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N. C. Kelkar

R. M. Gole

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NARSINHA CHINTAMAN KELKAR

(1872-1947), popularly known as Tatyasaheb Kelkar, was a journalist, a historian and an artist with a sensitive feeling for words. Personal integrity, honesty in public dealings, simple living, respect and love for books, music and all the graces of life, a sense of social responsibility, loyalty to family, friends and country were the characteristics of N. C. Kelkar.

Kelkar handled every branch of literature, poetry, drama, history, fiction, novel, literary criticism, biography, editorials, essays and reviews with equal authority and ease, both in his speeches and writings.

In 1932 his friends, admirers and various literary associations conferred upon him the title '*Sahitya Samrat*'.

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Cover design: Satyajit Ray

Portrait: C. M. Rudra

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RE REVISED PRICE Rs. 15-00

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MAKERS OF INDIAN LITERATURE

N. C. KELKAR

by

R. M. GOLE

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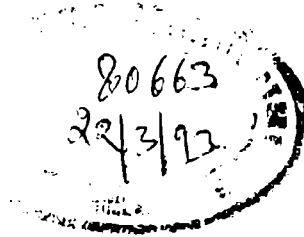


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First Published : 1976

891.460 924
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Published by Sahitya Akademi and printed by Syed Ishaque at
Sangam Press Limited, 17B Kothrud, Poona 411 029.

Acknowledgements

My thanks are due to :

Sri. Jayantrao Tilak who allowed me free use of the Kesari Office Library.

Sri. V. D. Ghate and Sri. Achyut Patwardhan who went over the manuscript with me and made some very valuable suggestions.

Sri. Prabhakar Padhye without whose sustained interest the book would have been without many important additions and amendments.

The Sahitya Akademi for entrusting me with the work of writing the book.

R. M. Gole

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CHAPTER ONE

From Modnimb to Poona

THE Kelkars originally belonged to Nanivade, a small village in Konkan about seven miles east of Devagad. Like most Chitpawan families, the Kelkars were poor and like most Chitpawans from the Konkan who migrated to Desh in search of employment, N. C. Kelkar's grandfather left his native village and went to Miraj, then the capital of a small native State in Maharashtra. Kelkar's father, Chintaman, was born in 1840. He too found employment in the Miraj State clerical service on a salary of Rs. 3/- per month. He was later transferred to Modnimb, a small taluka town in the State as an Awwal Karkun or Head Clerk. Chintaman Kelkar stayed in Modnimb for over twelve years and it was here that Narasinha Chintaman was born on 24th August, 1872. He was the youngest of three brothers. Narayan or Nana, the eldest, became a graduate and served as a teacher in Dhulia, Poona and Satara. He was an intelligent man fond of books and newspapers and it was due to him that Kelkar developed the habit of reading the 'Kesari' regularly.+ The second brother, Mahadeo alias Appa joined the revenue service and retired as a Deputy Collector.

Kelkar himself graduated in 1891 and took his law degree in

+ Autobiography, p. 82.

1894. Shripad Krishna Kolhatkar who later became famous as a Marathi writer was his contemporary. They became good friends and remained so throughout their lives. About these college days in Poona and Bombay, Kolhatkar writes, 'Kelkar was then a very bright and handsome young man. Even as a student we discovered his natural bent for compromise. Whenever our discussions or arguments generated a lot of heat, Kelkar would step in, and after finding out what the discussion was about, suggest a compromise.'⁺ This natural bent for compromise remained with Kelkar throughout his life. Kolhatkar also noticed at the time Kelkar's capacity for hard work. 'Most of us went to sleep after a hearty meal, but Kelkar would always be found busy writing. He was then making a prose translation of Walter Scott's "Rokeby". While at College we were very fond of seeing Parsee and Gujarati plays. I was then writing my play "Veeratanaya" and received great encouragement from Kelkar. This was particularly so about my literary essays.'^{*}

About this time, in 1892, Kelkar was deeply pained by the language used against each other by Tilak and Agarkar through their respective papers. He wrote a letter about it to the 'Gnyan-prakash' in which he said that while Poona people were very fond of argument, their one fault was that persons arguing from different points of view did not hesitate to abuse one another in foul language. In the same letter, Kelkar expressed his views on what he expected of a newspaper. 'The main business of a newspaper', he said, 'is to make the ignorant and the young familiar with the opinions of the learned and educated men of experience, write well informed articles on social, moral and political topics and so bring about the awakening of the people.'^{*} Kelkar had no idea when he wrote this that one day in his later life, he would become the editor of the very weekly in Maharashtra about which he expressed these views but it throws revealing light on his future career as a journalist. We get an interesting sidelight on

⁺ Ibid., pp. 168-169.

^{*} Ibid., pp. 168-171.

this from what Agarkar himself wrote about his differences with Tilak. In his article 'An Open Letter to the Maharashtrians' he says, 'Instead of admiring the way in which the two redoubtable opponents fight each other in support of their ideas, people accuse them of personal jealousy. This is unfair. My friends, why are you so afraid of a clash of ideas ? There is nothing like it to destroy evil custom and to promote good manners, compassion, a search for truth and love of knowledge.'

In 1895, Kelkar settled down at the district town of Satara and started his legal practice. Though he was not particularly fond of the profession, he seems to have been happy enough at Satara, quite content to lead the typical life of a young, intelligent but as yet a briefless lawyer of a middle class family—a few hours in the law court, a few at the local club's tennis court, some literary activity and a little participation in the public life of the city.

Satyendranath Tagore, the elder brother of the Poet was then the District Judge at Satara and Kelkar soon became very friendly with the family. He studied enough Bengali to be able to adapt into Marathi Jyotirindranath Tagore's play 'Sarojini'.

But very soon after, this even tenor of Kelkar's life took a sudden turn and plunged him headlong into the public life, first of Maharashtra and then of the whole country. Kelkar writes in his autobiography, 'In February 1896, Tilak visited Satara. As I was young, intelligent and a briefless lawyer, I was assigned the duty of keeping him company and looking after his comforts. We talked for hours together and I asked him many questions on 'Gramanya'* and the controversy over the Social Conference meeting in the same pendal as the Political. I agreed with his views on the one but not on the other, a fact which could not have escaped his notice. This, however, did not prejudice his mind against me as became evident the very next month.'

* Gramanya means social boycott. Some gentlemen of Poona took or were supposed to have taken tea at the local Christian Mission and therefore were boycotted by the community.

In the first week of March, while Tilak was travelling to Miraj, Sri. Govindrao Ranade, a senior pleader from Satara, got on the same train, and since they knew each other, travelled in the same compartment. During the course of conversation Tilak said, 'I am on the lookout for a young law graduate who will help me conduct my law class and also write in the "Mahratta"'. It is true that this may not prove a very attractive prospect but if everyone thinks so, how can any public activity be carried on?'

Govindrao promised Tilak that he would be on the lookout for a suitable man.

After a few days Govindrao returned to Satara and we happened to meet in the bar room. As soon as he saw me he said, 'Kelkar, I have a job for you. Will you take it?' He then told me about his talk with Tilak. Writing was no problem for me but I was apprehensive about conducting the law class. But Govindrao brushed aside my objections and persuaded me to accept Tilak's offer. Tilak immediately called me to Poona for an interview. So I landed in Poona and was Tilak's guest.

I told Tilak that while I was fairly confident of my ability to edit the 'Mahratta', I was not sure whether I could write in the 'Kesari'. 'That question doesn't arise at present', Tilak said. 'It would be enough if you manage the law class and edit the "Mahratta"'. At present Mr. Waknis looks after the law class. I shall have a talk with him about the law class and let you know.' Thereafter I returned to Satara, thinking that it would at least be a couple of months before I heard from Tilak.

But again, things turned out differently. In his letter to Ranade dated 15th March, Tilak wrote, 'There is no question of any misunderstanding between us (Tilak and Kelkar) about the law class. But I don't want any misunderstanding between us about the policy of the paper. I do not wish to deprive him (Kelkar) of his freedom of opinion but both the "Kesari" and the "Mahratta" have a definite policy and that policy must never change. Kelkar must always remember this.....I believe that I am now approaching the end of my life and I am looking for a friend and worker who will

FROM MODNIMB TO POONA

never desert me during the rest of my public life.'⁺ About future prospects, Tilak said that they would entirely depend on my capacity for hard work and my ability. He ended the letter by saying that if I agreed to all this, I should report for work on 1st April.

This letter was dated 15th March. But the very next day, that is on 16th morning, Ranade received a wire from Tilak reading as under :

'If terms accepted ask Kelkar start immediately. Wire.'

Things moved so fast and so unexpectedly, writes Kelkar, that he hardly had time to consult his elder brother before taking the final decision. In a letter he wrote to him afterwards he remarks, 'It seems that my life is about to take a favourable turn. I shall get a double appointment, as a teacher in Tilak's law class and as the joint editor of the "Mahratta".' 'In this way,' says Kelkar, 'instead of spending the rest of my life in Satara, I became a permanent resident of Poona, a hundred percent Poonaites.'⁺

⁺ Autobiography, pp. 191-192.

⁺ Ibid., p. 193.

CHAPTER TWO

Maharashtra 1870-1895

EVERY sensitive person responds in his own fashion to the social and political milieu in which he grows and, while doing so, is himself influenced by the events, personalities and problems which surround him. We have already seen how, even in his student days, Kelkar reacted to events happening around him and it would be useful to take a close look at the events and personalities contemporaneous with Kelkar and which undoubtedly affected him. The politics of Maharashtra, writes Kelkar in his biography of Tilak, was like a high tide at sea when one mounting wave after another travels further and further towards the shore. The second generation of educated men of Maharashtra moved further forward than the first in its independence of thought and judgement and the third overtook the second in its desire for freedom and the need for personal sacrifice to achieve it. We see this process of expanding awareness from Dadabhai Naoroji to Justice Ranade to Vishnushastri Chiplunkar. The work which Vishnushastri started after resigning from government service was carried on as a full time job by Tilak and Agarkar. This was the natural result of the growing political and national consciousness in the country.

Let us take a look at the religious, social and educational conditions that prevailed in Maharashtra after the advent of British rule.

It took some time for the people of Maharashtra to realise that the Union Jack atop the Shaniwar Wada marked not just the replacement of one ruler by another but the beginning of revolutionary changes in the prevailing system of administration, education, law, justice and taxation. The new dispensation found the ruling class of Brahmins thoroughly demoralised and incapable of adapting themselves to the new ideas in education and administration sought to be introduced by Elphinstone.

While the urban elite was making desperate efforts to find its feet, the vast rural population in the countryside faced the prospect of total destruction. Pringle's new system of land revenue, based on the utilitarian doctrine of legality and equity broke the old chain between the village Patel, the Mamlatdar, the Deshmukh and the Court at Poona. It also destroyed the old sense of cohesion and mutual dependence in the village community and created instead a new class of absentee landlords. The erstwhile owners and cultivators, deprived of a living link with the land they cultivated, found themselves reduced to the status of landless labourers working for a mere pittance on land which they once owned. The new ryotwari system of land revenue generated new social tensions in the countryside which, heightened by the terrible famine of 1872, culminated in the peasant riots of 1875.*

The impact of Elphinstone's new educational policy was first visible among the urban population. The Bombay University, a visible symbol of the new educational policy, was founded in 1857.

Before 1875, the year in which Tilak passed his B.A. examination, there were only 179 graduates in Maharashtra. In 1874, there were about 35 to 37 pleaders in Poona. In 1880, there were less than five thousand primary schools in the Presidency and the number of students 275,000. The first girls' non-missionary primary school in Poona was started by Jotiba Phule in 1848. This generated such resentment that people used to pelt his wife with stones because she went there to help him. The High School

* For details see 'Western India in the nineteenth century' by Ravindra Kumar (Routledge and Kegan Paul 1968).

for Indian Girls, then known as the Female High School, was started in 1884 and right upto 1914-15 a maid servant used to go round from house to house to collect the girls and shepherd them safely to school. Mrs. Ramabai Ranade did this herself when the school was first started. The 'Dnyanprakash' was started in 1849 and the 'Deenabandhu' started by Bhalekar, a co-worker of Jotiba Phule, in 1868. There were 'Darpan' and 'Prabhakar' published from Bombay and the 'Dnyanodaya' of the Christian missionaries. The first printed almanac came out in 1831 and Dadoba Pandurang's grammar in 1836.

In the same year, Sripad Babaji Thakur went to England to sit for the I.C.S. examination. He was the first Maharashtrian student to do so. The hold of religious bigotry and tradition on the community as a whole was evident from the fact that though the Sarvajanic Sabha had arranged to send a representative from Maharashtra to give evidence before the Finance Commission in England, (1872), no one could be found to undertake the journey because of the fear of social and religious boycott. The same reason probably prevented Ranade from going to England though, in the normal course of things, he should have done it even before Ferozeshah Mehta. The same religious intolerance is evident in the notorious 'Gramanya' episode which shook the Brahmin community of Poona later on.

Kelkar records the fact that when Tilak visited Madras in 1898, he invited a number of prominent citizens of the town to dinner. There were highly educated men among the invitees; graduates, double graduates, teachers and lawyers. But so strong was the hold of religious tradition that all the Iyers had their meal on the ground floor and all the Iyengars on the first floor. There were also two different sets of people to serve them.

After this, not much need be said about the condition of women. We see a very compassionate picture of it drawn by Hari Narayan Apte in many of his novels. But the signs of the changing times were there. The Widow Remarriage Society was founded in 1865. The first widow remarriage in Maharashtra took place on 15 June, 1869. It was the first expression in fact of a thought that

was then agitating the people's mind. It is also significant because it attracted the attention of Maharshi Karve to the problem and laid the foundation of his monumental work in the cause of women's emancipation.

Another important fact noticeable at the time was the growing poverty of the peasant of Maharashtra. A terrible famine in 1872 took heavy toll of the countryside. So widespread was its impact that in many places the peasants rose in revolt. Coming as the famine did just a few years before Lord Lytton's Darbar where Queen Victoria was proclaimed the Empress of India, it brought out the contradiction between British profession and practice towards India whose significance was not lost on the people.

In a community already overloaded with caste and custom there now emerged a new caste, that of the English educated Indians. They were so dazzled by their contact with Western ideas, Western culture, the Western way of life that they no longer had any use for their own language, their religion, their customs and their country. Haribhau Apte makes fun of the type through a character in one of his novels. Vishnushastri first pointed out the grave danger which faces a country and its people who lose their national moorings and prefer to live as bond slaves of an alien culture.

Between these two worlds, the one dead or dying and the other powerless to be born, stood the figure of Mahadeo Govind Ranade. A man of towering intellect, who, like Bacon, took all knowledge for his province, Ranade used all the skill at his command to put some life into this shapeless mass of humanity by starting or giving shape to numerous activities that would make people conscious of their manifold responsibilities towards the society in which they lived. The need for this becomes evident when we read that the politics of the day was so elementary and simple that complaint about a dirty or a narrow road was considered to be politics. Local Self Government was, of course, conspicuous by its absence. All the public institutions and organisations started at this time and some of which survive even today, like the Debating Society, the

Summer Lecture Series, the Industrial Conference, the Female High School, the Native General Library, the Prarthana Samaj, the Sarvajanik Sabha were either born out of Ranade's head or had his active support. For nearly twentyfive years and practically throughout his life, Ranade taught people how to organise themselves, to come on a common public platform to voice their needs and their aspirations.

Ranade believed that every cloud had a silver lining. The Indo-British connection therefore was not an unfortunate accident of history but the manifestation of the divine will. He thought that the British were sent to this country to give it peace and establish here the Rule of Law. It was dangerous therefore to upset this arrangement by thoughtless radical action. His genuine desire to improve the lot of his people and his untiring effort in that direction, his sense of history and his habit of seeking sanctions for all modern reform in ancient doctrine, his deep and original analysis of our economic, industrial and political problems make him the most fascinating figure of this period. Madhav the All-knowing—सर्वज्ञः स हि माधवः—was how people affectionately referred him.

It was inevitable that such a man should follow a policy of compromise, of give and take; walk softly that he may go far. He was a progressive thinker, moderate in action. Without setting his eyes on a distant goal, he applied his mind to the immediate problems of the day and sought their solution. He wanted people to engage themselves in one activity or another, social, political or religious, without mutual acrimony and in a spirit of accommodation and understanding. All roads lead to Rome and there is no need to quarrel over the road you take as long as you walk along it with resolution and faith.

Tilak and Agarkar who were fourteen years younger than Ranade, belonged to the new generation. They advocated a far more radical action than Ranade, were not afraid to upset the apple cart of the British Raj even by revolutionary action if necessary. Tilak concentrated all his energies on the political advancement of the people. He firmly believed that social and other reforms will follow on the attainment of freedom and blamed

Ranade and others of his way of thinking for dividing the attention of the people between the two. He got support for his political agitation by not hurting people's social and religious traditional beliefs and so successful and popular were his methods that by the time Kelkar came and joined him, he had already made his mark in the public life of Maharashtra and was looked upon as the leader of the people.

Different from these two but most remarkable in the history of our renaissance, was Agarkar. Unlike Ranade and Tilak, he was a revolutionary on all fronts. God appeared to him in the form of human reason against which every idea had to be tested and rejected if found wanting. He did not plead for women's emancipation out of compassion like Ranade but because reason and intelligence made it both inevitable and just. He criticised Tilak for taking an equivocal attitude in social and religious matters but in politics he was as great a revolutionary as Tilak himself. Unfortunately he died young.

