shiva, not only as an individual deity but as the presiding deity of the collective organism of life, comprising men, animals, trees, rivers, mountains and forests.

It is difficult to say how far the Upanishadic thought owed its profundity to the earlier Shiva cults. But the *Shvetashvatara Upanishad* clearly shows their influence. He is described there as the Lord of the three worlds: Rudra, the destroyer; Shiva, the benevolent; Giri-shanta and Giritra, one who has manifested himself in the uni-

verse as *Param-Brahma*, enveloping all: a description which gives Shiva a high place in the Upanishadic philosophy. The *Agama* scriptures indicate an independent origin, possibly the same source.

It is not impossible that Buddhism owes its paraphernalia to these cults. Long before the Yaksha cult, with its stone images of the Yakshas and Yakshis, came into vogue the *linga* and *ligodbhava* icons—possibly of Austric origin—may have been in use for worship. The Gudimallama Shiva is only a surviving specimen of an iconographic tradition which must have originated several centuries before the Mauryan period.

As Mahayana Buddhism was to fade imperceptibly into mediaeval Shaivism, it is legitimate to infer that it was built on the existing Shiva cults, while Buddha's teachings provided only a moral and philosophic superstructure. When the superstructure rotted, only Shaivism was left, though modified.

* * * *

The great Asiatic mother Goddess, *Ma* and the father god *Atthis*, of the pre-historic period, were associated, one with the lion, the other with a bull, as were Shakti and Shiva. The Vedic Dyaus and Prithvi or Aditi, are the Aryan equivalents of the same deities. Even in Vedic times, as the *Devisukta* of *Rigveda* shows, the supreme goddess was associated with Rudra as his strength and was the most worshipful.

In the *Kenopanishad*, one of the earliest in point of time, Indra, the Vedic god, "came upon the Woman, even upon her who shines out of many forms, Uma, the daughter of the Himalaya!" To her he said: "Who is this mighty Yaksha?" She replied "It is the Eternal. Of the Eternal is this victory in which ye shall grow to

greatness." Then alone Indra came to know that this was the Brahman. This curious association of pre-Vedic Uma and Yaksha with the Vedic Indra and Upanishadic Brahman indicates a milestone in the harmonisation of different layers of beliefs and concepts to produce the later idea of Shiva and Shakti. It also shows a possible connection between the earliest images of Yaksha and Yakshi.

Shiva and Shakti, indissolubly linked as they are in the imagination of India as the creator and the creative principle, had a colourful family representing the collective organism of life. Their son, the elephant-headed Ganesha—a pre-Aryan deity who at first obstructed all auspicious things—emerged as the wise and auspicious god. Kartikeya, the god of war, also perhaps an early Dravidian deity, was straightforward and heroic. The inseparable and faithful Nandi was the animal aspect of the God himself, the progenitor of animal life. Cosmic unity was symbolised by the moon which Shiva wore on his crest. The starry Mandakini flowing in the heavens found an asylum in the locks of Shiva and, thanks to his grace, flowed on earth also as the Ganga, the mother of purity and plenty.

The conception of Shiva gradually became cosmic. As Pashupati, he is Lord of the animal world; as Vanapati, the Lord of the forests. To rescue the impure, He holds the heavenly Ganga in his locks. As Rudra, he is the terrific destroyer, as Shiva, he is benevolent. In his auspicious moods, he is a charming youth. He is also the master who first taught men music and sculpture, wisdom and Yoga which destroys the bondage of earthly existence. He is the cosmic power, "the Absolute," the "All-pervading" as Kalidasa describes him.

Shakti is equally cosmic. In her womb are both creation and doom. She is also Kali, the closing aspect of

creation, as Shiva is Mahakala. Shiva is also *tapas*, the living fire of stern self-discipline, which sublimates human urges. He it is who renders human aspirations creative by destroying the dross of life. Uma is unflinching devotion, ready to die in order to win Shiva, a theme which Kalidasa wove into his immortal *Kumara-Sambhava*. As Ambika or Parvati, the mother, she is loving as well as benevolent. As Durga, she is irresistible. Both of them protect the gods and men when wickedness and brutal power turn the creation to godlessness. Of them are born Kumara or Kartikeya, the destroyer of evil, and Ganesha, the wise, for the rescue of the good.