It was in this transitional period of ferment that Kelkar joined Tilak and started writing in the 'Mahratta.' He had already met Tilak and must have been aware of their different points of view. In the matter of social reform, his views did not agree with those of Tilak and unlike Tilak, he was incapable of raising a political storm and ride it to success. Agarkar was, on the other hand, too much of a radical to suit his temperament. While he did his political apprenticeship under Tilak, Kelkar found in Ranade a more kindred spirit. Ranade combined tradition with reform, believed in knowledge as the key to human progress and trusting to the inevitability of gradualness, followed the middle path of accommodation and compromise. The middle path was also the magnetic point of Kelkar's personality and we find him advocating it in all his writings—political, social, religious and literary.

Much of the material in this Chapter is taken from Tilak's Biography by Kelkar, 'Adhunika Bharat' by Acharya Javadekar and 'Ajkaleha Maharashtra'—'Maharashtra—yesterday and to-day' by S. Tikekar and Prabhakar Padhye.

CHAPTER THREE

The Journalist

‘A newspaper is like a carpet which shows unity and uniformity in diversity and a wonderful combination of different colours. The press is like a weaver’s loom but the loom in this case is the roaring loom of time’. (N. C. Kelkar—Collected works vol.10, page 407.)

On 17th March, 1896, Kelkar arrived in Poona and took over the editorship of ‘Mahratta’. For almost thirty-five years thereafter he worked on the staff of both ‘Kesari’ and ‘Mahratta’ as the editor or sub-editor. He thus became what he said everyone connected with a newspaper must be, a professional journalist.

To appreciate Kelkar’s work as a journalist we must look at the genesis of the two papers and the ideals their founders had placed before themselves.

The papers were originally a joint venture of V. K. Chiplunkar, G. G. Agarkar and Lokmanya Tilak. Vishnushastri Chiplunkar was the first editor of the ‘Kesari’ and while giving notice of the publication of the two weeklies, the founders said:

‘Up to now newspaper editors have not shown sufficient awareness of their responsibility or how much they can contribute to the general reform of society by their effort.’ (Kesari 4.1.1881)

‘Newspaper Editors are the advocates and watchdogs of the

people and we have decided to fulfil both these functions with as much care and attention as possible.'

'From our preliminary handout every reader must have realised that the publishers of the paper are independent in every respect and quite incapable of behaving as government stooges.' (Kesari 3.1.1882).

These extracts throw into prominence three objectives of these weeklies: (1) they would act as guardians of peoples' rights. (2) would generally contribute to their improvement and reform and (3) would be in no way obliged to the government for any favour. The three stalwarts mentioned above became the guiding lights of the two weeklies in rapid succession. Vishnushastri, after a very brief editorial work, died in 1882. Agarkar then took over the editorship of the Kesari. But soon after, as differences arose between him and Tilak regarding the policies of the papers, the two decided to part and Tilak became the sole proprietor of 'Kesari' and 'Mahratta'. As a result, the policies and programmes of the two papers became homogeneous, projecting the thought and image of a single mind devoted to the emancipation of the people.

Vishnushastri in his time taught the people to take pride in their past achievement and their promising future. Agarkar consistently raised his powerful voice against every kind of injustice.

While underlining these special features, Tilak brought to the weeklies a new prestige by his scholarship, fearless criticism of government, an emphasis on principles rather than personalities and the knack of using every contemporary event to educate the people, make them conscious of their rights and responsibilities and bold enough to express their opinions without fear or favour.

'Politics', said Kelkar in his essay on "Indian Journalism", 'is the soul of journalism' and the two weeklies of Tilak tended this soul and displayed its strength and splendour throughout their stormy career.

Tilak used the pages of Kesari to checkmate and criticize the government at every step and so forthright and fearless was his criticism of government policies and so strong his convictions

that not once but twice in his stormy career the government thought it necessary to sentence him to various terms of imprisonment.

One must understand this background before one can put Kelkar's work as a journalist in its proper perspective.

In some respects, Kelkar was eminently suited for the profession. From his college days he was fond of writing, had already started to take interest, though in a small way, in public affairs, had met Tilak and matched his wits against his. While not unmindful of the risks involved, Kelkar's native bent for public service was strong enough to make him accept those risks. The job was also an escape from the tedium of legal practice in a district town.

The job too suited him admirably. 'There was such perfect harmony', he says, 'between the job I selected to earn a living and my natural inclinations as would be difficult to come across elsewhere.' α

Describing his work as editor of the 'Mahratta' Kelkar says 'I could finish my work for the "Mahratta" in four days. But a good journalist must read thrice as much as he writes. I therefore devoted my leisure time to reading. In those days not many new books appeared in Marathi, but English literature of which I was very fond, was a vast treasure house and I read as much of it as I could, which stood me in good stead ever afterwards. A good journalist must not only write well but he must also be well informed and knowledgeable. My writing was seldom very spicy or inspired but it was always packed with information, which partially compensated for the other shortcomings.' θ

Kelkar thus equipped himself with the necessary editorial talent and competence. But there was another serious eventuality he had to guard against. Thanks to their political propaganda and bold criticism of government policies, the papers were in constant danger of incurring government's disfavour. They could be caught

α Autobiography, p. 16.

θ Ibid., p. 234.

in the octopus of the dreaded Press Act and face crippling fines or 'total extinction.

Over long periods Kelkar had to keep these dangers in mind especially when he was, as editor, solely responsible for the policy of the papers during Tilak's absence in jail. It was comparatively easy to write flamboyant articles against the government and either become extinct by closing down the papers or face heavy financial punishment. Kelkar avoided both these pitfalls and yet managed to maintain the status of Kesari as the tribune of the people without deviating from its avowed policy of guarding the peoples' rights, independence of judgement, political education and reform. Editing a newspaper in the peculiar and somewhat explosive political conditions from 1896 right upto 1937, the when Kelkar left the editorial chair was an exercise in tight rope walking where the slightest move either way meant a sure and a fatal fall.

Tilak was shrewd enough to have Kelkar to look after his papers during his long terms of imprisonment. He gratefully acknowledged his debt to Kelkar after his release from jail in 1914 when he said that it was because of Kelkar that he still had a place of his own to stand on.

For 35 years* Kelkar remained the editor either of the 'Mahratta' or 'Kesari' or both and almost every week saw him come out with an editorial on one topic or another of current interest. What is remarkable about this tremendous output is not that he did it regularly week after week but that he did it so well. Even a cursory perusal of the variety of articles that Kelkar wrote as a journalist cannot but impress the reader with his independence of judgement, his extensive knowledge of the topic under discussion and his persuasive and highly delectable style.

As already stated, the main task before Kelkar from 1908 to 1914 was to guard 'Kesari' against its enemies and save it from falling into many conceivable traps. This he did with admirable

* Kelkar resigned the editorship of Kesari before 1932 but continued to supervise and control the policy of the paper till 1937.

skill and legal acumen; but he did something else which vastly added to the prestige and popularity of the paper. Kelkar's ambition to make all knowledge his province, and his innate desire to make that knowledge available to the public, his love of literature and literary pursuits and his native curiosity all combined to widen the scope and range of Kesari's journalistic activities. 'It was a matter of wonder to the readers of Kesari that week after week a fresh and fine garment of silken finish consisting of some new, original and thoughtful ideas was presented to them. This created in the readers other interests besides only the political. They now learnt to appreciate the variety and beauty of thought, of generosity, of tolerance.' (S. M. Mate—'Kesari Prabodh'.)

This was a welcome change from Tilak's almost singleminded and incisive political writing directed mostly to rousing people's wrath against a foreign government in a language whose logic was as faultless as its style of almost mathematical precision.

Even a passing glance at the subjects Kelkar handled during this period shows the wide variety of his interests, his often original point of view, his many-sided approach to a problem, his genius for picking up a seemingly trivial subject and raising it to the plane of high seriousness and, above all, his enviable command of the language. As he himself says in discussing Justice Ranade's political stand, 'like passengers in a railway carriage words and circumstances are constantly fighting each other for suitable accommodation,' and it must be admitted to the credit of Kelkar that he finds suitable and comfortable accommodation for both. Here are a few samples of his writing:

In an article on astrology or 'Predicting the Future' he makes fun of the pseudo-science but ends up by saying, 'Predicting the future is nothing but drawing reasonable forecasts from available knowledge and the question, what next? faces every person. This question has never received a definitive answer but everyone tries to make a partial forecast about individuals and societies.' Kelkar then ends the article by saying that it is necessary that everyone should have aims and ideals—goals to be reached and

ideals realised. 'One should have a sense of the possible in deciding one's goals and faith in one's capacity to achieve them.'

Writing about the dowry system and its boycott (3rd March, 1914) Kelkar says, 'Some bad but long-established custom is even more oppressive and durable than political oppression.' He then contrasts the old practice in the matter with the more recent one and takes a sly dig at the reformers who continue the practice but give it a different name.

'The unsophisticated old fashioned people call a dowry a dowry and accept it as such, no more and no less. But the so called reformists exhaust all their skill and legerdemain in trying to give it a more acceptable and less offensive name or form.' As usual he ends the article with a few words of wisdom 'Marriage after all is a purely religious ceremony. But even as a matter of ordinary common sense one must accept that marriage ultimately means a search for a home from home, an opportunity to develop new friendships and new relatives. This attitude must either be born out of innate virtue or consciously cultivated.'

Some of the best things Kelkar wrote are his pen portraits of our great leaders. Look how he starts his portrait of Dadabhai Naoroji:—

'Those whom the gods love, it is said, die young. But the gods must certainly be very malicious or perverse minded people, if we could suppose that they could not love a pre-eminently lovable man like Dadabhai. One would willingly become an atheist if he be told on the semblance of anything like authority that virtues like those possessed by Dadabhai could not constitute a valid claim to become the beloved of the gods.' Or this, of Sir Pheroze-shah Mehta :

'It is indeed interesting to speculate what rank Mr. Mehta might have attained as a public leader without his leonine figure, his stentorian voice, his forceful eloquence and his dashing dialectics. Every one of these qualities taken singly is a great asset for a public leader, but a combination of all the four is bound to make him irresistible. But we have no hesitation in saying that Pheroze-shah's shrewd political sense and sensibility, his wide

grasp of political principles and his statesmanship were in themselves so great that, even without the adventitious aid of the above qualities of personality, he would still have made his mark as a political leader.' Kelkar is also capable of sly and impish humour. Writing about Sir N. Chandavarkar in an article titled 'The Hon'ble Mr. Chandavarkar and Reform from Without' he says:

'Undoubtedly Mr. Chandavarkar is for reform even against maximum resistance and perhaps also at any cost. It is not a little interesting to see such a mild mannered and affable gentleman as Mr. Chandavarkar showing a strong impulse for fight and cherishing the sweet vision of martyrdom in the cause of social reform.'

It is perhaps unnecessary to refer to Kelkar's political articles because as an editor he had accepted politics as his first consideration. But his articles ranging from Shivaji and the History of the Marathas to the Study of Sanskrit, University education, the Historicity of Christ, Wit and Humour, Evolution and Law, show the wide range of his interests, his intellectual curiosity and catholicity of outlook.

No discussion of Kelkar as a journalist would be complete without taking note of the many arresting headlines he used for his editorials. They lose much of their original flavour in translation but they cover the entire gamut of an editors' journalistic skill. He titles his withering attack on Miss Mayo's book 'Mother India' with 'Vicious bite of a poisonous snake'. He described the Viceroy as the 'Mahadeo (Great God) of Simla'.

When Sir Vishweshwarayya built the Khadakvasla dam, Kelkar said, 'He has lifted the river lying at our feet and placed it near our head'. The river Mutha flows from West towards the city on the East and the dam is on the western part of the river. Another of his arresting statements : 'The penal code provides no punishment for treason against the people.'

He compares the empire to the tail of a sheep 'साम्राज्य म्हणजे शेळीचे शेपट' because a sheep's tail is not long enough to ward away the flies or broad enough to cover its shame. Similarly the British

Empire is unable either to protect its subjects in South Africa or cover their shame.'

But it cannot be denied that in spite of his long political apprenticeship under Tilak, the advent of Gandhi on the Indian political scene baffled him completely. So much so, that the apostle of urbanity, generosity, tolerance in politics which Kelkar said he was, took leave of these qualities in criticising Gandhi and displayed a personal animus not to be expected from a journalist of his mature background. Writing about the political scene in 1944, he says of Gandhi, 'Since this Khadi clad pontiff started uttering the great mantra that without the friendship of the Muslims there can be no Swaraj for India, the Muslims have developed a false idea about their importance. The uncalled for support from Gandhi put body into this demand for Pakistan. In fact the very birth of the idea of Pakistan was, to some extent, due to this support. Without this self destructive backing of Gandhi not even 50 per cent share in office much less Pakistan would ever have been heard of.' This was in November 1944. How completely misleading this is can be seen from what Gandhi wrote to Jinnah in September of the same year. 'I find no parallel in history for a body of converts and their descendants claiming to be a nation apart from the parent stock. You seem to have introduced a new test of nationhood. If I accept it, I would have to subscribe to many more claims and face an insoluble problem.'*

But this was not all. Descending to personalities, Kelkar writes 'Whatever transpires at the talks (between Gandhi and Jinnah), the fact remains that Gandhi's dates and goat's milk are carried to Jinnah's bungalow as in a procession and reporters give it publicity 'minute by minute and second by second'.

The truth seems to be that the advocate of the golden mean never understood the philosophy of the naked fakir though the naked fakir was a past master in bringing together under his leadership many highly gifted persons of conflicting views and was himself a model of generosity, tolerance, good manners;

* Pyarelal 'Gandhi, The last Phase', Vol. 1, p. 90.

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ever ready to understand, and accommodate where possible, an opposite point of view.

Be that as it may, the fact remains that Kelkar tended his journalistic offsprings with single minded devotion and all his skill as a writer. In recognition of this signal service rendered by Kelkar to their favourite paper, the people of Maharashtra, on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of Kesari, presented to him a massive volume consisting of selected articles from Kesari which handled various important topics during its long career. Again, it is mainly due to Kelkar that, in another few years, Kesari will be celebrating its centenary, a unique achievement in the annals of a paper in a regional language. With great justice one can say of 'Kesari' under Kelkar's stewardship:

'Behold! the bush was burning bright but was not extinguished.'

CHAPTER FOUR

The Biographer

KELKAR'S reputation as a biographer rests on his three volume *Life of Tilak*, the much shorter *Life of Garibaldi* and his autobiography, 'Gata Goshti' or 'Past Events'.

Biography is defined as 'the written account or history of the life of an individual'. Kelkar seems to have followed this definition to the letter in his biography of Tilak. 'My aim', he says in the introduction, 'is to give a chronological, complete and orderly account of events well supported by available evidence.' We must also remember that his work as a journalist was always 'packed with information'.

Now this is not a very promising start for writing the life of a notable person. Biography is not just a chronicle of events, nor a historical document packed with information. A man's life is a fascinating interplay of events and character. Sometimes he succeeds in controlling those events, at other times the events overpower him. He lives in the midst of 'the magic and the dance of plastic circumstance' and an attempt at accommodation, victory and surrender between the individual and the events is all the time going on. A man of vision can cross the limitations of the present and see his future course of action so clearly that it gives

him complete control of both the present and the future. Men engaged in the task of creating a nation show this rare combination of action, imagination and thought and become worthy of being affectionately referred to as 'Lokamanya' or the 'Father of the Nation'. That is how we see Cromwell, in Rosebury's biography, marching across Europe with sword in one hand and the Bible in the other and asking his men to put their trust in God but, at the same time, keep their powder dry.

If we apply this test to Kelkar's *Life of Tilak* we have to concede that in trying to pack everything he knew into the life of the subject, he has put in a lot of irrelevant material that overshadows the principal character. Where was the need to write in such detail about the books which Tilak wrote, give tedious accounts of conferences which Tilak did not attend. How could Tilak have had anything to do with the world outside during his long isolation in jail? And yet, Kelkar tries to imagine what his thoughts must have been during this period (Vol. 2, Ch. 37). 'How wonderful it would be', he says 'if someone could paint a picture of the thoughts passing through Tilak's mind during this period.' This was obviously impossible. So Kelkar reproduces a number of letters which Tilak wrote from Mandalay. So far so good. But then he goes on to add in an appendix, other selected letters during the period 1908-1914 and says in parenthesis, 'it was our plan to give a summary of all events that happened during this period. But Tilak had no direct knowledge of these events. He came to know of them only after his release from jail and he did not express his opinions on them one way or the other. Because of this and mainly because it would make the biography too long, we (note the editorial we) decided not to write about these events though the material was kept ready at hand.' Thank you Mr. Kelkar, one is tempted to say, thank you very much indeed!

The same fault could be found with Kelkar's account of the Chirole case which he records in needless detail. The case, if it proves anything, proves only that Tilak could sometimes go wrong in his judgement. But Kelkar drags it along for full 136

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pages and includes in it a sketch of the opposing consul, Edward Carson, written not by himself but by A. G. Gardiner. Apart from this adventitious contact, Tilak and Edward Carson had nothing to do with each other. No wonder many say that in this mass of material one has to search for Tilak before one can find him.

Chronologically, Kelkar divides Tilak's life into three parts. The first volume starts with his birth and childhood and ends with his release from jail in 1898. The second volume starts with the partition of Bengal and ends with Tilak's death. The third volume deals with Tilak as an individual, his appearance, his family, his powers of concentration, his phenomenal memory. It also includes an account of Tilak's attitude towards the Indian Revolutionary movement and a detailed summary of the various books he wrote. This makes total of 1994 pages. But Kelkar was fond of writing and in this particular case he must have been in a really expansive mood. Though he joined Tilak as the paid editor of the 'Kesari' and the 'Maharatta', in course of time he became, for all practical purposes, Tilak's secretary and a close friend of the family which obviously was what Tilak wanted him to be. He thus came to know so much about Tilak that there was no dearth of material to draw upon and the speed at which Kelkar wrote may have prevented him from selecting the right material and give the biography a compact form.

But this very close association with the subject of the biography gives Kelkar an advantage which would be the envy of any biographer. Not only Tilak but most of the characters' which pass in and out of the biography Kelkar knew personally, and, in most of the events recorded, he was directly involved. This has given the biography a quality of intimacy rarely to be found in any biographical material. Boswell had similar good fortune but he is not supposed to have spent more than a few years in Johnson's company and, compared to the stormy life of Tilak, Johnson's was like a placid pool. No doubt Johnson was poor and suffered hardships but the hardships and conflicts that Tilak had to face were on a different plane altogether.

It is precisely for these reasons that the first volume of Tilak's biography becomes of absorbing interest. All the incidents narrated there, the affair of Mr. Crawford, the Bapat Commission, the Tai Maharaj Case, the 'Gramanya' episode act as a backdrop which throws into clear relief Tilak's great qualities: his love of justice, his loyalty to friends, his obstinate perseverance and total devotion to the cause in hand.

Thus, as Tilak is going from strength to strength and staking his claim as the up and coming leader of men, major and minor characters pass across the stage. With his large-hearted tolerance, his sympathetic outlook and his powers of observation, Kelkar, as if with the brush and pencil of the artist, brings them to life. Like a cartoonist, he picks out the most outstanding features of the subject and fixes them on paper. 'The stentorian voice of Sir Pherozechah Mehta, bursting forth like a deep rumble out of a cave, the horse laugh of Shridhar Vithal Date, who with his great height and voluminous head-dress looked like a man walking on stilts, the sweet music of Gokhale's voice and his gentle modest behaviour' are all noted and put down with infinite skill. The following description of Mr. Crawford not only tells us something about the man but gives us an inkling into his behaviour: 'Mr. Crawford was a hundred per cent English Civilian. He was very intelligent but like most intelligent persons, lazy. He would waste month after month in fun and games and allow his work to pile up. Then, one night, he would sit down with all the undisposed files on one side and a bottle of whisky and cigarettes on the other. By sunrise both the whisky and the files would disappear and Crawford would go to bed, turning mid-morning into midnight. He wrote beautifully but his habits were extravagant and wherever he was posted he would always have a group of pleasure loving Europeans, both men and women, for permanent company at the bungalow.'*

But the intimate glimpses we get of Tilak throughout the three volumes were possible only because Kelkar knew him so well

* Life of Tilak, Vol. I, p. 258.

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and had the gift of recognising greatness where he saw it. Tilak standing foursquare against all opposition with hands across the chest at the Surat Congress and Tilak making his memorable statement in the court room after the judge's verdict of deportation for six years are, according to Kelkar, the most memorable events in Tilak's life and such indeed they were. During his lifelong struggle against the government, Tilak suffered a lot. This is how Kelkar saw him when he came out of jail in 1898:

θ'It would be difficult if not impossible for the political prisoners of to-day to get an idea of the hardships which Tilak suffered in jail. The jail food consisted of dry coarse bread served with equally dry chatni. Since the chatni was seasoned with garlic, Tilak would refuse to touch it. He would pick up the upper crust of the bread, mix it with a little water and then shove it down his throat. No wonder he lost thirty pounds of weight. Every time Widwans saw him his condition appeared to have steadily deteriorated—so much so that his friends doubted whether he could come out alive.' Fortunately he managed to do so but 'with a pinched face and sunken cheeks, parched lips from which the skin was peeling off and with shaky legs. People had no doubt accepted him as their uncrowned king but the coarse blanket on which he slept and the coarse bread which was his food were hardly worthy of a king.'

Kelkar narrates another incident which shows how sensitive Tilak was to any injustice caused to his countrymen by the white man in his arrogance. Veeranwali, a young girl from the Punjab travelling to Rawalpindi was raped by a white station-master on the way. A case was filed against the station-master but the judge acquitted him. 'When he heard of this Tilak spent a sleepless night in anger and pain. He was restless throughout the night.'

How did Tilak carry himself during his stay in England? Many people were curious to know. 'England made no difference

θ Ibid., p. 709, 762.

to Tilak's daily routine', writes Kelkar. 'He would get up as usual at six or seven. Besides two meals and two teas he ate nothing during the day. He wore a long coat and trousers but kept to his pagdi. He never liked wearing shoes but this too he had to do because of the weather. He never wore a tie. He was never very fond of show but since he did not grow a beard, he had to shave himself every morning which he did with a safety razor. He could not see very well (1918-19) and his hearing was also defective. His legs were shaky but Namjoshi always accompanied him as an attendant.

'Tilak had met many Englishmen in India from the Governor downwards and was quite familiar with English etiquette. He therefore never found himself at a loss in English company. Besides, his intellectual powers were such that he always made his presence felt.

'During his thirteen months' stay in London, Tilak never even once went out sight seeing. You would hardly come across another person who stayed in London for over a year but saw so very little of it.'[∞]

We come across equally intimate glimpses of Tilak throughout the biography. Kelkar refers to Tilak's rather harsh and grating voice, his habit of moving about bare bodied, the easy chair which was his constant companion, the way he stroked his forehead with his hand while dictating and his habit of drinking soda-water or gingerade.

Throughout the Biography Kelkar never refers to Tilak as Lokamanya Tilak. Kelkar refers to this omission towards the end of the second volume and says that words like 'Deshbhakta', 'Deshabandhu', 'Comrade' have been so overworked that they have ceased to make any impact on our mind. 'The beautiful word "Lokamanya" is similarly overworked and I have been careful to avoid its use in my Life of Tilak.'*

With one exception. The occasion is the arrival of Tilak's ashes in Poona and Kelkar, not an emotional man by nature,

[∞] Vol. 2, pp. 824 et seq. * Vol. 2, p. 1001.

seems to be deeply moved. He writes, 'LOKAMANYA Tilak left his home for Bombay on 12 July. He returned from Bombay on 3 August. But what a difference there was between the arrival and departure! When he went he was dressed in his usual manner. He returned as a handful of ashes from the funeral pyre. He walked out of the house unsupported except by his two strong legs. On the return journey he had gone to sleep in a sandal wood box the size of your palm, carried on the shoulders of four pall bearers. He went away talking about his people. When he returned he had entered the region of eternal silence and now the people had nothing else to talk about. When he left, Poona was humming with his name. He returned to a Poona where Tilak was no more.'*

While he pays such endearing and affectionate tributes to his political leader, Kelkar does not hesitate to have an occasional dig at him. Tilak's views on social reform were well known. But when he heard that Pandita Ramabai was taking Hindu widows to her Ashram and converting them to Christianity, he said that he would much prefer their going to Maharshi Karve's institution. Comments Kelkar, 'So, at least to that extent, Ramabai proved very useful.'

He is equally critical about Tilak's attitude to the Moderates and particularly to Gokhale. He strongly disapproves of Tilak listening to scurrilous songs against them during the Ganapati Festival.

Kelkar's mastery of portraiture is already noted. But he had such a genius and feeling for words that one could reproduce many extracts from the biography to illustrate Kelkar's command of Marathi prose. The following account of how the movement against the partition of Bengal affected the people is as good as any :

'.....The movement broke out in many diverse streams. Newspapers learnt to write bold, exciting, daring articles. The dumb became vocal. The goddess of learning tickled the lazy intellectuals with her peacock feathers and prompted them to write. Poets composed inspired songs. Language put on new and beautiful

* Vol. 2, pp. 996-997.

garments. The learned hunted out from old books quotations and sayings to illustrate the present. Men used to luxurious living felt ashamed of their ostentation. Cowards became brave and collective action put an end to all misgiving. Boys in their teens rivalled with older men in acts of daring.'Σ

Kelkar's sense of humour never leaves him. Writing about Tilak's horoscope he says, 'More predictions were made from Tilak's horoscope than perhaps any other but it must be admitted that in no other case so many of them went wrong. Till Tilak became famous, the planets in his horoscope were left comparatively alone. But in later years no one would let them rest in peace. The planets too seemed to have made up their mind to avenge this ill treatment by deciding to falsify these predictions.'

In a whirlwind tour of C.P. and Berar (now Maharashtra), Tilak was scheduled to address a meeting in the evening at Bhandara. Tilak was delayed en route and reached Bhandara by about 11 p.m. The news of his arrival spread like wild fire and crowds in the local cinema houses rushed out to attend his meeting.

Kelkar was a journalist, a historian and an artist with a sensitive feeling for words. His biography of Tilak is a mixture of all the three and reveal the subject as much as the author.

Compared to the *Life of Tilak*, the *Life of Garibaldi* is a much shorter and a more compact affair. This may be because Kelkar had to depend upon material mostly collected from English books and any intimate acquaintance with the subject was simply out of the question. Kelkar may have been attracted to Garibaldi because Garibaldi was doing in Italy what others were doing in India, fighting for their country's freedom. And since educating the people was one of the prime motives in everything which Kelkar wrote, it was natural that he should have turned his attention to this well known freedom fighter from Italy. Here too there was enough room for Kelkar to be in an expansive mood and describe in detail the history of the Hapsburg Empire, Garibaldi's adventures in America with a short note on the

Σ Vol. 2, p. 65.

history of the American continent, and detailed life sketches of Garibaldi's great contemporaries, Mazzini, Cavour, King Victor Emanuel. He could have, just to keep the record straight, given some space to Napoleon III and his foreign policy. Fortunately Kelkar does none of these things with the result that Garibaldi's whole life, his struggle to free Italy from Austrian misrule, the privations he suffered, the sad death of his wife Anita, all stand out in clear relief. Even so, it must be admitted that the *Life of Garibaldi* does not grip the reader like the much longer *Life of Tilak*, for obvious reasons. To Indian readers at any rate Tilak was and is a much nearer and dearer person than Garibaldi and reading his life was to many the pleasurable sensation of emotion recollected in tranquillity.

Kelkar's autobiography suffers from the same fault as his biography of Tilak. As usual, he starts in an expansive mood with an unnecessary dissertation on the merits and demerits of writing an autobiography, the pleasures of old age, illustrated, for the benefit of the reader, by a complete transcript of a dialogue on old age between Cipio and Cato. Similarly in a review of events, 1920-1938, he gives a district-wise list of votes polled by different candidates in the election to the Central Assembly in 1923. This whole chapter is a mixture of events and persons, some relevant, others not so relevant.

In fact, the second part of the autobiography is more a history of recorded events than anything else. It also suffers from the fault of special pleading by which Kelkar is trying to put up a defence for his actions, trying to justify them, instead of looking at them from a distance, like a dispassionate observer. He devotes a whole chapter to the history of the Indian revolutionary movement with which he was not even remotely connected. But since he frankly admits that his autobiography is like the account of a pilgrimage, we have to see many things which a pilgrim does on his way which have no relevance to the purpose of the pilgrimage itself.

Barring the first thirty-six pages, the rest of the first part of the autobiography is eminently readable. He describes with infectious

abandon his love of Konkan: 'to sit under the tree by the well in my compound, allow the breeze to play around my naked torso and watch the sea in front is the height of bliss.'* He paints a loving picture of his mother making desperate efforts to make two ends meet in a poor home. She lived long enough to see her son achieve fame and fortune and, with tears in her eyes would collect the garlands and flowers her famous son brought home. Equally homely is the account of his betrothal and marriage. The two families were very close friends and shared the same house. Kelkar and his future wife played together as children and while Kelkar came to know what was going on, his future wife was entirely innocent. 'This caused me more embarrassment even though I was the prospective bridegroom.' Kelkar also tells us how, after the marriage was arranged, his parents-in-law started taking special notice of him. He would be frequently invited to their house and a mango or a guava or some special tid bit would be pressed upon him.

The visit of a dramatic troupe to a small and out of the way place like Miraj was always a major event for the townspeople. Kelkar entertains us with a very amusing account of the theatre and actors at Miraj during his childhood. 'The theatre which also included the stage was a quadrangle 40' x 40'. A side verandah cut off by a screen formed the green room. The stage had only one curtain. A hundred or a hundred and fifty persons formed the audience. There was a single entrance which was used both by the audience and the actors so that in the narrow passage you had residents of heaven, hell and earth all crowding together... Sometimes a whole company of demons had to walk on to the stage which took as much as fifteen minutes. The gods in comparison were simple folk. They pushed aside the curtain to make their entry and if the clown was not there to offer them a chair, they would pull one out themselves and sit on it. Singing was the privilege of the Sutradhar or the main protagonist. The female actor, while talking in dulcet tones would suddenly stop and

* Autobiography, p. 55.

invite the audience to listen. Then the Sutradhar would sing in his harsh unmusical voice to the accompaniment of cymbals. It was like the script of a musical drama in which songs in bold type are interspersed between the prose passages. There is a fascinating portrait of his aunt Bhaluatya, her powers of exorcism and her inexhaustible stock of stories. We leave these behind and move forward to Kelkar's college days in Poona, Kolhapur and Bombay. We now learn that Kelkar was a handsome young man fond of drama and played the parts of Madanika, Nati and Kumbhilaka in 'Mricchakatika' or the 'Toy Cart' put on the stage by the college students. Kelkar does not fail to record that spectators certified that they thought Madanika more handsome than her mistress Vasantsena.

For several years after he came to Poona, the plague epidemic was a hardy annual. Kelkar gives a graphic description of how every year, on the advent of plague, people migrated to the outskirts of the town and lived in small groups. Those who have gone through the experience will read Kelkar's account with relish and approval.

From 1906 onwards, Kelkar's public engagements increased. He became the Joint Secretary of the Marathi Sahitya Parishad started that year. He also found permanent accommodation for the many historical documents which had been collected. This proved to be the genesis of the Bharat Itihas Sanshodhak Mandal with which Kelkar was closely associated throughout his life. People started looking at him as the coming man in the public life of Poona and, in years to come, Kelkar more than justified their expectations.

In 1930, the Jubilee year of the 'Kesari', Kelkar did something which throws a flood of light on the character of the man. In 1920, the people of Maharashtra presented a purse to Tilak to enable him to defray the expenses of the Chirole case. While accepting the purse Tilak told his audience that by presenting him the purse they had practically purchased him and he must spend the rest of his life in their service. He ended, 'It is a sad thing for a person to be required to borrow money and I can never forget this transaction'.

Kelkar remembered these words and had decided that some day he would redeem this debt. The opportunity offered itself in 1930. By then Kesari's financial position had greatly improved. Out of the money saved, Kelkar created a public trust of Rs. 3,00,000/- the interest from which was to be used to support the activities of public institutions throughout Maharashtra. 'I never forgot', he said, 'that by presenting a purse to Tilak, people had saved the "Kesari" and to return this debt was part of an obligation which a son owes to his father.'^β

With disarming frankness Kelkar makes an assessment of his merits and faults. Writing about his abilities he says, 'Whatever success or fame have come my way are out of all proportion to my abilities. I am a person of quite ordinary talent, may be one in a thousand but certainly not one in ten thousand'.^Σ Comparing his editorial talent with his contemporaries like Tilak, Arabindo, Motilal Ghosh, Natrajan, C. Y. Chintamani, Kolhatkar and Khadilkar, he admits that he found himself wanting in one quality or another possessed by each one of them. 'I study the pros and cons of every problem and try to make it acceptable to the common reader. Since I am incapable of holding extreme views, my writing lacks vigour. Though I am an idealist I am always conscious of the limitations of every ideal. I am overanxious to give the other side its due. Thus, my writing, a mixture of faults and excellences, suffers from the defects of its qualities. But I have always given my unstinted support to every good cause and have avoided being deliberately unfair.' (p. 966 et seq.)

Writing of his political career Kelkar says, 'In politics I can think of so many persons who are far superior to me. I look at every political movement from the angle of my personal capacity to participate in it and the amount of sacrifice I am capable of making for the sake of the cause. I am very reluctant to ask others to do something which I cannot do myself. Those who prescribe no limit to their sacrifice or suffering are the real leaders of men and

^β p. 622.

^Σ p. 967 et seq.

I have the greatest respect for them. It is such men alone who take the country forward. But there are others who, unmindful of their limitations, egg others on. For such I have nothing but contempt. I must admit quite frankly that I do not possess the necessary talent, capacity for sacrifice and incessant toil. It is true that I am not ambitious. But ambition can have a bad as well as a good connotation.' (p. 968)

Answering his many critics, Kelkar picks out the unconscious compliment implied in the criticism. 'The charm of Kelkar's pen overpowered the whole of Maharashtra', says one critic. Kelkar rebuts the criticism by pointing out the compliment it pays to the powers of his pen. 'It is true,' he goes on to say, 'that I am fond of ease and a quiet life. But that does not mean that I am an idler. I have tremendous capacity for hard work. The amount of writing that I have done and my close association with numerous public institutions would stand witness to this claim.' (p. 977)

He makes an objective assessment of the people's esteem. 'Those who follow the middle path in religion, politics or social matters would always find it difficult to be popular leaders of men. But an honest man can acquire a modicum of fame and popularity if he is industrious, unselfish and conscious of the country's good. I do not claim to be in the first division of the first class in any walk of life. The second class would perhaps be more suitable but even if I am put in the third class I would not complain because I have my own standards of judgement irrespective of what others say.' (p. 989)

It is a matter of surprise to many that with this background, Kelkar should have remained a lifelong companion and friend of Tilak. It was perhaps because of these very qualities that Kelkar managed to achieve this feat. Here too he did not, like Mahadeobhai in relation to Gandhi, reduce himself to a zero where Tilak was concerned. In front of the raging fire which was Tilak, he tended and kept alive the lamp of his individuality. Tilak once wrote an article for the 'Kesari' on a current social topic. He thought that the views he expressed there may not conform with what Kelkar may write in the 'Mahratta'. Tilak therefore asked Kelkar

to go through his article and suggest such changes as he thought necessary. Kelkar's reaction was characteristic. He replied that since Tilak was the editor of the paper, it was but right that his views should get prominence in it. He, Kelkar, would take care of himself if the critics came down on him.