Both Shiva and Parvati are timeless time, united and equal, benevolent and terrific.

XCIX

THE COSMIC ROMANCE—THE SUBLIME IN STONE

RAJ BHAVAN, LUCKNOW
April '22, 1956

IN my last letter I referred to the cosmic romance of Shiva and Shakti.

Literature and art, no less than religion and philosophy in India, have revolved round Shiva and Shakti. As the central figures of the cosmic romance, they are human in their appeal and yet elevating in their significance.

On the death of his spouse Sati, Shiva becomes insane with grief. Later, he withdraws himself into an endless meditative trance. Taraka, the wicked demon, then dominates the universe from which the benevolent

god has withdrawn. The affrighted gods and men pray to Shiva that the creation may be rid of the demon. But, in view of Shiva's blessing, the demon could only be destroyed by a new-born infant. To achieve this end, Sati takes another birth as Uma (or Parvati), the daughter of the Himalaya.

In order to woo Shiva, lost in a meditative trance, Parvati performs stern penance. She wears herself to skin and bone, and becomes as emaciated as a withered lily. But Shiva has to be wooed and won and the world to be saved from the wicked Taraka by the creative process merging itself in the creative artist.

Kamadeva, the god of love, and the guardian deity of the creative process, comes to the help of Parvati. He cannot bear that the two deities should remain apart. But his magic has no effect on the divine ascetic who opens his third eye, and burns the officious god to ashes. Kama, his body reduced to ashes, just remains the quivering flame, which makes man and woman one and indivisible. Ultimately, Shiva relents and the cosmic man and woman come together. They are reunited so that the end of creation might be gained and evil destroyed.

Parvati's penance, immortalised in Kalidasa's *Kumarsambhava*, stirred and still continues to stir the Indian imagination, and has been inspiring poetry, drama and art again and again.

Another dramatic episode symbolises the evolutionary process through a struggle between good and evil, between the pride of brutal strength and the vigour of high aspiration. In this Shiva appears as the cosmic saviour. The titans wax strong, for Shiva is too benevolent to deny them the boon for which they had asked. But in their strength they oppress creation. The gods, therefore, wish to secure immortality. So they invite the titans to churn

the ocean to secure the divine nectar of immortality. This churning of the ocean is the eternal process of evolution. As it goes on, chaos the mother of darkness, is agitated and throws up the poison, Kalakuta, the quintessence of sin. This, if allowed to remain unabsorbed, would destroy creation. Shiva, therefore, comes to its rescue and swallows it so that the evolution may ultimately result in the triumph of the good.

This benevolent deity who in his good-nature is a generous dispenser of boons, becomes in the end the saviour *par excellence*. It was he who saved creation by burning Cupid, by keeping the Kalakuta poison in his throat and by marrying Parvati so that Skanda might be born and Tarakasura, the demon, be destroyed. He destroyed Tripura himself when the world needed to be purified; at the prayer of Bhagiratha, he opened out his matted locks to receive the mighty floods of the Ganga which would otherwise have drowned this earth.

Many other similar episodes make these deities nobly human, loveable, protective, terrific and inspiring; the presiding deities of an eternal universe fearlessly marching to ultimate beauty, goodness and truth.



In the course of the centuries has evolved, out of the various forms of these two deities, the Indian imagination, philosophy, tradition, art and human values. As a consequence, each of them has become invested with a vivid and picturesque personality which varies with each aspect.

Shiva is the naked ascetic, the lord of austerities, sometimes a mad man. He presides over burial and burning grounds. His body is smeared with ashes; his long hair remains matted, and only at times such as those when

he is receiving the Ganga on his head to save the world, does he loosen his locks.

At the same time, he dances, but through the dance he is as much the lord of destruction as of creation. Even if he does not dance as the vanquisher of the wicked, he can dominate the battle. Normally, the trident is his favourite weapon. In one of his hands, he holds the *damaru*, the drum, in the other a *mriga*, a deer. The third hand is held in the symbolic gesture of conferring boons, the fourth assures mankind of protection.

Shiva's third eye in the forehead opens only at times to save mankind and destroy evil. It opened, as we know, when the body of Kamadeva was reduced to ashes, to remain the spirit of a sublimated yearning. Shiva is enveloped either in a tiger-skin or the hide of an elephant. A living serpent is found round his neck. His matted locks are crested with the moon. They bear a skull, the fifth head of Brahma and provide a home for Ganga, the great purifier. Shiva is often shown in sculpture as trampling either the demon Tripura under foot or the dwarf whom the disbelievers once hurled at him.