In what may be taken as an epilogue to the autobiography, Kelkar says, 'Human beings can be divided into three categories: those who give orders, those who obey orders and those who prefer to use their independent judgement. The problem of the first two is comparatively simple. But those of the third category neither like to give orders nor receive them. They respect other people's independence as much as their own. But this independence of judgement demands as its price a willing rejection of power, readiness to be cast aside, to become a back bencher. There are some people who aspire for power and rule over men. There are others who prefer to be kind and considerate towards all. They prefer to win other people's esteem through their native goodness and power of ideas. I belong to this second category.'*

Kelkar was perhaps the last and the most complete representative of a class which is dead or fast dying. Personal integrity, honesty in public dealings, simple living, respect for and love of books, music and all the graces of life, a sense of social responsibility, loyalty to family, friends and country, and, finally, withdrawal from all worldly pursuits with a sense both of achievement and fulfilment were the hall mark of this class. By his many qualities Kelkar made himself the finest representative of this class and while he welcomed death with open arms, people mourned his loss as if they had lost a dear member of the family, a guide, friend and philosopher rolled into one.

* Autobiography, pp. 991-992.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Novelist, The Story-teller, The Poet, The Dramatist

I

AFTER giving up the editorship of the 'Kesari' Kelkar decided to utilise his leisure in the pursuit of his favourite hobby — writing. It was his ambition to handle every literary form and by doing so give 'Kesari' the benefit of his virtuosity in literature.

With this end in view, he wrote the novel 'Navalpurcha Sansthanik'—The Raja of Navalpur. In his autobiography he says, 'A novel can be as great and dignified a literary form as the essay. I thought that there should be no objection to a novel making its appearance in the columns of a prestigious paper like the "Kesari" if its subject, language and treatment were in keeping with the high standards of the paper. I therefore decided to make the experiment and the novel appeared in serial form in "Kesari" in 1934. The subject matter of the novel, politics in an Indian Princely State, was more topical than creative. I included in it the love story of the hero and the heroine but I was very guarded in my language and did not allow a single unseemly word to creep into the narrative. This in my opinion, achieved to a great extent the double purpose of discussing politics in Indian India and entertaining the reader.' (p. 811)

The reader is no doubt entertained but not for reasons Kelkar may have had in mind. Kelkar seems to be obsessed with the

idea that fiction and drama are not worth the name without a generous sprinkling of melodrama. In our childhood we read with relish the stories of Prince Thaksen and the Arabian Nights. Like Caliph Harun-ul-Rashid, Kelkar's hero roams the streets of Navalpur in disguise on dark nights. Another character is charged with murder and is a fugitive from justice. He reappears on the scene after an absence of twelve years and, since there is a chance of his being arrested if discovered, his sister and mother get the cellar under the house ready to hide him. There is the proverbial bad man of the story in the person of the Diwan who is corrupt, conspiratorial and given to vice; the retired State servant who is old and suspicious of his young wife; the Political Agent who is sympathetic towards the Prince; the Shirastedar who is clever, mean and shifty; the communist leader and the palace barber. There is the virtuous dame engaged in social service and ultimately to the Prince. It is said that in a novel or a play, when lovers cease to talk, they begin to kiss. But so guarded is Kelkar in his language and so discreet in his presentation that the lovers never cease to talk.

The Prince has a friend, Manohar, who acts as his private secretary. Manohar has come into possession of evidence which proves beyond doubt that the Diwan is both disloyal and corrupt. When the Diwan is confronted with it he tries to save himself by pointing out that since the evidence was in the form of a private letter, a charge of theft could be brought against Manohar. But Manohar, who believes in direct methods, pulls out a revolver from his pocket. The Diwan is so frightened that he signs a statement acknowledging his guilt and flees from Navalpur.

Kelkar is a traditionalist who also believes in social reform. The heroine of his novel, Vimal the virtuous dame is, in consequence, both modern and not so modern. She wears expensive saris but they completely cover her from the neck downwards. Under the sari she wears a silk blouse with a simple border, meaning 'it had no frills'. She wears rubber sandals and even shoes on occasions but has no objection to go about barefooted. When in hurry, she ties her hair into a bun, otherwise she asks her

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mother to do her hair for her. Last but not the least, she always carries on her person, that latest sign of modernity, a handkerchief. Every time we meet her, we do not fail to notice this inevitable sign of modernity.

The Prince is an unusual Prince. He decides to give a constitutional government to his people and himself remain as the constitutional Head of the State. While the powers of the elected representatives of the people are being discussed, Kelkar puts into the mouth of one of the characters words which carry a surprisingly contemporary ring. Says this character, 'The term "Cabinet Responsibility" used by the present democratic governments is an empty phrase. Anyone who becomes a minister looks upon his post as a temporary monopoly. No matter how incompetent he proves himself to be, and no matter what amount of public funds he misappropriates, it is extremely difficult to remove him during his term of office; but knowing that he will be so removed one day, he collects such a fortune by fair and unfair means that, in after life, he can, if not actually roll in wealth, start some business which will maintain him in comfort.'

The novel ends as such novels generally do. The Prince marries the virtuous dame, her old father is no longer suspicious of his young wife, her brother, the erstwhile fugitive from justice, becomes the keeper of law and order in Navalpur. Manohar becomes the chief minister of the State, the bad Diwan is banished for ever, and the Political Agent congratulates the Prince on being the first Indian Raja to give an honest constitution to his people. There is nothing much left for us to do except take leave of these good people and wish them well.

Kelkar's other novel, 'Balidan' or the Sacrifice, deals with the quarrels and rivalry between an order of Buddhist monks and nuns and the followers of the Shakti Cult. The background is a place called Bhairavpur, an important religious centre of the Shaktas. The king of Bhairavpur is favourably inclined towards Buddhism. The narrative gets a twist when the Shaktas try to hatch a plot against the king because of his partiality towards Buddhism.

The Shakta Cult itself offers enough scope for melodrama. One character in the novel, a girl named Nalini has been molested in the past by a Shakta priest. She sees her molester in Bhairavpur and starts plotting her revenge against him. The Shakta priest, Rudrabhat, persuades a rich merchant of the town to offer his child as a sacrifice to the goddess Kali. The child is a foundling. When the mystery of his birth is solved from a paper found in the amulet he wears, it is discovered that he is the son of the Amatya of the State who, with the help of the Shaktas, is plotting to depose the king.

To protest against the pro-Buddhist policies of the king, the Shaktas decide to present him with a petition enumerating their grievances. To do this they organise a conference in which all the non-Buddhist sects are invited to participate. Kelkar devotes two chapters of the novel to give an account of this conference. Since he had attended many such conferences in the political field, Kelkar gives a very realistic account of the conference. We however fail to understand its relevance to the main story.

The novel ends on a note of high melodrama. One of the Buddhist nuns has fallen into the clutches of the Shakta priests who are getting ready to offer her as a sacrifice to the goddess Kali. She is rescued in the nick of time. The molested girl, Nalini, avenges herself by killing the Shakta priest who had molested her. She then drowns herself in the river since she had now nothing else to live for.

2

In addition to these novels Kelkar wrote a number of short stories. Some are allegorical and deal with our social and political problems. Mr. Sarda had brought a bill in the Assembly seeking the prevention of child marriages. Taking advantage of the similarity of names between Sarda, who piloted the bill in the Assembly and the Marathi play of the same name, Kelkar puts in the mouth of the heroine of the play his views on the subject. In another he makes fun of Gandhi's political ideas. In yet another he discourses on the habit of gambling and the legal attempt to

put a stop to it. In one story Kelkar takes a peep into the future and writes about the final departure of the English from the Indian soil.

Any work of fiction, whether a novel or a short story, has to have a technique, a form, a dramatic theme and a conflict of interests and character. When Kelkar writes five or ten pages it becomes a short story; when he writes five hundred, it is a novel. The main business is not the theme or the technique. It is writing—so many words for a short story, so many for a novel.

3

Before we take a look at Kelkar's plays, we shall dip into his poetic effort. In his introduction to his volume of poems, 'Padya Guccha' or a Bouquet of Verse, Kelkar tells us that many of the poems were written to pass an idle hour, for personal amusement. But as is his habit, he immediately gets didactic and enumerates eight different characteristics which distinguish poetry from prose. According to him, brevity which is the soul of wit is also the single factor of difference between poetry and prose.

Kelkar then tries to answer the question why, in any literature, the output of poetry is much smaller than the output of prose. This is because generally speaking, in life, man has to be more serious than light-hearted and since poetry is a light-hearted pastime, its output is small. 'My prose collection, "Gadya Guccha" has two hundred pages while my "Padya Guccha" has only one hundred. My earliest poem was written in 1892 and the latest in 1935. This means that in forty-three years my poetic output does not amount to more than one hundred printed pages.' What better proof is required to justify the above thesis!

In the end Kelkar assures us that he is not a poet and possesses no poetic genius. 'I have written poetry to amuse myself and the reader should also read it for his amusement.'

Kelkar did indeed write some very amusing poems. The best among these is his 'Vilayatechya Yatrechi Tayari' or Preparations for a trip to England. 'I wrote this poem', Kelkar tells us in his autobiography, 'on my return trip from England just to

pass the time. It took me four days, from 7th to 10th November, 1919, to complete it.' It starts with a fashionable gentleman, a dietitian, a person familiar with English etiquette, all coming to advise Kelkar as to what he should do. The experts are followed by friends and relatives, a doctor and a priest to help him prepare for his journey overseas. It is impossible to bring out its humour in translation but here are a couple of samples: The fashionable gentleman advises him to choose the most expensive cloth for his wardrobe and find a good tailor, preferably an Englishman, to stitch the clothes. 'First clothes, then a shave. All the secrets of civilization are contained in these twain.' What should he eat? 'Boiled eggs in the morning, tender chicks at noon, their parents at night. Thus there will be none left to mourn the dead. Well has the philosopher said, only the living grieve, not the dead.' He wrote another humorous poem on 'Our New Raj'. 'We have made our kingdom as we wanted to, thank God. The postal department is now managed by snails. There is no question of any complaints because there is one delivery every ten years.'

Kelkar was fond of music. He was equally fond of the Marathi language. His ambition was to present Hindustani music in a Marathi garb. He therefore wrote several Marathi songs to suit Hindustani *ragas*. Kelkar never asked others to do what he did not or could not do himself. Since he advised Maharashtrian singers to sing Marathi songs in the Hindustani style, he thought he must provide them the wherewithals to do so. The marriage of the Marathi language with the Hindustani Ragas was a disaster. The kindest thing one could say of Kelkar's efforts to make it a success is not to say anything at all.

4

In 1923, Kelkar delivered a lecture at the New Poona College. The subject was 'My Plays' (collected works, Sahitya Khanda, pp. 414 et seq.). He said, 'I have written eight plays in all. Out of these, people remember only six. "Navardevachi Jodgoli" is a translation of Sheridan's "The Rivals". "Sarojini" is an adaptation of a Bengali play written chiefly to test my mastery over the

Bengali language which I had started learning in Satara (1896). After this, I did not write any play till 1912. In that year, I wrote the historical play, "Totayache Band" (Revolt of the Pretender). "Chandragupta" is a romance. Besides the two characters of Chandragupta and Chanakya, there is nothing historical about the play. "Krishnarjun Yuddha" is high comedy. It would also be classified as a mythological play. "Amatya Madhav" was thought of after reading Lord Lytton's "Richelieu". "Veer Vidamban" was written in 1918. It is based on the degradation suffered by the Pandavas during the one year of their exile spent incognito. I was principally thinking of Arjuna who had to spend a whole year pretending to be a woman. My last play, "Bhanudas" is more a farce than a play proper.'

From this we see that three of Kelkar's plays were translations or near translations, one a historical drama, one a romance, one high comedy, one a satire and one a farce. This means that in these few plays, Kelkar handles five different dramatic forms.

Even so, Kelkar's contribution to Marathi drama must be considered negligible. In a long introduction to the collected works of Sripad Krishna Kolhatkar whose dramatic technique profoundly influenced him, Kelkar says, 'Many may think that a play which is successful on the stage alone deserves the name of drama. But drama is in its own right a literary form and as such its value as literature remains beyond question'. (collected works, vol. 10, p. 484.) This may be one reason of his failure. Others we come to know from the lecture already referred to. In it Kelkar says, 'I am not a playwright whose plays make good theatre. I lack the basic qualification: I am incapable of romantic passion. I am incapable of working to an emotional or sentimental climax so necessary in a successful dramatist, or weaving a successful plot or of introducing humorous scenes at the appropriate moments.'

As against these handicaps 'my language is simple and unadorned, the plots are interesting, the love element is kept well under control. No play has a background that would create opportunities for unbridled love scenes. This fulfils the condition

of Bharat, the preceptor of the dramatic art, that a play should be chaste enough for all members of a family, father and son, husband and wife to be able to watch together. I think this to be a very important consideration. If this rule is strictly followed, a lot of the present criticism of the theatre would disappear. I can successfully combine intellect with emotion. There is no adverse criticism against my plays. My songs are easy to understand. Some of them are considered by people as poetry of a very high standard.'

Barring 'Totayache Band', none of Kelkar's plays was a stage success. The play is based on a well known incident in Maratha history. At the battle of Panipat in 1761, Sadashivrao Peshwa lost his life. His dead body was never recovered which left room for people to suspect that he was still alive. Taking advantage of this, a person from Mathura in the north, Sukhanidhan of the play, pretended to be Sadashivrao and arrived in Maharashtra. Nana Phadnis, the renowned minister of the Peshwas had no doubt that Bhausaheb Peshwa was dead but Bhausaheb's wife, Parvatibai, believed that he was alive. She was also labouring under the misconception that the pretender who was imprisoned in the Ratnagiri fort on Nana's orders was her husband and no other.

This was a highly dangerous situation fraught with danger not only to the state but to the fair name of the Peshwas. This basic conflict, both dangerous and dramatic, is explained by Nana in Act 2, Sc. 3 of the play in the following terms:

'I have come across many treacherous plots in the past which I have successfully nipped in the bud. But I never expected this Pretender to give rise to such a dangerous situation. Unfortunately, a popular and truly courageous lady from the House of the Peshwas is involved in it. It has therefore become very difficult to put an end to this folly. Out of consideration for Parvatibaisaheb's feelings, I refrained from taking strong action against the Pretender with the result that what was once only an earthen doll has now acquired sinews of iron.'

Here is great drama with tragic overtones. The characters too, as in a Greek tragedy, are highly placed persons. Nana

Phadnis, the clever statesman, has to contend against Parvatibai, who is, as we see in Act 3, Sc. 2 quite capable of matching her wits against his.

Kelkar's handling of this theme, full of great dramatic possibilities, is rather disappointing. Sukhanidhan, who has come all the way from Mathura to acquire the kingdom of the Marathas, seems to be devoid of intelligence, incapable of intrigue, with hardly any strength of character. Nana, the renowned statesman, who should have been shown equal to the great challenge, appears as a meek and passive figure. The only specific act he performs in the play is the arrest of the keeper of the Ratnagiri fort who released Sukhanidhan against his orders. But in doing so right in front of Parvatibai, he shows neither political finesse nor tact nor respect for the unfortunate lady's feelings. For the rest, he depends on God-given chance to achieve his end. Chance alone puts him in touch with Haibati, and even more than Haibati, with Amala, the wife of Sukhanidhan. Their simultaneous arrival on the scene is as great a strain on the human capacity to suspend disbelief as Amala's fantastic request to Nana that he should find out her husband for her. But the moment Nana meets her, his inner voice tells him that she is the clue to solving the mystery of the Pretender. So he grants the simple woman her request and fulfils his promise without much difficulty. This is melodrama with a vengeance, an Arabian Night's entertainment, history turned into fable.

Parvatibai is the best drawn character in the play. In her verbal boxing contest with Nana, she proves herself equal to her adversary (Act 3, Sc. 2). As a high born lady belonging to a noble House, she refuses to run away from Poona. Apparently helpless against her powerful adversary, she succeeds in wringing from him a promise that before taking the final step, he will bring her face to face with the person who, she fondly believes, may be her husband. She fully lives up to the reputation of the ladies of the Peshwa House that they were clever, understood politics and quite capable of holding their own against the best of their contemporaries.

By introducing the characters of Bajirao and Khushalrao, Kelkar succeeds in giving some local colour to the play but one wonders where Amala, an uneducated girl from the North, picked up such good Marathi. All in all, one must admit that Kelkar fails to exploit the great dramatic possibilities of the play. Kelkar is not, on his own admission, emotional enough, is too critical to be creative, is unable to let himself go and get lost in his characters. He is the middle order man, cautious, circumspect, temperate, always thinking of the father and son, the husband and wife, the whole middle class clientele in fact, who could watch his plays and while doing so, cry a little, laugh a little and taste a bit of romance denied them in their humdrum every day life.

Kelkar considered 'Chandragupta' his best play. It is, as he says, a romance and there is nothing historical about it except the two characters, Chandragupta and Chanakya. Kelkar has put the following words in the mouth of Chandandas, one of the principal characters of the play: 'Devotion whether to God or King depends upon the personal choice of an individual.' 'And this,' says Kelkar, 'is the central theme of the play.' One does not get this impression when one reads the play. There is so much in it of mystery and romance, of characters going about in disguise, secret documents hidden in an ancient box, fights and tantrums that there is hardly any time to fix attention on the central theme of the play. One also hears throughout the play constant echoes of the stagecraft of Kolhatkar and Khadiolkar, two famous dramatists of the time. One suspects that Kelkar wanted to show that like the other two, he too was capable of handling mystery and romance, clash of swords, siege and pursuit and the final happy ending. Chanakya is the known enemy of the Nanda dynasty while Chandandas is their devoted follower. Tarini, his daughter, is in love with Chandrasen who is also Chandragupta. Chandragupta himself is a scion of the Nanda dynasty a mystery which is uncovered when the ancient box in the keeping of Chandandas is opened. Chanakya has thereafter to give up his vow of putting to the sword every surviving member

of the Nanda dynasty. Tarini discovers that Chandrasen and Chandragupta are the same person. All misunderstandings are resolved, Tarini and Chandragupta are married and the play ends.

In spite of what Kelkar says, one must consider 'Krishnarjuna Yuddha' as his most satisfactory play. In the introduction Kelkar says, 'The friendship between Krishna and Arjun is well known. What is not so well known is the fact that on one occasion they almost fought against each other. I thought of this theme when last year (1913) the Chittakarshak Theatrical Company approached me for a play.'

The play is well constructed because Narad, the chief Protagonist, holds all the strings in his hand and every action in the play is planned and executed by him or on his initiative. The element of comedy comes in because the audience knows that there will be no fight, that the impossible situation is the creation of a master mind, that the characters in the play are entirely unaware of it and are trying to surmount a crisis which in fact does not exist.

The play opens with Krishna, Satyabhama, Draupadi and Arjuna arriving at a beautiful forest for a picnic. Just then Narada arrives on the scene and during the course of argument propounds the theory that they all love one another because they love themselves. He quotes the Upanishadic saying 'Atmanastu Kamay Sarvam Priyam Bhavati' in support of his argument. When the rest of the company disagree, he says that he will prove it to them. That is the starting point of the play which gradually rises to a climax when Krishna and Arjuna stand facing each other ready to fight and ends in a final reconciliation.

One may agree with Kelkar that he had no dramatic genius but there can be no doubt that Kelkar was genuinely interested in the theatre. While he did not, like Khadilkar, spend a lot of time with the dramatic companies which staged his plays, he considered drama to be great art. In his presidential address to the Natyasammelan at Nasik, he traces the origin of the drama in our country, quotes chapter and verse to prove how, in

ancient India, drama was considered to be a great art. He then points out how it helps to cultivate other arts like music, painting, dancing, stage settings, oratory. He says that drama is a visual art and sees no reason why, actors who present this art to the people should be looked down upon. At the end of the speech he makes a few useful suggestions. One is to shorten the average length of the plays. 'Even as amusement plain and simple, it is not right to extend the play over five or six hours.' It is unhealthy and puts a great strain both on the actors and the audience. Sometimes, to save time, the length of the play is arbitrarily cut which affects the quality of the play. He then turns to the use of songs in a play. Very often, the audience does not understand the meaning of the songs. This not only breaks the chain of the narrative, but the particular idea which the dramatist deliberately presents in the form of a song, is totally lost. He then makes the rather naive suggestion that before starting to sing, the actor should explain the idea of the song in prose. He does not seem to realise that this would also break the continuity of the play as much as cutting out portions of the play itself.

Kelkar's great contribution to the theatre was that he did his best to persuade the people to give up their step-motherly attitude to drama, the theatre and actors and give the art its proper place in the cultural life of his times.

CHAPTER SIX

The Historian

ONE of the objects of the founders of the 'Kesari' was to put a new life into a defeated and disheartened people and make them conscious of their latent power. One way of doing this was to make them aware of their historical past when the country was both free and prosperous. Vishnushastri first turned his readers' attention to their past history. Tilak carried on from where Vishnushastri had left and gave our past history a concrete form by starting the Shivaji Festival. It not only reawakened people's faith in themselves but gave a great phillip to the study of history and historical research. Kelkar was eminently suited to carry on this tradition. His teacher, Vasudeoshastri Khare turned Kelkar's attention to historical studies which bore fruit in later years in the foundation of the Bharat Itihas Sanshodhak Mandal with which Kelkar was intimately connected and was, for many years, its President.

For his historical writings Kelkar selected such topics as would throw fresh light on our own freedom struggle and put it in a correct historical perspective.

The purpose of a University, it is said, is the discovery of knowledge, the preservation and spread of knowledge and the search of truth. Kelkar was by instinct a teacher and in all his historical writings he seems to be engaged in carrying out the

work of a University. He had read Gibbon with relish and was a great admirer of Macaulay. His tutelage under Khare had also made him a keen student of Maratha history

Kelkar's first historical study, the History of Ireland, was published in 1909. The Home Rule Movement was then in full force in Ireland. He was prompted to write about Ireland because of a statement by Rashbihari Ghosh in the Executive Council of the Viceroy. 'History of Ireland was written' he told an interviewer, 'when the Home Rule Movement was in full force and the Indian revolutionaries had started their activities in Bengal. The idea came to me from Rashbihari's warning to the government that India was fast turning into another Ireland.'

The main purpose in writing the History was to find out the similarities and differences between Ireland and India. He felt that the problems and aspirations of the two were so similar that their discussion at the particular point of time (1908) was very relevant. He also knew that such a discussion may irritate the common rulers of both countries but he accepted the risk in the hope that both sides would profit by it if they tried to understand the problem in a cool and detached manner.

The history of Ireland, at the time Kelkar wrote it, was unknown to Indians in such detail. At the end of the book Kelkar has included the life sketches of Irish leaders. It may be that by doing so, he wanted to offer the readers a chance to compare the leaders of the two countries and appreciate their methods.

In one chapter of the book, Kelkar surveys the course of the many violent uprisings in Ireland and points out their futility. He does not fail to underline the fact that an armed revolution to liberate India would prove equally futile.

Kelkar's History of the French Revolution was published in 1937. Like everything which Kelkar wrote, it is a highly readable account of a revolution which affected the course of world history as definitely as did the much later revolution in Russia. But nowhere in the course of the narrative does Kelkar point out the basic achievement of the Revolution, that it was a revolt against feudalism and privilege and that, in spite of a brief period of

Empire which followed the Revolution, neither Europe nor the world could ever be the same again.

Nearer home, we notice Kelkar's abiding interest in Indian, and particularly, in Maratha history. We have already noticed how, by the end of the nineteenth century, interest in history and historical research was rapidly growing. Besides Khare who was making a detailed scrutiny of the Patwardhan Papers* under very difficult conditions, there were others who were making outstanding contributions to historical research, particularly research in Maratha history. Foremost among them was Rajwade whose genius for hunting out old historical documents was as phenomenal as the daring conclusions he drew from their study.

Others in the field of whom Kelkar takes note are Sane, Parasnis and Sardesai. Of all these, Sane, Khare and Rajwade were researchers proper while the other two were more collectors of historical material than researchers. In his article on 'The Resurrection of Maratha History' Kelkar admits that historical research is a comparatively new development and our interest in it is the result of our English education. In India a sense of history is new something in the field of knowledge and while the purpose of historical research is to bring to light facts and information hitherto unknown, its main attraction lies in that such buried knowledge is very difficult to come by. Kelkar then gives us an idea of the vast material already collected. 'About 35 volumes of the collected material have been published and if all the remaining material were to be printed, it would run into nearly 150 volumes.' This would be impossible without solid financial assistance and he invites the rich, particularly the Heads of the Princely States, to do something in the matter.

Kelkar's most outstanding historical work is his 'Marathe ani Ingraj'—'The Marathas and the English'—.The genesis of the book is as interesting as the achievement creditable. 1818 A.D. marked the end of the Maratha Empire. One hundred years

* The Patwardhans were in the front rank of the Peshwa sardars and had extensive jagirs in South Maharashtra.

later, in 1918; some persons decided to observe the hundredth anniversary of the event by bringing out a book. Each member of the group was to contribute an article all of which would later on be published in a book form. As often happens to such resolutions, nobody wrote anything, and since the time factor was very important, Kelkar decided to do the work single-handed. The result was this remarkable book. It begins with the arrival of the English in India and ends with the liquidation of the Maratha Empire at their hands. Kelkar was then fully occupied with the work of the Home Rule League started by Tilak and he was scheduled to go abroad. No wonder he says, "Marathe ani Ingraj" I wrote while I was sorely pressed for time but since it was to be the literary anniversary of the end of the Maratha Empire, I had to apply every spare moment to its completion.' The book was published on time, in March, 1918 and Kelkar sailed for England in April. Not only does this show his love of Maratha history but his tremendous capacity for hard work and his habit never to leave unfinished a job once undertaken.

Kelkar refers to the haste with which the book had to be finished and says that it would need another book of the same size to do full justice to the subject. Kelkar divides the book into two parts. The first part ends with the end of the Peshwas and the second with the suppression by the English of the other members of the Maratha Confederacy. Two separate chapters are devoted to the Grand strategy of the Marathas and their administrative machinery.

While Kelkar was proud of the Marathas and their exploits, he does not allow this to interfere with his judgement. Like a true historian, he points out the achievements and faults of the Marathas and gives to the English due credit for their many qualities. 'While the princes of all castes and communities in India, Brahmins, Marathas, Rajputs were begging for help from the English, the English made it clear that all Englishmen in India were one; that they had no conflicting interests or loyalties; that while they resided in three distant corners of India they were the obedient servants of a single authority and followed a single

policy; that they never disobeyed the orders of their superiors, and if there was any rivalry amongst them, it was for the maximum benefit of the Company Raj.' He continues, 'Just as the local subhedars of the Mogul Emperor at Delhi became independent Nawabs and Princes, Clive and Warren Hastings could have done the same. If any local servant of the Company had grabbed a part of the country for himself, the Company would have been put to no end of trouble to bring him to book. No doubt many Englishmen and Frenchmen in India amassed huge personal fortunes, but they never revolted against the parent Companies in England or France. They fought amongst themselves but never sought the help of Indians against their own countrymen. They always felt that they belonged to one country and one nation.'

As against this, 'the Princes of India sought the help of the foreigners in their internal fights which ultimately cost them their freedom. Not one of them showed enough far sighted statesmanship and sensed the danger.'*

According to Kelkar, the Marathas lost their empire for two reasons: their predilection to set up small independent kingdoms and their lack of unity, discipline and national pride. The second reason for their downfall was the lack of superior military hardware and modern, well trained armies. 'There was not a single Maratha general who did not fight the English, but they did not do it even in twos or threes, let alone all of them fighting together.'

Kelkar writes with pride and almost in a lyrical vein of the imperial strategy of the Marathas. But he fails to note that while the Marathas had their eyes fixed on distant Delhi, they never thought of consolidating their rear by taking care of the South. Expansion without consolidation is no way to stabilise a conquest or build an empire. The English never made this mistake. They went about their business step by step using all the military and political alternatives available to them to gain their objective.

* pp. 204 et seq.

Vasudeoshastri Khare, whose introduction to the book is as valuable a contribution to the subject as the book itself, brings out this factor very clearly. He says in the introduction : 'During the period 1720-1760, the Marathas built a huge empire and then threw it away during the next forty years. If the Maratha sardars had controlled their greed and not gone after conquering territory to acquire fresh jagirs, the Maratha rule may not have extended so far and wide but it would certainly have become more strong and stable. The Maratha sardars who went where they pleased, attacked Lahore but never found time to bring under their absolute control the territory of Baleghat, the birth place of Maratha saints and the core of Maharashtra proper consisting of Paithan, Aurangabad, Nanded, Jalna, Beed and the surrounding area. In peace time the writ of the Marathas ran everywhere but during unsettled conditions it ran nowhere. The reason was that the Marathas never consolidated their hold on any part of the country.'

Another reason for the downfall of the Marathas of which there is no mention in Kelkar's book is that the Marathas never seemed to have understood the importance of the navy in their overall military strategy. Shivaji was the only Maratha king who had grasped its significance, and he built up a sizeable navy even at the cost of starving other departments of state. As against this, Nanasaheb Peshwa (1721-1761) was the first among the Marathas who invited the English to help him. And the help was sought to destroy, of all things, the powerful fleet of Angre—the admiral of the Maratha fleet who refused to accept the hegemony of the Peshwas. This shows a sad lack of statesmanship, for the destruction of the Maratha fleet gave the English mastery over the West coast and prevented for all time to come an attack on their supply routes from the sea. This showed not only a short-sighted and self-destructive appreciation of history, but also an equally sad appreciation of the geographical factor which forms a vital part of military strategy. In any successful military campaign, blocking of the enemy's supply routes plays a vital role. Bajirao did it against the Nizam and Abdali at Panipat against the marathas

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Throughout the struggle for power between the Marathas and the English on the Indian continent, the English navy could pour into the country the required quantity of men and materials without let or hindrance. There was no Indian navy to hold them in check. The downfall of the Marathas and the failure of the mutiny later on must be ascribed to a great extent to this vital factor.

In addition to these longer studies, Kelkar wrote a number of articles and delivered many lectures on historical subjects and contemporary historians. He evaluates the work of all of them with a special tribute to Khare of whom he says, 'Khare lived in a small, backward town like Miraj, he followed a tedious and not a very remunerative profession, he lacked financial support. When one thinks of these handicaps one cannot but admire Khare for his voluminous output and contribution to research in Maratha history.'

Kelkar knew that history must, at some point, touch upon the larger field of sociology. He also knew the importance of social history in the field of historical studies. In a lecture on 'Poona 64 years ago' he refers to the city's dark, dirty, narrow lanes and blind alleys, the danger of going out alone at night, the population of Poona at the time and the number of houses in the city. He also lists the prices of essential commodities which alone would tempt the reader to go back to those days, the dark and dirty streets notwithstanding. In his lecture on 'Excavations at Shaniwar Wada', he introduces archeology into the study of history. It is both amusing and of interest to know that the Wada as originally built by Bajirao had three quadrangles but only two stories and cost Rs. 16,110/-

He divides the study of history into three parts, historical research, the collection of available material and the philosophy of history. The three together give us knowledge, wisdom and strength. With his knack of illustrating a proposition with an apt simile, Kelkar compares the three to the beat and rhythm of music which arrives at a single point of summation with the help of the other two.

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Kelkar made the study of history both exciting and popular. Thanks to him, many started taking interest in this branch of knowledge. Falstaff, in Shakespear's King Henry the Fourth, says that he is not only humorous himself but the cause of humour in other men. Kelkar not only explored every branch of human knowledge but prompted others to do so. It is therefore difficult to classify him either as a journalist, a historian, a literary artist, or a political pamphleteer. He is an eclectic in the field of human knowledge and ever anxious to share that knowledge with others.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The 'Sahitya Samrat'

ON 24th August, 1932, Kelkar turned sixty and his friends decided to celebrate the occasion in a grand manner. In 1932, the Civil Disobedience Movement was in full swing and Kelkar was reluctant to have any public celebration. But his friends made it a matter of prestige and Kelkar yielded to their pressure. They wanted to show his enemies what a large following Kelkar had and the esteem in which people held him. 'This was to be a celebration without any help from and in spite of the opposition of my enemies. Looked at from this angle, there is no doubt that my friends carried out the celebration with a success quite beyond theirs, mine or my enemies' expectations.' (Autobiography, pp. 637-638).

Kelkar devotes 33 pages of the autobiography to a detailed account of the celebrations. We are concerned with it because of the address presented to him on the occasion by various literary organisations and men of letters throughout Maharashtra. 'In my life, I had come into greater contact with men of letters than men in politics. I am therefore very proud of the address they presented me.' (Autobiography. p. 657).

The address begins : 'Sahityacharya Narasinha Chintaman Kelkar ! With the grace of God, you have entered the sixtyfirst year of your life. We, the men of Letters from Poona and outside,

and representatives of many literary organisations from Maharashtra have gathered here to congratulate you and wish you well. We hope you will agree that we have a greater claim on you than anyone else because you are first a devotee of literature and then everything else.

'Your literary output is voluminous, varied and coloured with many shades of thought. It is full of such virtues of classical literature as learning, high seriousness and urbanity. It both instructs and entertains.

'Your single outstanding quality is that you are at home in every branch of literature. Poetry, drama, history, fiction, literary criticism, editorials, essays and reviews—you handle all these literary forms with equal authority and ease, both in your speeches and your writings. It would be difficult to come across another literary craftsman who could handle these medii with equal competence.

'It is impossible, in this short address, to make even a passing reference to your colossal literary output. But one has only to think of your biography of Tilak, "Totayache Band", "Subhashit ani Vinod" (Wit and Humour), "Marathe ani Ingraj" (The Marathas and the English), Newsletters from London and Simla, the "History of Ireland", the Presidential address to the literary conference at Baroda, critical appreciation of the plays of Shripad Krishna Kolhatkar, to get some idea of your vast learning, your catholicity of outlook and your power to appreciate the subtler points of beauty in every kind of literary effort.

'You not only worshipped at the shrine of the goddess of learning but through the columns of the "Kesari" and in various other ways, you helped every effort to enrich the Marathi language'. (Autobiography p. 659).

1

In the earlier chapters we reviewed the work of Kelkar as a journalist, a biographer, a historian, a novelist, a poet and a dramatist. We have now to consider his work as a literary critic.