Shakti, Shiva's timeless spouse, is primal energy and is no less powerful than Shiva. Creation flourishes because of her penances. She is the goddess of domestic joy and plenty, the ideal wife, the ardent lover, the guardian of brides and happy wives. Every panel of the Kailasanatha temple at Ellora shows how her love for Shiva has fired the imagination of generations. Literature and sculpture both describe her jealousy of Ganga, or of Vishnu, when in the form of Mohini he came to foment trouble between the gods and titans. In some parts of the country, Lakshmi and Sarasvati are both

described as her daughters, just as Ganesha the god of wisdom, and Kartikeya the god of war, are her sons.

After the Gupta period, the popularity of Kartikeya appears to have waned in north India. But Ganesha remains the most favourite deity. He is in all the temples, either by himself or associated with his parents. He adorns the front gate of every Hindu house in India. His twinkling eyes and round belly are joyful to look at, at all times. He is the most lovable of the gods. Ganesha is intelligent with the combined intelligence of man and elephant. He is a man of letters. He is the guardian god of scribes and stenographers, for he was the first to take down the *Mahabharata* at the instance of Veda-Vyasa. He is also fond of good food and is extremely kind. He leads the hosts of the *ganas* to battle and brings luck wherever he is worshipped. Wherever Indian influence has reached, Ganesha, of all the Indian gods, has become the favourite deity.

Shakti, like Shiva, also has her different forms. As Parvati the Mother, she decks herself out with all the arts of a woman; as Durga or Mahishasuramardini, her favourite form with the artist, she appears in battle armed with dread weapons. As Kali, the irresistible goddess of battle and victory, she wears like Shiva the tiger-skin and a necklace of skulls. At times, she is portrayed as bony, with her tongue coming out, almost a skeleton.

Durga, says the *Harivamsa*, is both wisdom and pleasure, both darkness and light. The elder sister of Yama, the god of death, she is covered with garment of black silk. She appears under a thousand graceful or splendid forms. At times her glance is horrible; at others it is all sweetness. Her favourite resort is the Vindhya mountains. Her joy is in battle. Now she appears covered with rags, now resplendent in magnificent garments.

She is the night and the twilight. She walks with dishevelled hair. She is death which delights to rend and devour the bleeding, palpitating flesh, and she is also the resplendence of the stars, the beauty of young girls and the happiness of wives.

From the Rigvedic days, the Mother, as we saw, is the queen, the first of worshipful gods, the strength of her Lord.

I am the Queen, the gathered-up of treasures,
 Most thoughtful, first of those who merit worship.
 I bend the bow of Rudra that his arrow may strike
 And slay the hater of devotion.
 On the world's summit I bring forth the Father:
 My home is in the waters, in the ocean.
 Thence I extend o'er all existing creatures,
 And touch even yonder heaven with my forehead.
 I breathe a strong breath like the wind and tempest,
 The while I hold together all existence.
 Beyond this wide earth and beyond the heavens
 I have become so mighty in my grandeur.

(*Rigveda* X. 125)

The *Devi-Mahatmya* in the *Markandeya-Purana* says: "The energy of Shiva is on her face; Yama's power is in her hair; in her arms lies Vishnu's strength; her breasts are like unto the moon. Her waist has the vigour of Indra and her legs and thighs, the speed of Varuna. Brahma is in her feet and in her toes, the fiery Surya." And the artist described this form in numberless Mahishasuramardinis throughout India.

In this triumphant conception, we have the Mother taking her place as the equal of and undivided from the Supreme Lord of the creation.

* * * *

Harivamsa prays to Lord Shiva thus: "I worship thee, Father of this Universe, which thou dost traverse

by invisible ways, great mystic tree with the shining branches, terrible deity with myriad eyes and thousand armours. . . . Protect me, thou the only god, with thine escort of wild beasts; thou art also the pleasure of the senses, the past and the future, imperceptible atom which dost abide in the heart of the disintegrated elements, one and only substance of organic bodies, owing thy birth to none save thyself, O Universal Essence!"

One of the Tamil poets describes the greatness of Shiva in superlative terms:

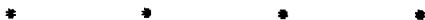
"The ages during which many millions of the gods of heaven shall follow one after the other, each of them living out the appointed period of his life, the time during which many Brahmas shall die, the time after which Vishnu shall cease to be, these ages are as one moment for Shiva. When the time shall be fulfilled in which the sea, the earth, the air, the fire, and the wind shall be annihilated, many millions of Vishnus shall perish, and many millions of Brahmas shall die also. Then shall Shiva collect together all the heads, and of these heads He shall make himself a necklace, and He shall dance upon one foot, a dance that none can imitate, in which this necklace shall clash against his eight shoulders; and He shall sing mysterious tunes such as none other can sing, and He shall taste the pleasure that none other has known."

Of Shiva, the Nataraja, it is stated:

"Our Lord is the dancer, who, like the heat latent in wood for the kindling of fire, diffuses his power through both spirit and matter, and causes them each in turn to dance."

To match this description, we have the sublime in stone in the Maheshamurti. As Rene Grousset says: "The Maheshamurti, the three-headed bust at Elephanta, is perhaps the greatest masterpiece of the world's art. The

three countenances of the one being are here harmonised without a trace of effort. There are few material representations of the divine principle, at once so powerful and so well-balanced, as this in the art of the whole world. Nay, more: here, we have undoubtedly the grandest representation of the pantheist God ever made by the hand of man." In a magnificently poetic outburst, Rodin has celebrated "this full, pouting mouth, rich in sensuous expression, these lips like a lake of pleasure, fringed by the noble, palpitating nostrils." Indeed, never have the exuberant vigour of life, the tumult of universal joy expressing itself in ordered harmony, the pride of a power superior to any other, and the secret exaltation of the divinity immanent in all things found such serene expression. In its Olympian majesty, the Maheshamurti of Elephanta is worthy of comparison with the Zeus of Mylasa or the Asklepios of Melos.



In the *Bhagavad-Gita*, Arjuna, by his surrender, can become the '*nimitta-matra*' or God—His instrument. But according to the Shaivite doctrines, when a man attains absolute integration, Shiva himself manifests in him. This is expressed by Sankaracharya in his inimitable *Nirvana-shatka*.

I am not the mind nor the intellect,
 Nor am I the thought nor the cognising ego;
 Neither am I the ear, the tongue, the nose, the eyes,
 The sky is not I, nor the earth;
 Neither fire nor wind am I;
 For, I am Bliss-Consciousness;
 Shiva is in me, and I am Shiva.

I am not the breath, nor the five-fold vital oars,
 Nor the seven elements, nor the five organs;
 Speech is not me, nor hands, nor feet am I;

For I am Bliss-Consciousness;
Shiva is in me, and I am Shiva.

I know no aversion, nor any attachment I know;
I covet not, nor does illusions shroud my eyes;
I have no pride, nor the touch of envy;
Neither duty nor selfish purpose;
Neither desire, nor freedom am I;
I am Bliss-Consciousness;
Shiva is in me, and I am Shiva.

Transcended have I both virtue and sin;
As also pleasure and pain;
Even chants or sacred places,
Vedas or the sacrifices, have me not;
Nor am I enjoyment;
Neither the enjoyable nor the enjoyer,
Bliss-Consciousness I am;
Shiva is in me, and I am Shiva.

Death claims me not
Nor fear ever shake my calm;
Distinctions that part man from man,
I know not,
I have no father, no mother even,
No brother, friend, no teacher, no pupil,
Nor have I another life;
For Bliss-Consciousness am I;
Shiva is in me, and I am Shiva.

I am the Lord of all my senses,
All attachments have I shed, even freedom lures me not,
Changeless am I, formless and omnipresent,
For Bliss-Consciousness am I;
I am Shiva, Shiva is in me.

Shiva and Shakti are the eternal refrain of the Indian culture, nay, all culture which has faith in the fullness and richness of human existence and its potential strength to bring down God on earth.

MORE OF MUNSHI HEIGHTS—THE HEROES OF
THE EPIC WAR—THE FIERY UNCLE

RAJ BHAVAN, LUCKNOW

May 6, 1956

THIS is the hundredth Letter which I am writing to you fortnight after fortnight. It has been a joy to write to you on different subjects. I wish I could celebrate this occasion in some special way. I can find no better way than for the moment to take you back to the epic war of the Munshi Heights, in continuation of what I wrote in Kulapati's Letter No. 91.