At the literary conference at Baroda, Kelkar chose for his

presidential address the theme, WHAT IS LITERATURE. After expressing the hope that similar conferences will be held in future at places like Tanjavur in Madras where many Marathi families still cherished the Marathi language, he copies an earlier attempt of Justice Ranade and devotes the first part of his speech to a review of Marathi literature from 1908 to 1921. He pays handsome tributes to those writers who were dead: to Haribhau Apte, 'the first great Marathi novelist', to Ram Ganesh Gadkari, 'whose poetry made the reader feel that he was roaming over hills and dales, jumping from one rock to another, drinking water from gushing streams', to Narayan Waman Tilak, 'whose poetry reminded one of limpid waters in a placid pool in which a man could safely swim for pleasure and cull the lotus blooms which flowered all over it', and to many others who had enriched the Marathi language. He extols the rich variety of current Marathi literature and censures those who condemn it. Writing about Tilak's 'Geeta Rahasya' he says, 'Every literary period is named after some great writer or literary creation of the time. If a future historian were to give a name to the current period of Marathi literature, he would have to describe it as the Age of "Geeta Rahasya".' He then turns to the main theme: What is Literature. Pointing out the difficulty in defining literature, he quotes from Dunns who says that 'there is a distant border land where expression of thought merges into the pure gold of literature.' He points out that though literature is always confined to words or language, it has many physical and non-physical properties like weight, size, colour, excellence, soul, history, success or defeat and God's grace.

He then discusses the physical properties of literature. A few words or phrases, however good they may be, do not make literature, nor does every spoken or written word. Literature to be literature must have both weight and size. 'Every generation passe, all available writing through the twin sieves o,' memory and taste. All that passes through these two sieves into the treasure house of the goddess of learning is literature. Literature consists of words and their meaning. It has therefore to be free from faults and

possess the virtues of quality and judgement. It must, in addition, pass the test of propriety and relevance.'

He next approaches the very important and highly controversial topic, the purpose of literature. Some say that the only purpose of literature is to provide entertainment. Others insist that it must have a moral purpose. (cf. "Literature enables us to enjoy life and to bear with it.—"Dr. Johnson). Kelkar thinks that to judge literature only by its moral purpose is unnecessarily to limit its scope. 'Did Shakespeare or Kalidas write each one of their plays with a view to its moral content or did they write them to give a free play to their rich imagination? If we put the secret agent of purpose on the heels of artistic creation, it will lead to disaster. A swimmer who romps and plays in water is not there just to have a bath. A hunter does not go on shikar to get some good meat. If literature, besides being good art, also serves a moral purpose, well and good. But there must be some point beyond which the question of motive becomes irrelevant. If you ask where a particular road leads, you may be told that it leads to a town. But if, after arriving at the town, you ask where the town leads, what answer should you expect? A subject acquires literary merit because of its imaginative overtones. This imagination expresses itself through the medium of ideas and figures of speech or rhetoric.'

Kelkar uses the Vedantic terminology to answer this question. The human soul is for ever striving to become one with the universal soul and to the extent it is able to do this, it experiences a sense of joy, of release. In literature, a person can imaginatively become one with the experience of another. He does this without giving up his personal identity. This process of getting lost in experiences not your own without at the same time losing your identity, is the secret of literary enjoyment. When your daughter leaves your home for that of her husband, you cry. This experience is your own, a personal, one-sided affair. But we also cry when we see Shakuntala leave Kanva's ashram. This is a literary or a poetic experience. We do not forget ourselves but play, for the short interval of time, a different role. The

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sensation then felt or experienced is not painful but pleasurable. This pleasurable sensation, in its most intense form, can acquire the condition of a trance. Kelkar continues with the Vedantic terminology and calls this state of mind 'Savikalpa Samadhi'. Normally, in samadhi, man loses all consciousness. But in this samadhi, individual consciousness remains. What Kelkar is trying to say is that literature widens our horizon, heightens our sensibility, makes us see and experience things which we would normally miss. In trying to explain the joy we derive from literature in Vedantic terms, Kelkar actually enters the region of mysticism. It is stated by many that imaginative apprehension of the unity of the universe is at the root of all great art, the secret of its inspiration. This is a mystic experience. This is why Wordsworth begins to dance with the daffodils when he sees them dancing in the breeze. That is why Shelley says of a poet :

'He will watch from dawn to gloom
The lake-reflected sun illumine
The yellow bees in the ivy bloom,
Nor heed nor see what things they be;
But from these create he can
Forms more real than living man,
Nurselings of immortality.'

We frequently experience this state of mind while watching a play. We know that ourselves and the actor on the stage are two different entities separate from each other and yet, when we see Kanva bidding good bye to Shakuntala, we cry. For the moment we forget that we are we and get lost in an experience not our own. Instances are known when persons from the audience actually shout when a highly emotional scene is being acted on the stage like Othello strangling Desdemona. This intense state of identification is, according to Kelkar, a state of samadhi. This of course is not samadhi in the true Vedantic sense. Kelkar knows it and so he qualifies it by saying that in this samadhi you are conscious of your identity and so live two experiences at one and the same time. He further says that that literature is really

great which gives rise to several such sensations at one and the same time. 'If we drop a stone in a still pool of water we see one circular wave after another extending from the central point. A touch of genius can start similar waves in the still waters of the mind but they rise very fast and extend to the end of the universe.'

An interesting sidelight is thrown on Kelkar's use of this particular phrase by Prof. Athavale of Ahmedabad. Prof. Athavale congratulated Kelkar on his use of the phrase 'Savikalpa Samadhi' to describe the joy one feels on reading great literature. Prof. Athavale then said to Kelkar, 'This is a very appropriate description quite in keeping with the tradition of our old Sanskrit literature. For this you deserve very special congratulations. Did you pick up this phrase from some old Sanskrit treatise?' 'No' replied Kelkar, 'The phrase occurred to me on the spur of the moment, without any premeditation. Why, have you found this phrase anywhere in old Sanskrit literature?' 'Yes', replied Prof. Athavale, 'the phrase occurs in the criticism of Nageshbhatta on "Rasagangadhar".' (Anecdotes—p. 205) In the same address, Kelkar takes an extensive review of modern Marathi poetry. 'Modern poetry reflects the great revolution in opinions and taste brought about by British rule. Some still continued to draw inspiration from the old Sanskrit poets, others tried to simplify the medium and bring it in line with the new trends, yet others turned to translations. These together introduced into Marathi poetry a great variety of subject matter, language and treatment.

The lyric was the outstanding feature of this new poetry. "Keshavsut" was the first to use it and it immediately became very popular. Others followed in Keshavsut's footsteps and this period of Marathi poetry is known as the Age of Keshavsut. Most of this poetry consists of short pieces, written generally in the style of a song. It confines itself to the presentation of a single emotion or passion and the greater its rhythm, the greater its appeal.' Kelkar acknowledges Keshavsut's contribution to Marathi poetry but takes exception to his loose construction and unpolished language and warns against their increasing use.

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No modern writer would fail to notice the weakness of this criticism. Kelkar too was perhaps conscious of it for he points out the need for a more detailed analysis. 'It is very necessary to have criticism which would take a detailed, impartial and appreciative view of this new poetry.' Being a humourist himself, Kelkar does not fail to take notice of the humorous strain in this new poetry. In this connection he mentions the work of Kolhatkar, Gadkari and others and makes the significant comment that since humour is more an intellectual than an emotional exercise, it is more suited to prose than poetry.

2

In 1931, Kelkar addressed the Madhya Bharatiya Sahitya Sammelan. During the course of his talk he pointed out the difference between poetry and prose. Poetry is an art in its own right and therefore employs its own tools to achieve its end. These tools are rhythm and cadence. Anyone who wishes for excellence in this art must agree to use these tools. After this positive statement, Kelkar goes on to say that the prose of Emerson, Carlyle and Banabhatt is highly poetic.

We often come across such contradictory statements in Kelkar's critical writings. We have noted elsewhere Kelkar's remarks about poetry and prose. There he says that since the business of poetry is to amuse and entertain, and since life is more serious than amusing, the output of poetry is less than the output of prose. But in this address he says that a good deal of human activity is based on laughter and wonder (the Marathi word used here is *adbhut* which Kelkar amplifies by using the word surprise in brackets. Elsewhere he uses the English word romantic or romance as a synonym for *adbhut*). and as such a great deal of human activity can be rendered in a poetic form. Similarly, in one place he remarks that it would be wrong to look for motive in imaginative literature. But addressing a literary group in 1935 he says that while all literature must possess the quality of beauty 'the real purpose of literature is to survey the world around us, to point out what is bad in it and persuade people to improve it.'

He thus gives literature a moral purpose denied in the earlier definition.

This equivocal attitude to literary criticism has exposed Kelkar to the charge that though he wrote extensively on almost every form of literary art, he is not sure of his ground, that his criticism only skims the surface and never goes in search of first principles. This may be true but it is also true that Kelkar drew the attention of his contemporaries to the different branches of literary criticism and provoked others to take a fresh look at the questions he had raised.

3

Kelkar was a past master in the use of different figures of speech to illustrate his thesis. On his way to England in 1919, he saw for the first time a mountain top covered with snow. In his letter home he wrote that 'it looked like a heap of pulao rice with a sprinkling of fresh dessicated coconut on top.' This brought forth the comment that Kelkar was fond of good food. It provoked Kelkar in his turn to dash off an article (Sahyadri, July 1935) on 'The Simile and its single most distinctive Mark'.

He starts with a personal explanation with a view to clear the ground. How did he come to think of this particular simile? 'I saw a snow covered mountain for the very first time on the south coast of Spain from the boat which took me to England in 1919. I had not had a meal then nor was I particularly hungry. The sight suggested two or three different similes to me but I preferred the one about the pulao rice. Since I was the first member of the family ever to see a snow clad peak, it was impossible that the ladies and children of the house could have seen one. If, therefore, I wanted to make them visualise the scene, it was necessary to use an image with which they were familiar. Three images came to my mind. (1) White flowers on top of Lord Shiva's "pindi", (2) White hair on the head of a very dark old man. (3) Dessicated coconut on pulao rice. The difficulty with the first was that Lord Shiva's pindi is sloping from the top so that flowers spread over it slide down, do not stay put. As against this, the snow on top

of the mountain was clinging to it, not likely to fall off. The second simile was rejected because I thought it vulgar. But the third was most appropriate. The pulao rice is probably taken out on the plate by the cook but it is the ladies who spread the coconut on top of it. They also do it sparingly, an art which they alone know. Any reader will agree that this was a simile which the ladies would immediately understand. In sum, the simile was related not to my immediate need or fondness for food but with the background of experience and knowledge of those for whom it was meant.' (collected works, Vol. 10, pp. 246 et seq.)

One observation can be made on this preference for pulao rice. The Himalaya with its snow clad peaks is universally accepted as the home of Lord Shiva. If Kelkar had made use of the first of the three possible similes, it would have been far more appropriate and the ladies of his household would have immediately caught the point. The association of Lord Shiva with snow clad mountain peaks was and is a concept with which even ignorant women are familiar.

With this explanatory preface, Kelkar turns to the discussion of the main issue which he considers from two different angles, (1) why is man always looking for resemblances or similarities in different objects and (2) granting this human characteristic, what is the single most distinguishing mark of a simile. In this article he considers only the second point though the first was more important. Kelkar was upset by the criticism levelled at him in connection with the particular simile because he thought it was a reflection on his non-existent weakness for good food. Kelkar then produces a list of sixty-five different similes used by Kalidas in the first five cantoes of 'Raghuvansha'. Kalidas was one and the same man who used these different similes to illustrate different points and therefore, to judge his particular state of mind or his character from these would be absurd. Kalidas uses many similes which are based on the love relationship between man and woman, but to conclude therefore that Kalidas was lustful would be wrong. There must always be some specific reason which prompts a writer to pick on a particular simile. These

sixty-five similes show not the subjective state of Kalidas' mind but the objective quality of the similes in question. From this Kelkar concludes that it is not right to judge a writer's state of mind or infer his weakness from the similes he uses.

But the question of Kelkar's fondness for good food still remains. If, as he says, there is nothing wrong in being fond of good food, there need be nothing wrong in choosing an article of food to illustrate a point or use it as a simile. In fact, Kelkar frequently does so. To prove the absurdity of a statement, Kelkar says that it is like calling rice seasoned with sugar (sakhar-bhat) as rice made of sugar (sakharecha bhat). Elsewhere he uses the simile of buttermilk made tasty by the addition of a pinch of salt. Writing about proverbs he says, 'they are like hot condiments. It is not as if without them language will cease to be tasty or lose its flavour. But this hot seasoning of proverbs is most acceptable to those who are fond of eating rich, highly seasoned food. But people used to a plainer diet, though they do not reject this seasoning out of hand, use it sparingly on specific occasions.' ('Proverbs and Legends' collected works Vol. 10, p. 907.)

Kelkar's essays in criticism cover a very wide field and it is impossible to notice them all in a small monograph. Some of them, like the one on the obscene in literature are very superficial. He considers the following couplet from Kalidas' 'Raghuvansha' not only vulgar but obscene. It is difficult to agree with him because most readers will consider it rather beautiful:

सदयं बुभुजे महीभुजः सहस्रोद्वेगमियं व्रजेदिति ।
अचिरोपनतां स मेदिनीं नवपाणिग्रहणां वधूमिव ॥

4

In his address 'Literature Today and Tomorrow', Kelkar compares Marathi literature to the cycle of the seasons. A hundred years ago Marathi literature was in the dark ages, in the winter of its seasons. But contact with a foreign civilization put new life into it. The current Marathi literature was the creation of the previous sixty or seventy years and its quality was totally

different from the literature of an earlier period. He also predicts that we shall see yet another kind of literature in days to come as different from today as today's literature is different from the literature of a hundred years ago. He expresses the hope that more and more books on the natural and physical sciences will appear in days to come as without scientific knowledge we shall be unable to survive in the modern world. Next in importance to scientific literature, Kelkar places books on economics and social sciences. Literature dealing with the liberal arts, fiction, poetry, drama gets the third place in his ranking. Kelkar then makes a very significant remark. To enjoy literature dealing with the liberal arts, one must be free and assured of a secure life in reasonably comfortable circumstances. One is reminded of Sir Arthur Quiller Couch's remark about the fairly comfortable economic condition of the English poets of the romantic and the post romantic period.

He ends his speech with the suggestion that the responsibility of encouraging and producing good literature rests with the government, the universities and the well-to-do classes.

5

In 1937, Kelkar published his lengthy treatise on laughter, 'Hasya Vinod Meemansa'. In the introduction he refers to his much earlier book, 'Subhashit ani Vinod' ('Wit and Humour', published in 1911). This earlier volume received high praise because till then there was no book in Marathi dealing with the subject. 'Thus my book opened a new hall in the mansion of the goddess of learning.'

In this later treatise which is an expanded edition of the earlier volume, Kelkar mentions six different kinds of laughter noted by old Sanskrit scholars and the facial changes brought about by each. A man's laughter, like his face, is distinctly his own. 'Some people's laughter reminds you of a tiny fold on a smooth piece of silk while the laughter of others is full-throated, resembling a tall four storeyed building.' He then defines humour and its use in social intercourse. 'Beauty and form are the soul

of art; the soul of humour is irrelevance'. 'Art is not motivated, laughter is. In true laughter, the performer is not aware that he is making himself laughable, but others are.'

'The small problems of daily life are more easily solved by humour than by anger or irritation. In every humorous statement there is a substratum of truth. To understand this truth is to be wise. Humour spreads from one person to another and then to a third. It helps society to become virtuous, wise and conscious of its duties and responsibilities.'

Kelkar then points out that laughter and tears are the two sides of the same shield. 'They both provide an escape from highly worked up emotions.' He then quotes Mark Twain, James Thurber, Charlie Chaplin in support of this statement. But nowhere does he point out that laughter is closely related with our mental processes. Laughter can express joy, sorrow, irony, anger, sarcasm, ridicule; it can be sardonic or foolish. Thus it expresses several human emotions and is an expression of the state of our mind at a given moment. It is not enough just to distinguish one sound from another—the full throated laugh from the hardly audible smile and the corresponding facial changes they bring about.

6

Kelkar wrote extensively on literary topics. He wrote equally extensively on other topics which form the basic ingredients of the cultural life of a people. The most important among these is Education. In the last volume of his collected works which includes his writings on cultural subjects, there are altogether 134 articles. Of these nearly sixty deal with education and allied topics. This shows the great importance Kelkar attaches to this subject. In these articles, Kelkar covers every aspect of education. There are articles devoted to primary, secondary and university education, women's education and education of the backward classes, the desirability of government control of education or otherwise, regional universities, education through the mother-tongue, the problem of foreign words in the Marathi language, the importance of libraries in the cultural life of a people,

the need for national education. The list is not exhaustive but enough to show Kelkar's abiding and varied interest in the subject.

One of the most important articles in this volume is his long and learned essay on the Revival of Sanskrit Learning. He rightly points out that Sanskrit was and is the original source of Marathi and all other Indian languages. In an attempt to show its wide-spread influence, he roams over the whole landscape and takes a bird's-eye-view of Sanskrit learning in the four corners of the country. He pays a handsome tribute to foreign scholars who made the study of Sanskrit their life-long pursuit and takes note of the valuable contribution of modern scholars to Sanskrit studies. Though the effect of Sanskrit studies on the European romantic movement in literature escapes him, he points out why, for historical reasons, the study of Sanskrit flourished more in France and Germany than in England.

In the article on libraries, Kelkar writes lovingly about books and learning. He invites rich men to divert their wealth to the establishment of libraries where knowledge will be supplied to the people free of cost and in ample measure.

National education was a very important item in our overall strategy of political struggle and Kelkar writes extensively about it. When one thinks of the sorry state of our education after twentyfive years of freedom, the importance of this subject should be self evident.

Kelkar's book on 'Indian Philosophy' was published in 1934. This is a straightforward account of the various schools of Indian philosophy. The most significant part of this otherwise ordinary book is the introduction because it throws light on Kelkar's general attitude to writing. He says 'In some of the books I wrote, I kept only one thing before my eyes. That was not to try and make the book perfect in every respect because this may have resulted in my not writing anything at all. So I chose the other course; of writing books which would prove useful even if, from the point of view of learning and excellence, they proved to be less than the best.'