As I told you in the above Letter, I was "the apple of discord" which led to the epic war of the Munshi Heights. I wish I could describe it in iambic pentametres, but since I do not possess the gift of the heroic verse, I must rest content with a prosaic narrative. You will remember that you have been introduced to Mother, Father and his first cousin Adhubhai, generally called "Sarkar". I must now introduce to you the two heroes and a heroine who took the most active part in that event.

* * * *

After my Grandfather's death, his eldest son Parashuram (1837-1901) succeeded to the lordship of the Munshi Heights. We called him Mota-kaka, Great Uncle,—Grand Uncle would be incorrect—a name by which I propose to refer to him in this chronicle.

In the fifties of last century, Great Uncle studied at the Elphinstone Institute in Bombay, but as he was scarcely a success at his books, he soon returned to the

Munshi Heights and decided to follow the ancestral profession of the law.

Once, Great Uncle described to Father in my presence how he became a lawyer. The story was being told for perhaps the thousandth time and it had gained more colour every time it was told. But this time it was recounted by way of a warning to Father, not to expect me to do in my examination as well as he himself had done.

Great Uncle said, "Kanu (that is myself) is going up for an examination! Does he know how I passed my law examination?"

"The day before I started for Bombay for my examination, our *munim* started ahead in a bullock-cart. I followed on horseback. Bhai (Grandfather) had sent men in advance to arrange for my reception at the different towns on the way. Every arrangement was perfect and wherever I went, I received a hearty welcome and a good feast.

"After some days I reached Bombay and put up with Dhirajlal Mathuradas, a great friend of Bhai's. He was the Government pleader in the High Court, as you know.

"Dhirajlal first enquired of me about the welfare of the different members of the family. He then said:

"Look here, Parshu, I shall take you to the Chief Justice tomorrow. I hope you are ready with your answers."

"Don't worry, Kaka' was my reply. 'I will answer all your questions. I am an expert in answering questions. But don't ask me difficult ones.'

"The next day, we proceeded to the High Court, Dhirajlal in a palanquin and myself on horseback. After some time, I was called into the presence of the Chief Justice, who was seated on a big chair in the majesty of wig and gown. I saluted him respectfully.

“Dhirajlal had some conversation with the Chief Justice in English about me. The Chief Justice then asked him: ‘Does the candidate know what is the law of mortgage?’

“Dhirajlal then turned to me and asked in Gujarati: ‘Parshuram Munshi, are you married?’

“I promptly answered in the affirmative. Dhirajlal told the Chief Justice that I knew all about mortgages.

“‘Ask him what is the equity of redemption’ the Chief Justice said to Dhirajlal.

“Dhirajlal again turned to me and asked in Gujarati: ‘How many persons were invited on the occasion of your marriage feast and what were the dishes served?’

“‘Sir, there were three dishes of sweets,’ I replied and described the menu.

“‘That is enough,’ said Dhirajlal to me and turned to the Chief Justice with a smile. ‘My Lord, the answer is correct,’ he said. ‘It must be correct. He comes from a lawyers’ family. His father is a lawyer; his grandfather was a lawyer. The Munshis suck in the law with their mothers’ milk.’

“The Chief Justice smiled. He took a big quill pen, dipped it into a huge inkpot and signed the *sanad* which lay near him. His Lordship then handed it over to me. I saluted as humbly as I could, gathered up the *sanad* and marched out triumphantly from the Court.

“That same night, Dhirajlal gave a feast in my honour. Next day, I mounted my horse again and returned happily to Broach with the *sanad*. Look here, no one can snatch away the *sanad* from me. Can he? Even if you go on coaching up your weakling of a boy for years to come, Mankabhai, he would never be able to do what I did.”

I do not remember what my childish thoughts were on hearing of this exploit, but I must have been distressed

at the thought that the days of the sucking in of the law with the mother's milk had gone.



After a few years of practice, Great Uncle became stone-deaf and gave up the profession.

Since Grandfather's death, he had continued to be the unquestioned master of the Munshi Heights and the dictator of the caste till they came to be ranged in two camps as a result of the epic war.