According to Prof. V. P. Dandekar of Baroda, Kelkar had some definite opinions about good writing. They were :

- (1) It is not possible to imitate style and therefore no one should attempt to do it. Just as each person walks and talks in his own style, so also does he write. The style reflects the man.
- (2) All writing should be suggestive but not comprehensive. It should not include everything from end to end. He referred to Lessing: 'All art is penultimate, not ultimate.'
- (3) Writing should not fall a victim to emotion; it should also avoid prolixity. (Anecdotes—p. 113).

Kelkar's friends and admirers conferred upon him the title of 'Sahitya Samrat'. In an effort to see that his empire was organised and administered properly, Kelkar worked hard to lay down certain guidelines so that the various parts of his literary empire, poetry, prose, drama, criticism, history, philosophy, journalism, politics, should work efficiently. He wrote simply and clearly so that the least among the citizens of his empire should understand him. He also guarded his empire from the eccentric genius of Dr. S. V. Ketkar who was not likely to pay homage to any empire and the non-conformist Acharya Jawadekar, the foremost political thinker of the time whose book 'Adhunik Bharat' became and has remained a classic on the political and social history of India under British rule. After the advent of Hitler, all empires were doomed and Kelkar's empire could not escape the inexorable logic of the times. But he did his best to state as clearly as possible, the problems that face an empire, literary or otherwise, and throughout his career took note of Burke's famous dictum that a great empire and little minds go ill together.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Essayist

KELKAR was and remained a journalist by profession practically throughout his life. As editor of the 'Kesari' and the 'Maharatta', he was required to produce every week an article on some current topic that had attracted the attention of the people or some other in which he thought the people should be interested.

Every successful editor of a newspaper has to keep before his eyes the reading public for whom he writes. While reading Kelkar's articles we get the impression that he is writing for a public which is not very well informed but which is anxious to know. With the help of his skill as a writer, his love of learning, and his desire to share that learning with others, Kelkar raised many a newspaper article from the lowly status of a popular disquisition on a short lived burning topic of the day to that of an essay of abiding interest.

Let us see how Kelkar went about his business. To attract the attention of the reader, he often used an arresting headline. We have seen some examples of this in an earlier chapter. Very often, after starting with an arresting headline, Kelkar continues to maintain the suspense by not immediately disclosing what the article is about. He starts his article on Miss Mayo's book, 'Mother India' with the headline, 'The vicious Bite of a Poisonous Snake'.

This itself is enough to rouse the curiosity of the reader. Kelkar continues to maintain the suspense by starting the article thus : 'A book on India has proved to be the greatest sensation in Europe and America over the last few months. Printers unrolled their stocks of printing paper, publishers loosened their purse strings, readers lost their patience and rushed to buy. Why did all this happen ? It happened because a white skinned woman lost all sense of shame.'

But Kelkar resorts to this method only when he is out to attack with all the weapons in his literary armoury. One has only to look at his review of Khadilkar's play 'Menaka' to note the skill with which he handles these weapons.

But invective is not the most noticeable feature of Kelkar's essays, nor the most abiding. It is modesty, urbanity, learning, a many-sided view of the topic under discussion, and his humour. We see all these qualities at their best in his essay on Widow Remarriage. He starts on a note of extreme modesty. 'I too, like many others, believe in social reform but I have not given serious thought to it. My study of the social sciences is also limited. Nor have I exerted myself in favour of this particular reform or suffered in its cause. I therefore do not consider myself a fit person to talk about it.' He then points out that there are many types of public activity and a man selects the one most suited to his taste. 'This difference in taste is to be welcomed because it leads to a division of labour. All that must be done is that people working in different fields must have no mental reservations about one another, must give credit where credit is due, freely and openly. It will also help if such people come together now and then and work shoulder to shoulder'. As usual, Kelkar makes his point by a happy illustration. 'We are all farmers engaged in social agriculture. All our work may not be equally valuable but it is equally important. Some will make the ground ready, others will sow the seed, yet others will water the plants.'

With this modest introduction, Kelkar turns to the main subject. He would try to look at the problem not as the advocate of a particular point of view but from the point of view of custom

and religious doctrine, the individual and society, and see if a commonly acceptable desideratum could not be discovered.

Religious sanction is what one would first look for in support of this reform. But religious doctrine or the *shastra* is not homogeneous and keeps changing from one period to another. That is because every religious caveat is liable to branch out into many conflicting views and opinions. Kelkar illustrates the process by looking at what happens to various acts passed by our legislative councils. 'The Government Law Department is like the Public Works Department. By the time one end of a public building is ready, repairs have to start at the other. In the same way a constant race is going on between the law and its interpretation. Just as broken glass vessels are sent back to the glass factory for remelting, or torn clothes for darning, in the same way, laws that are broken or have proved inadequate, are constantly being referred back to the Council for necessary repairs. But has this process ever succeeded in satisfying the parties to a suit ?'

If modern enactments, drawn up with great care and legal knowledge suffer this fate, how can one expect an ancient religious order to give final judgement on a controversial issue that would be acceptable to all. Therefore all directives in the Shastras ultimately fall back upon what is generally accepted as norms of good conduct at any given time. But here again, the old and the new come into conflict because public opinion is for ever marching ahead of both the prevailing custom and the Shastras.

Thus Kelkar points out the futility of looking for sanctions in the Shastras for this particular reform. We do or permit to be done a hundred different things condemned by ancient religious doctrine. It is not right therefore to raise religious objections to widow remarriage. Secondly, those who support widow remarriage today are men respected by all as the leaders of society whose spotless character is beyond question. A new wind of change is blowing across the country and ideas of freedom and equality which are taken for granted in the field of politics are bound to spread to the field of social reform. 'Nobody believes that if widow remarriage becomes universally accepted, government will imme-

diately hand over political freedom to us on a platter. But we shall have the satisfaction of having put an end to one form of social injustice implicit in our opposition to widow remarriage.'

Kelkar thus cleverly connects up his twofold discussion of religion and custom with the topic under discussion. He then works towards the end of the essay by pointing out that with the spread of education, there will be increasing sympathy for this reform. What will remain to be decided would be the limits within which it could be allowed.

This rather lengthy summary of the essay brings out Kelkar's qualities as an essayist. He makes a modest beginning by saying that he does not know much about the subject. He then goes on to quote extensively from the shastras to give a backing of deep learning to his argument which some may find it difficult to accept. He points out how custom, education and prevailing social norms affect every reform. He cleverly connects up his lengthy discussion of the two with the question of widow remarriage and points out the limits within which it should be immediately accepted. He sprinkles his thesis with happy and humorous illustrations to prove his point as when he compares the Law Department with the Department of Public Works or when he compares the desire for freedom to a high tide at sea which engulfs all the rivers and canals and creeks on the shore.

The essay also reveals the limitations of Kelkar's thought. Nowhere in this long and well constructed essay do we hear the pitious and heart-rending cry of the Hindu widow, the helpless victim of blind custom. One has only to think of Agarkar's numerous articles on the subject, every page of which echoes with the cry of these unfortunate women and every sentence of which lashes out against this brutal custom. Could we not say of this essay of Kelkar what Ton Paine said of Burke in another context, 'He pities the plumage but forgets the dying bird'.

Kelkar shows the same qualities while reviewing the life and works of his old teacher, Vesudeo Shastri Khare. He begins with the arresting statement that with this book, Khare'shastri is reborn but it is a man, the author of the book, and not a woman,

who has given him his second birth and nursed him with the same care and affection as his mother would have done. He then reviews in detail Khare's contribution to the study of history and to the liberal arts and concludes that Khare was, by nature, more at home with the arts than with history. To prove the point, he draws a comparison between Khare and other contemporary historians with an unmistakable touch of almost imperceptible humour. Pointing out the contrast between Khare and Rajwade in their respective attitudes to the liberal arts, Kelkar says, 'Rajwade's hatred for music can only be compared to that of Aurangzeb. The love of music, according to him, can turn even an Arjun into a Brihannada. As against this, Shastribuwa's genius was many-sided. It is because of his love of the arts that we find in Shastribuwa's various historical writings a happy union of truth and beauty.'

Mahamahopadhyaya D. W. Potdar thinks Kelkar to be the greatest of modern essayists. He however forgets that Kelkar could never strike the personal note in any of his essays. He is incapable of producing an essay in the manner of Robert Lynd or A. G. Gardiner. And one can never imagine him writing such a delectable and inconsequential piece as Lamb's 'Dissertation on a Roast Pig'. The good journalist that he is, he is out to educate, to persuade, to blunt the edge of opposition. Like Burke, he enters into a subject like a serpent, and looking at it from every side, slowly carries the reader to the inevitable conclusion.

In some of his essays like 'Predicting the Future' Kelkar reminds us of Addison. Like Addison, he makes quiet fun of a prevailing superstition and like Addison, draws a moral. Writing about women's hair-styles, Addison remarks that women are more concerned with that part of their head which is known as the outside. With the same quiet humour Kelkar says of astrologers and those who believe in astrology, 'Those who claim to predict the future need never fear the death of their tribe because their faithful followers never die.'

CHAPTER NINE

The Master of Marathi Prose

AFTER the advent of British rule and our consequent contact with a foreign culture, Marathi prose went through a long process of change, so much so that Mahamahopadhyaya Datto Waman Potdar thought it worth while writing a book about it. Kelkar himself has reproduced a few samples of Marathi prose from contemporary 'Akhbars' in the pre-British period which show how completely Marathi prose changed during the hundred years from 1800 to 1900 A.D.

After the advent of British rule, many educated persons thought that they must inform the people of the changes that were taking place. Thanks to the printing press, the easiest way of doing this was through the written word. And since the majority of the people had only a modicum of education, they had to be instructed in a medium they could understand. The language had therefore to be very simple, using words and phrases that a child could comprehend. And so, the language that these early writers used was halting in its approach, taking a few steps at a time, using homely words and phrases in common use and looking for support all along.

By the time Kelkar joined the staff of the 'Kesari' and the 'Mahratta' this character of Marathi prose had completely changed. Vishnushastri Chiplunkar, who called himself the

Shivaji, of the Marathi language, had made it the proud and accomplished vehicle of modern thought. He introduced the Sanskrit idiom into Marathi prose and endowed and enriched it with all the rules of classical rhetoric. We now hear in it the echoes of Macaulay who was Chiplunkar's favourite. Since Chiplunkar's aim was to rouse the pride and self-confidence of the people, he wrote with exceptional vigour and his essays on various subjects, from the condition of our country to the condition of our language made a great impact on the minds of his readers. So popular was his 'Nibandhmala' that people eagerly awaited its arrival month after month.

Another predecessor of Kelkar who enriched Marathi prose was Agarkar. His native humour and romantic style started a new trend in Marathi prose. He did not, if the occasion demanded, hesitate to make use of homely words and phrases in current use at the time, the idiom of the market place. But he wrote with great vigour and employed his pen with equal ease in attack or self-defence.

Tilak had a style all his own. He did not waste his time in embellishing his prose with figures of speech. Kelkar says about him, 'Those who will read these articles will not see before their mind's eye, Tilak at his writing table, pen in hand. They will see Tilak standing (before an audience), speaking in a loud voice and stressing every important word and phrase. One sees in them an inspired flow of words going straight to the heart'. (Introduction to the collected articles of Tilak.) As mentioned in an earlier chapter, Tilak wrote with mathematical precision and produced maximum effect with the minimum use of words.

Kelkar did not follow any of these styles. Vishnushatri's Marathi was too ornate and full of invective, something quite alien to Kelkar's nature. He liked Agarkar's humorous and romantic prose but he thought that Agarkar's discretion often ran away with his humour and he made use of vulgarisms that Kelkar's refined taste rejected.

Tilak was a different proposition altogether. He wrote with the single object of making people accept his somewhat dangerous

and novel political stand. He showed no mercy to those who opposed him. When he struck, he struck to kill. This style again was something Kelkar could not adopt. Language was to him a vehicle both of thought and beauty and where Tilak struck to kill, Kelkar patiently argued to persuade. Kelkar had therefore to evolve a style of his own, and week after week, through the columns of the 'Kesari', he gradually perfected a prose style suitable to his taste and temperament: urbane, gently persuasive, adorned with rhetoric, flexible enough to express every shade of thought and very attractive by itself. In his hands Marathi prose started playing with itself, with words and images. Besides being a vehicle of thought, language now developed its own quality, colour and texture. His sense of humour was an added attraction. In reviewing Kelkar's essays in criticism, Waman Malhar Joshi affectionately records two complaints against him. One is that his views are so balanced and cover the opponent's ground so completely that there is very little left for the critic to criticise. His second complaint is about Kelkar's language. 'His similes and illustrations are so fetching and his language so decorous, well dressed and attractive that the critic forgets his main task of criticism and gets lost in admiring its beauty' (Kelkar Memorial Volume, 1932, pp.28-29).

There is no doubt that Kelkar's vast reading, his close acquaintance with the European and our own literature, old and new, his sense of history, his constant effort to understand every point of view, influenced his style. But he was fond of life and enjoyed it and his style was imperceptibly influenced by this sense of enjoyment. Problems of man, of man in relation to nature and of man in relation to man interested him and he was such an eclectic that he looked at all this panorama of life passing before his eyes with a sympathetic and humorous eye. Like Mr. Knowall in one of Somerset Maugham's stories, he was more inclined to forgive human weaknesses than punish them. No wonder we constantly come across phrases like 'and yet' and 'on the other hand' throughout his voluminous writing.

In building up his particular style, Kelkar added to the pomp

and decorum given to it by his immediate predecessors, the simplicity of the earlier writers. He seeks to illustrate his arguments with things and images with which we are all familiar. Things of daily use, the food we eat, the clothes and ornaments we wear, the gods we worship, the games we play like boxing, cards, khokho provide him with his similes and illustrations. In his speech on the gold currency, he offers to play the game of forfeits with the Finance Minister. In his essay on Justice Ranade's Political Role, he is discussing how words come to men's minds when circumstances are ripe to receive them. Dadabhai's use of the word Swaraj at a given time was not an accident. He explains the point by a very happy simile. 'Like passengers in a railway carriage, words and circumstances are constantly fighting with each other for suitable accommodation.'

Kelkar delights to extend a simile as in an epic. 'It is but right to climb the mountain of history now and then and breathe its fresh air. But we must remember that one cannot stay on the mountain top and inhale its fresh air for all time. Anyone would like to live on a mountain top all his life, free from the vexations of the lower regions. But this is not possible. So it is with the enjoyment of history.' He continues with another simile. 'History hands over to man all accumulated knowledge like a golden nugget. But how to use that gold, where to sell it and at what price is something which a man must use his own judgement to decide.' (Recollection of Historical Events and Present Conditions, Kesari, June 12, 1917).

Sometimes, Kelkar drives home a point with a striking metaphor. Writing about Tilak's 'The Arctic Home in the Vedas' he says. 'It must be admitted that Tilak and European scholars like Dr. Warren lifted the cradle of the Aryan race or of the first human inhabitants of the earth from the top of Mount Caucasus and hitched it to the North Pole.'

In a newsletter from Simla, Kelkar compares the natural beauty of the Himalayas with that of the Sahyadri. 'The trees on the slopes of the Himalayas are from fifty to seventy-five feet tall. But their branches spread out from the ground at a height of

about ten feet so that one can comfortably move under their shade. The forest on the Sahyadri reminds you of a hairy torso lying naked in the Summer heat, but the trees on the Himalayas remind you of a public meeting where, to protect themselves from a sudden unexpected shower, people quickly open their umbrellas to cover their heads.'

Kelkar visited East Bengal, now Bangla Desh, during the course of his travels. Struck by the wide expanse of the numerous rivers sprawling all over the countryside, his imagination gets busy. 'The Ganga at Allahabad is known as Ganga with plaited hair while the one in East Bengal as Ganga with flowing traces. Anyone who has seen the Ganga in the East and the Ganga in the West will readily agree to this description. In the first, only two plaits are visible, the Ganga and the Yamuna but, in the East, when the already wide basin of the Ganga is joined by the big Shona and the Brahmaputra, the river flows all over the landscape like a woman who, to enhance the beauty of her already thick and long hair, embellishes it with the addition of an extra plait.'

On occasions Kelkar gives pleasure by the use of surprising but very appropriate images. During his stay in London, he visited the House of Commons. 'The Treasury Benches occupied by the ministers', he writes, 'were in total darkness. The business of an empire over which the sun never sets is carried on from this dark corner.' He writes about the proverbial English weather. 'Here sunshine and rain are constantly playing at hide and seek with each other. The local people take no notice of it and do not use an umbrella but they take very good care to see that their (imperial) umbrella never fails to give cover to people the world over.' Why discuss the weather in a newsletter, you may ask. But according to English custom, you cannot talk here about any subject without some preliminary remarks about the weather.'

Have you ever heard the Bhagwatgeeta compared to a shop? Listen to this. 'The Shanti Parva after the Mahabharat war, like the Geeta before it, is looked upon as a storehouse of philosophy. But like a merchant who maintains both a wholesale and a retail

stores, Geeta is the wholesale store and Shanti Parva and one or two others are the retail shops. This does not mean that because it is a wholesale stores, the Geeta stocks only one variety of goods; it stocks everything.'

One can go on quoting endlessly because there is no end to Kelkar's image making faculty and the pleasure we derive from it. We have already listened to Joshi's complaint that Kelkar writes so well that we often forget what he is writing about. In a more sober assessment, Daji Nagesh Apte of Baroda writes in a letter, 'Inspired diction, the charm of select but well chosen figures of speech, subtle and delectable humour, an all-sided survey of every problem, and the habit of resolving disputes with the sympathy of a friend have earned you the first place among men of letters.'