Every morning Great Uncle used to sit gossiping on his verandah with anyone who happened to pass in the street. He, however, could hear very little of what the other person said. The gossip, therefore, was generally a monologue and a very interesting one too. In the afternoon also, he sat on the verandah of the New Temple which abutted on the high road, exchanged greetings with the passers-by, and entertained such of them as came up to him with his lively monologues.

Great Uncle was an expert in handling men and could relate stories with great skill. He could also talk to the ladies very sweetly when he was in a mood to do so. He could talk nonsense, abuse or threaten, and make people laugh or, when necessary, cry. When he roared with anger, though it was invariably play-acting, everyone was terrified.

Great Uncle had inscribed his life's motto on the wall in front of the swing on which he generally sat: "Eat your bread with sugar; win the world with pugnacity." And he *was* pugnacious.

It seems that Great Uncle had lived a very riotous life in his younger days. Once I remember standing on our doorstep with Mother when some workmen were

going past with headloads of earth excavated from a well which had not been used for half a century. Seeing some broken bottles in the baskets, I asked Mother what they were for.

Great Uncle, who was sitting on the verandah opposite, coolly replied: "Those are our exploits, my boy."

Mother was furious at this reply. Later on, I was told that these bottles of wine, when their contents had been drunk, had been thrown into the well after a carousal by Grand Uncle and his friends in the youth.

The wife of Great Uncle, a wizened old lady, was a character in her own right.

I once heard her make the scornful remark when she saw some young lady wearing gold bracelets. "In my days, women of only two families put on gold bangles: those of my own and those of my father-in-law's. Now every little slut affects them. Oh what a world!"

When I went to college, I became an ardent champion of the education of women and began to induce some ladies of the family to learn to read and write. Aunt was very unhappy.

"Don't you know that if girls are given education, they immediately become widows?" she asked me on one occasion.

Another time she observed: "Why waste education on girls? I am not educated. What then? Would a literate girl, when dead, require more fuel than I for my funeral pyre? Should I need it less when I am gone, because I am uneducated?"

This argument was clinching; I had no answer.

* * * *

The other hero of the war was Rambhai, the second son of Grandfather, Father being the third. It was said

of him that he had passed some kind of law examination; I am not sure what it was, but he attended the courts. I could never understand how, with that qualification, he had been a railway station-master at one time.

Rambhai was a congenital fire-eater. Mother describes an exploit of his early years in these words:

“Great Uncle once ordered some choice food to be prepared. The ladies prepared it. As Rambhai had not returned home by dinner time, Tapi took the food to his room and kept it there for him.

“At 11 o'clock at night, Rambhai returned home. Phool Kuwar, his wife, who had returned from her parents' after taking her dinner there, said, 'Please take your food. Here it is, ready for you.'

“‘Have they all finished their meals?’ asked Rambhai.

“Rambhai's wife was equally made of inflammable materials. ‘Do you think everybody would wait for you? They have all gone to sleep after their dinner,’ she said angrily and drifted into narrating other grouses of the day. ‘Your sister, Rukhiba, is very conceited. In the morning when I offered an apple to your younger sister, she was not allowed to take it.’

“She also reported to her husband some caustic comments made by Great Uncle about him.” Mother continues the narrative:

“On hearing this, Rambhai flew into a rage and began abusing everybody. In an outburst of temper, he rushed downstairs, took up a sword and began to look for Parshu. Hearing the abuses of Rambhai, Parshuram came out of his room to retort. Seeing a sword in Rambhai's hand, however, he ran away and hid himself in Adhubhai's room. By the kindness of Shivaji, he escaped death.

“Rambhai, unsuccessful in finding Parshu, returned

to his room even more angry. He threw the sword on the ground, and the plate in which the food had been kept out of the window, as also the jug of water and the box of *pan*. Meanwhile, Mankelal came in and wisely took the sword away and hid it in his room.

“Rambhai also tore his scarf lengthwise, wore one of the pieces as a loincloth (as sadhus do) and rushed out of the house shouting ‘Har Shambho. Narayan, Narayan ...’ (as if he was giving up worldly life).

“Maneklal with only a dhoti on, ran after him. The ladies, though awake, lay quiet in their beds till Rambhai had left the house.

“Rambhai went straight to Dashashwamedh (the burning ground on the bank of the river) and sat down there like a sadhu. Maneklal persuaded him, however, to return home. When they came, it was four o'clock in the morning.

“Rambhai did not come down from his room for three days. Great Uncle would not venture even to come to the common dining room for meals for days.”

• • • •

Uncle Rambhai and his wife usually rose from bed at about midday. Then Uncle would go to the court and Aunt would betake herself to the house of her parents. In the evening both would return to the Munshi Heights, take tea together and rest.

Then their day would begin, Uncle would take his bath and perform his *pūjā* (worship) and aunt would prepare the food. At midnight, after taking *bhang*, the intoxicant sacred to the god Mahadevji, they would eat their food and gossip till about two or three in the morning.

“A *yogi* keeps awake in what is night for all other

beings, and when everyone else is awake, it is night to him." If this dictum of the *Gita* is correct, then both Uncle and Aunt were certainly yogis.

Uncle had only one friend, a Muslim aristocrat by the name of Faizamian. Almost every evening, they would go for a walk together. Sometimes Faizamian would have his dinner with Uncle at the Munshi Heights. But the Muslim friend would sit to eat at a distance; Aunt would also serve him from a distance for, in matters of food, they were orthodox. After dinner, Faizamian would put his plate a little away from the other plates and Aunt would reclaim it after purifying it with live charcoal.

Once a year or so, when he would also invite Uncle to dinner at his house, Faizamian would respect his Brahmanical susceptibilities. On the appointed day, Faizamian would get his compound cleaned and purified with cowdung and would procure a Brahman from the town to cook Uncle's food in milk.

I remember having accompanied Uncle once to such a dinner. We went to Faizamian's house, washed our hands and feet with water which had been brought by the Brahman from the river, changed into silk clothes and ate the food specially prepared for us. Both Uncle and his friend would then be happy.

In Broach those were the days of very happy relations between the Hindus and Muslims. They respected each other's social scruples and never felt that religious differences could come between friends.

* * * *

The most noteworthy participant in the epic war, however, was Rukmini, universally referred to as

Rukhiba, Father's elder sister, who had become a widow when a child. Affectionately brought up by her parents, she was also treated with consideration by her brothers, even after she had developed into a terror.

Rukhiba was allotted a room on the first floor of the family house, in which high-perched cave she lived like a dread lioness.

For that age Rukhiba was accomplished. She was also, in her own way, religious. She took her bath in the river, but never, so far as I remember, went to a temple. She was an excellent cook and an expert at organising social functions.

Above all, she was the most accomplished artist at the customary mournings. According to the custom of the caste, when there was a premature death, women gathered together for ten days to perform the mourning ritual of dirges to the accompaniment of beating the breast. On such occasions, Rukhiba's *rajias* (dirges) were the most heart-rending and her references to the deceased, the most touching. The tremor which she brought into her voice was more moving than the dying song of the soprano which I heard in a Neopolitan theatre years later.

Whenever I heard her tragic dirges, my little heart throbbed with pain and tears came into my eyes. But she was an artist through and through. She remained unperturbed, though the tears she shed on such occasions were enough to irrigate all the stony hearts in the world.

Rukhiba cared only for Chandulal, my youngest uncle. She had brought him up and looked after him with the ferocity of a wild beast with its cub. To the rest of the world she was unforgiving.

Rukhiba's courage was boundless. She could cajole anybody with success when it suited her. She could

spread scandal with almost superhuman effrontery. With her endless intrigues, she could split any domestic unit with the expert skill of an atomic scientist. And the vocabulary at her command was always picturesque; she could impregnate the most commonplace word with flaming colours.

But when Rukhiba was angry—and that was often—the welkin resounded with her thunderous abuse and her tongue acquired the scorching properties of raging lava.

I have never seen such a quality in any other person. For well nigh fifty years the family and the caste trembled before its might. The very idea of Rukhiba getting into a temper brought tears to my mother's eyes.

When both were old, Rukhiba was obliged to surrender to the all-embracing kindness of Mother, whom she had hated and done her best to ruin; and, as the irony of fate would have it, the only person who looked after her during her last two years of life with loyalty and solicitude was 'Kanu', whom she had cursed from the very moment of his birth.

The further history of the "epic war" will follow when I feel like writing it.

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