Kakasaheb Kelkar writes about Kelkar's prose, 'I honestly believe that Tatyasaheb's (Kelkar's) prose is more polished and effective than that of Vishnushastri or Tilak. He has written so extensively on so many different subjects and whatever he has written is so beautiful that anyone engaged in the study of the Marathi language cannot but read Kelkar.' (Anecdotes p. 199).

While discussing Kelkar's Marathi prose style, one is likely to forget that as editor of the 'Mahratta', Kelkar wrote extensively in English also. We have already reproduced Kelkar's pen portraits of Dadabhai Naoroji and Pheroze Shah Mehta. Elsewhere he has something to say about a newspaper editor, and the reading public. 'The newspaper is no doubt a vanity fair but the editor himself is the least remarkable exhibit therein.' 'Most men among the reading public, when they subscribe to a newspaper also deposit their right of independent judgement in pawn with the editor, and the habit of taking opinion on trust so grows that the pawn is never afterwards redeemed.' ('Lions of the Press') In his concluding remarks in the essay on 'The Historicity of Christ', he says, 'There is a comfortable half way house between the empty abyss of myth and the exalted throne of the deity on the other. It is in this half way house where reason lives and hospitality receives the refugees of the two extreme regions, that Christ may be safely located.'

Talking about old age, Kelkar says in his autobiography, 'Old age is like early morning starlight in Winter. There is light enough to see the landscape but that light is not the light of the blazing sun. The fading moon of a Winter morning knows that she will become young and bright again. The days of Winter too are inevitably followed by Spring and Summer. But the cold season of old age comes only once in a life-time and it is always the last.' (Autobiography, p. 4).

It is no wonder that while reading Kelkar, one gets the impression of a happy man, a contented man, a man keenly aware of life around him, a man who knows too much of life to be dogmatic about it, who loves knowledge and the arts and who has the rare gift of fixing in appropriate language the thoughts and images which are constantly rising in his mind. His style reminds one of a highly cultured and immaculately dressed woman surrounded by her family and her friends. Though married and with children, she is still young enough to be very attractive. She is not averse to a mild flirtation now and then but her sense of humour keeps her out of mischief and wherever she makes her appearance, peace and tranquility and a sense of beauty prevail.

Kelkar died in the early hours of the morning of 14th October, 1947. He died as he lived, pen in hand. On the morning of 15th October, his daughter-in-law found on his writing table his glasses, his fountain pen and a sheet of paper on which was inscribed the last thing he ever wrote, a poem welcoming death:

'I see death coming but he cannot frighten me.

I have known for long that one day he will meet me.

He who enters the forest with a spear in hand.

Does not fear but welcomes the tiger with a smile.'

'The five elements sustained me through life from birth to death.

This is a debt which must be repaid.

It is enough that with their help I lived a life full of happiness.

The only way to repay that debt is to return to them the life they gave me.'

Postscript

NOTHING has been said in the previous chapters on Kelkar as a writer on political subjects. Though Kelkar remained a journalist throughout his life and considered politics as the first concern of a journalist, he was more at home with men of letters than with politicians. That may be why his contribution to contemporary political thought does him much less credit than his contribution to literature and literary subjects. And yet, during the major part of his public life, Kelkar was the trusted lieutenant of Tilak, one of the greatest men this country produced. Though Tilak was a man of outstanding intellect and a scholar of international repute, his countrymen looked upon him as a political leader who used all his energies to accelerate India's march towards political freedom. Because of his long association with Tilak, people looked upon Kelkar as his natural successor in politics and looked to him for leadership after Tilak's death. To carry on from where Tilak had left would have been a heavy burden for anyone coming after him. It was much more so for a person of Kelkar's temperament because his views on politics did not always coincide with those of Tilak. In fact, at one time their differences became so acute that it was rumoured that Kelkar would leave Tilak and join the Moderate Camp under Gokhale.* Kelkar was also conscious of his own limitations, was honest enough not to say things which he did not mean and knew that

* For a more detailed account see 'Adhunik Bharat' by Acharya Javadekar, Chapter X.

he did not possess the qualities of a great leader. Providence which brought him in such close contact with Tilak recovered the debt in full measure with the result that with Tilak absent from the scene, we see Kelkar striving to find a safe anchorage for himself in the political storm that overtook the country under Gandhi's leadership. Kelkar recognised the elemental force that was Gandhi but Gandhi was so unpredictable, his logic looked so perverse and his methods so novel that he could not fit into any category which Kelkar knew and understood. This happened to many persons in Maharashtra who looked upon Tilak as their political Guru. Gandhi destroyed their frame of reference by taking politics out of the council chamber to the fields and factories where the millions toiled. The middle class politics of the early decades of the century ceased to be current coin and lost all relevance in the political programme chalked out by Gandhi. Problems like untouchability, Hindu Muslim unity, constitutional versus radical and extra legal political activity, questions in short which were on the periphery of our freedom struggle, now held the centre of the stage. Every political leader of any importance had to face the challenge these questions raised to arrive at a viable plan of political action. The tragedy of Kelkar was that he could not discard his old frame of reference and replace it by a new one. He still held firm to his belief in the efficacy of constitutional methods, he still thought that the question of untouchability was the difference between a clean and an unclean way of life, that the Muslims were the biggest obstacle in India's way to freedom and that their intransigence grew because Gandhi pampered them. He gloated like a child over a piece of chocolate when Gandhi admitted that the parliamentary mentality had come to stay and withdrew his opposition to council entry. He became a staunch supporter of the Hindu Mahasabha and its active leader. He saw too clearly and knew too well what was happening around him but was not wise enough to draw the right conclusions from what he saw. In September, 1947, he wrote an article in 'Sahyadri' in which he says, 'From 1920 the congress went into the hands of Gandhi and broke faith with the Hindu

POSTSCRIPT

nation. The real nature of the congress, its political faults, its betrayal of Hindu society and suicidal policies have now become as clear as daylight. Even so, if there are fresh elections tomorrow, our Hindu worthies will flock to the polling booths to cast their votes for the congress candidates. This is a sad commentary on the misfortune of the Hindus'. It is an equally sad commentary on Kelkar's puerile politics. Instead of admitting that he must have gone wrong somewhere, he is bold enough to indict the whole Hindu community for not listening to his words of wisdom and blindly supporting the congress. So naive was his political judgement that he believed that the emergence of a Fascist dictator was as much a democratic process as democracy itself and that had Tilak lived, he would have turned Fascist. It is unjust to himself and unfair to others when a man like Kelkar who prides himself on being an intellectual, starts predicting the future and assumes the role of a prophet.

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1. AGARKAR, GOPAL GANESH, (1856-1895)

A great social reformer and intellectual of Maharashtra. M.A. in history and philosophy. Came under the influence of Mill and Spencer and became an agnostic and a rationalist. Though brought up in extreme poverty, refused to accept a remunerative job and decided to devote his life to the service of others.

2. APTE, HARI NARAYAN, (1864-1919)

First great novelist and story-teller in Marathi. Familiar with Bengali, French and German. Started writing at the age of fourteen. A great student of Kalidas and Shakespeare. Between 1885 and 1915 wrote twenty-one social and historical novels, 'Ushahkal' and 'Vajraghat' (historical) and 'Pan Lakshyat kon gheto' and 'Mee' (social) being the more well known among them. Edited the 'Karamanuk' weekly for 28 years.

3. CHANDAVARKAR, SIR NARAYAN GANESH, (1855-1923)

A famous stalwart of the Indian National Congress. Attended its first session (1885). Elected President 1900. Editor, 'Induprakash' (1878-1889). Rose to eminence as the Chief Justice of the Bombay High Court. First Speaker of the Bombay Legislative Assembly after the Montford Reforms. A fellow of the Bombay University and later its Vice Chancellor.

4. CHIPLUNKAR, VISHNUSHASTRI KRISHNA,
(1850-1882)

The famous son of a famous father, Krishnashastri Chiplunkar. Universally recognised as the founder of modern Marathi prose. He used to call himself the Shivaji of the Marathi language and through the columns of his 'Nibandh Mala' which he started in 1874, he roused people's faith in themselves and their great past. Through his 'Kavyetihas-sangraha' he stimulated the study of history. With a view to promote the spirit of self-reliance and create means of livelihood apart from government service, started a litho press, 'Chitrashala'; a bookshop, the 'Kitabhkhana'; and the 'Arya Bhushan' press. Founded the 'Kesari' and 'Maratha' and the New English School. Inspired a string of Marathi writers like Hari Narayan Apte, Shivaram Mahadeo Paranjape, Vishwanath Kashinath Rajwade, Shripad Krishna Kolhatkar, Narasinha Chintaman Kelkar and Pangarkar.

5. DAMLE, KRISHNAJI KESHAV, (1866-1905)

Popularly known as 'KESHAVSUT', the pen name under which he wrote. Father of modern Marathi poetry. Other poets like Balakavi Thombre, Rendalkar, Tilak have acknowledged their debt to him. Like many writers starting a new trend, became famous after death, thanks to the high praise of Gadkari. Among his more famous poems are, 'Tutari', 'Zapurza', 'Sphurti', 'Vatachakra', 'Ahmi Kon', 'Ghubad'.

6. DONGRE, PANDITA RAMABAI, (1858-1922)

A great Sanskrit scholar and Christian missionary. Born in Mysore State. Proficient in Sanskrit when only twelve years old. Also knew Canarese, Marathi, Bengali, Hindi. Reached Calcutta under great privations in 1878 and there created a sensation among the local intelligentsia by her lectures on child marriages and the condition of Indian widows. Arrived in Poona after the death of her husband, Bipinbihari Medhavi and started the movement for women's education with the backing of Justice Ranade and Sir Ramakrishna Bhandarkar. Went to England in 1883 and

there embraced Christianity. Started 'Sharada Sadan' in Bombay for the education of widows (1889) and 'Mukti Sadan' at Kedgaon near Poona. Rescued hundreds of women from the jaws of death in the famine of 1897.

7. GADKARI, RAM GANESH, (1885-1919)

Renowned poet, dramatist and humorous writer in Marathi. Popularly known by his pen name, 'GOVINDAGRAJA'. A close friend of Shripad Krishna Kolhatkar, also renowned for his humorous writing. Was associated with the Kirloskar Theatrical Company practically throughout his life. Considered himself the disciple of another great Marathi poet, 'KESHAVSUT'. Published works: 'Wagvajayanti', a volume of collected poems. 'Complete Balakram', humorous essays. 'Prema Sanyasa', 'Punya Prabhav', 'Ekach Pyala', 'Bhavabandhan', 'Rajasanyasa'; all dramas.

8. JAWADEKAR, SHANKAR DATTATRAYA,
(1894-1955)

A great theoretician of Gandhi's political philosophy. Professor of history, economics and politics at the Tilak Vidyapeeth (1926). Participated in all Gandhi's freedom movements. Editor, 'Lokashakti', 'Navabharat', 'Sadhana'. Author, 'Introduction to Political Theory', 'Democracy and Gandhism', 'Tilak and Gandhi'. Well known for his book 'Adhunik Bharat', a detailed and original analysis of India's struggle for freedom from 1818 onwards.

9. JOSHI, WAMAN MALHAR, (1882-1943)

A social reformer. Famous as critic and writer in Marathi. After doing his M.A. in Logic and Philosophy, became a life-member of Samarth Vidyalyaya. Worked on the staff of the 'Maratha' and other newspapers and finally joined Maharshi Karve's Women's University in 1918. Known for his novels, "Ragini", "Indu Kale & Sarala Bhole" which started a new trend in Marathi fiction.

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10. KALELKAR, DATTATRAYA BALKRISHNA

alias KAKA, (b. 1885).

A great traveller, worked in various educational institutions including Shantiniketan and finally settled down in Gandhiji's Sabarmati Ashram. Played an important part in founding the Gujarat Vidyapeeth. Famous for his critical essays on the liberal arts in Gujarati and Hindi. Inspired a number of young Gujarati writers.

11. KETKAR, DR. SHRIDHAR VYANKATESH, (1884-1937)

An eccentric genius whose ambition was to put Maharashtra in the front rank of international scholarship and force foreign scholars to come here to complete their studies. A scholar of international repute, he wrote extensively on sociology, economics, politics besides writing novels, poetry and drama. Known universally for his monumental work of compiling the Marathi Encyclopaedia (1916-1927) and the introduction he wrote for it. He carried out this work without seeking financial help from anyone and paid adequate remuneration to the staff who worked for him.

12. KHADILKAR, KRISHNAJI PRABHAKAR, (1872-1948)

Educated at Sangli and Poona. Joined the staff of the 'Kesari' soon after N.C. Kelkar and became one of the trusted lieutenants of Lokamanya Tilak. Expert on foreign affairs. His weekly review of world-war I through the columns of 'Chitramaya Jagat' became very popular. Left the 'Kesari' after Tilak's death and started his own paper, 'Nava Kal' which he edited successfully till his death. Was elected president, Natya Sammelan in 1907 and again in 1917 and of the Sahitya Sammelan in 1933. He ruled the Marathi stage as its undisputed master for nearly quarter of a century. Had the rare knack of presenting modern political and social ideas through his mythological and historical plays. Wrote 21 plays, the more famous among them being 'Manapman' and 'Swayanwar' (musical) and 'Keechak Vadha' and 'Bhaubandki' (prose).

13. KHARE, VASUDEO WAMANSHASHTRI, (1858-1924)

Poet, dramatist and historian. As a result of his contact with Vishnushastri Chiplunkar and Kashinath Narayan Sane, took to the study of Maratha History. Was a friend of Tilak and Agarkar and taught for some time in the New English School. Soon migrated to Miraj which became his home for the rest of his life. Known for his exhaustive study of the Patwardhan Papers which were serially published in his collection of historical works from 1897 onwards.

14. KOLHATKAR, SHRIPAD KRISHNA, (1871-1934)

A well known humorous writer, dramatist and critic and a gifted writer on all subjects. Passed B.A. from the Deccan College in 1891 and LL.B. in 1897. A friend of Kelkar from his college days. A close student of astronomy, was chosen to preside over the Astronomical Conference at Sangli in 1918. Wrote eleven plays, two novels, numerous short stories. His collection of humorous writings, 'Sudamyache Pohe' is still very popular. An advocate of social reform, he preached the cause of widow remarriage and campaigned against the evil of drink through his plays, 'Mativikas', 'Mukanayak'.

15. PARASNIS, RAOBAHADUR DATTATRAYA

BALWANT, (1870-1926)

Famous for his collection of historical documents and items of historical interest which he later brought together in the Parasnisi Museum at Satara in 1925. Known for his 'Life of the Rani of Jhansi', 'Marathas in Bundelkhand', 'Extracts from the Peshwa Daftar' and numerous other publications of historical interest.

16. POTDAR, MAHAMAHOPADHYAYA DATTO WAMAN,
(b. 1890)

After graduation, joined the Shikshan Prasarak Mandali of Poona as a life-member. Taking inspiration from V. K. Rajwade,

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turned his attention to historical research and public service. Secretary, Bharat Itihas Sanshodhak Mandal for twenty-five years. President, Marathi Section, All India Oriental Conference, Hyderabad and Indian Historical Congress, Allahabad (1938). President, Marathi Sahitya Sammelan (1939). The Government honoured him for his services to history and literature by conferring upon him the title of Mahamahopadhyaya.

17. RAJWADE, VISHWANATHA KASHINATH, (1863-1926)

Well known historical researcher and linguist of Maharashtra. One of the founders of the Bharat Itihas Sanshodhak Mandal of Poona. Famous for his 'Sources of Marathi History, in several volumes (1898-1917). Known for his brilliant intellect, mordant wit and eccentricities and his very original interpretation of historical events.

18. RANADE, MAHADEO GOVIND, (1842-1901)

A towering personality of nineteenth century Maharashtra and of India. Well known as a social reformer, a politician, an economist and a man of great vision who brought his powerful intellect to bear upon every current problem. One of the founders of the Indian National Congress and the Social Conference.

19. SARDESAI, RAOBAHADUR GOVIND SAKHARAM, (1865-1957)

Well known historian and writer. Worked as reader to H.H. the Maharaja Sayajirao Gaikwad of Baroda and tutor to his son. Wrote the first detailed history of the Marathas making use of all available material old and new. Edited the Peshwa Daftar for which he was honoured by the Chhatrapati of Satara with a silver salver and a cloth of honour (1934). The Rajwade Research Institute conferred on him the title of 'Itihas Martand' in 1945. Among his works are 'Sources of History', 'Peshwa Daftar', Moghul, Marathi and British Riyasats, lives of Shahaji, Shivaji, Sambhaji and Rajaram.

20. TILAK, LOKAMANYA BAL GANGADHAR,
(1856-1920)

Great freedom fighter. 'Father of Indian Unrest'. Founder member, the New English School. Editor, the 'Kesari', internationally renowned Vedic scholar and the first to give the message of Home Rule to his people with his memorable words, 'Home Rule is my birth right and I shall have it'.

21. TILAK, REV. NARAYAN WAMAN, (1862-1919)

Well known Marathi poet. Travelled all over Maharashtra and worked in various capacities as kirtankar, compositor, teacher. Settled at Nagpur in 1891 for research in and translation of Sanskrit literature. Embraced Christianity in 1895. Resided at Ahmednagar (1895-1917) and Satara (1917-1919). His works include 'Collected Poems', 'Abhanganjali', 'Vanavasi Phool', 'Bhajan Sangraha', and 'Christayan' (incomplete).

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