

# MOTHER INDIA

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"GREAT IS TRUTH AND IT SHALL PREVAIL"

ALTERNATE SATURDAYS

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## INDIA THE SECULAR STATE THE RIGHT INTERPRETATION AND THE WRONG

### The Indian Secular Concept

India has been declared a Secular State and the advanced elements in the country are proud of this declaration—but in a rather vague way. Nobody seems to know what are the exact implications of secularity. And quite a number of people even doubt if, except in name, India is any more secular than Pakistan who has declared herself a Muslim State with the name of Allah an integral part of the constitution. The doubt is occasioned by the fact that most of our leaders and ministers openly encourage belief in a religious order of the world.

Even Nehru, socialist though his tendencies are, honoured with his presence the occasion of the return of sacred Buddhist relics to India from abroad. Not only that, but he actually made a most humble namaskar to the relics, joining his palms together and bowing his head over them—a gesture almost of worship. He also affirmed recently that true religion is very precious and that its absence in what is conventionally termed religious is to be regretted. As for Sardar Patel and Rajagopalachariar and most of the Congress notables, they make no secret in public of their reverence for the teachings of the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Gita. All of them and Nehru himself never tire of pronouncing Gandhiji's ideals and principles to be true, and everybody knows that Gandhiji's entire attitude to life was dictated by a firm faith in God, especially God as incarnated in the traditional Hindu figure Rama. If those who stand as symbols of the Government are avowedly in favour not only of a religious world-view but also of the Hindu religion, how, it is asked, can India be considered a Secular State?

### Secularity Has Many Meanings

The question does not go to the root of the matter. Secularity has many meanings. In its extreme form it is defined as total indifference to and discouragement of religious concepts and practices. The Soviet State is the outstanding example of anti-religious secularity. But there can be a less positive and more non-committal form. France and the U.S.A. are not pledged in their constitutions to any religion, but they have no hostility towards religious beliefs and bodies; they regard religion as the individual's private business and let no religious partiality mould their political conduct. Great Britain, inasmuch as the King is entitled the Defender of the Faith, implies reference not only to God but also to a particular brand of religion, and yet in actual working she is without any political bias prompted by the Established Protestant Church.

If by secularity we mean all omission of the idea of God, Great Britain is a theocratic State. If we mean lack of religious favouritism, then she is certainly secular. India is at present secular like France and the U.S.A. rather than like Great Britain. But she is very far indeed from being secular in the Soviet sense. And even as compared to France and the U.S.A., she is more secular in principle than practice, for, while there is a strong irreligious strain among the individuals who compose France and a considerable amount of scepticism among the American people, the majority of Indians are free from the agnostic attitude no less than the atheistic. Rank atheism is rare in India; agnosticism is confined to only a part of the literate population which is itself a small part of the humanity surging within our sub-continent. This is not to deny that, with a great many of our literati, religion is just a hazy background and what governs their thought and behaviour is a too-worldly utilitarianism and hedonism à la the modern West. But our finest minds are alive to the importance of the religious consciousness and the large multitude of Indians are believers. It would be more in conformity with our turn of mind as a nation if we had a constitution framed less according to the temper of the French or the American State than to that of the British. In other words, if the name "God" had a place in our constitution, we should be truer to the psychological condition of the country.

The first point to be settled is: can India avow belief in God, and yet be secular? The second point is: can that belief be Hindu-coloured without vitiating secularity? India called herself secular for only one purpose: she wanted to make it clear that Muslims, Christians, Parsis, Jews and Jains living within her borders would suffer no discrimination or penalty or suppression on account of their not being Hindus and not partaking in the Hindu conventions of worship. India wished to stress political liberty and communal equality irrespective of different religious conventions: that is why she chose the designation of "secular." She never had the intention of favouring atheism and agnosticism, or of hiding the fact that on the whole her fundamental beliefs are those which constitute the core and kernel of Hinduism as distinguished from its shell and superficialities. Sometimes the inner and outer Hinduisms are joined together: in that case, the leaders and ministers who symbolise the Government have to see, before they lend their personal support to religious occasions, that the inner is a living force and not stifled by rigid rule and uninspired ceremony. But there is nothing basically inconsistent in their reverence for religious values—even those which are closely connected with the Hindu religion as distinguished from any other. Read in its proper context, understood in its root motive, India's secular constitution does not run counter to a belief in God by the majority of the nation who are religious and whose voice is echoed in the Government. Nor does it run counter to the Government's being Hindu in essential religion, for if the majority of India follow the Hindu religion what else should we expect a representative Government to do?

In consideration of the fact that minorities subscribe to non-Hindu religions, the Hinduism of the Government must strip itself of all sectarianism, bigotry and orthodoxy and be the pure quintessence of the Hindu faith. This quintessence consists simply in the doctrine that there is an Infinite, Eternal, Perfect Being who is one yet capable of a myriad forms of manifestation, a Being whose divinity lives like a secret fire in all things and creatures and can guide and enlighten the human to unite with the divine, a Being who down the ages manifests also in a special sovereign form of spirituality which is the Avatar, the direct divine Incarnation. The Vedas, the Upanishads and the Gita are all here in a seed-significance to which, under one aspect or another and with this or that qualification, the living substance of all religions held in India today can be virtually reduced.

When it comes to making this seed-significance a dynamic for man's growth out of his ignorance and incapacity into a greater poise of consciousness, Hinduism cannot help being stressed more than the other religions, for it is universally acknowledged by all who have seriously looked into the matter to have the best psychological methods of God-realisation. The Government could not be criticised for any such stress: if the minorities are ignorant of those methods they should be illuminated and if they refuse illumination they have nobody save themselves to blame for feeling slighted. To assure them of safety from sectarianism the Government can be said to have done their best so long as the constitution guarantees freedom from Hinduism's outer husk.

Let us avoid all confusion about the Indian secular concept. There can be envisaged in it neither a conflict between the secular and the religious nor the absence of religion by virtue of the absence of God's name nor the absence of Hinduism's inner meaning. The term "secular" and the omission of God's name must be taken merely to be expedients to avoid bringing up philosophical subtleties and to give no chance to the minorities to fear

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# The LIVING MOMENT

## Glimpses of Men and Events

### "KASHMIR-PLEBISCITE" AGAIN IN THE FOREFRONT

The question of a plebiscite in Kashmir is once again in the forefront because of the difficulties freshly created by Pakistan. We dealt with what we considered its fundamentals in the very first issue of MOTHER INDIA. As a certain reader, Mr. B. Banerji, M.A., L.L.M., of Delhi, has found us "extremely disappointing", it may be worth while touching a second time on the main issue.

Mr. Banerji writes: "Starting on a search for fundamentals you ended on a note of satisfaction with empiricism. If a plebiscite on the question of a component part of the country is wrong, it does not cease to be so because the expected result may by chance turn out to be right. But there is absolutely no reason to think that the result of the plebiscite will be a vote for accession to India. To expect that Shaikh Abdulla will succeed where a much greater man, Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan, failed is mere moonshine. It seems that bitter experience has no lesson for us. We continue to live in the make-believe world of wishful thinking. Starting with the fundamental that there can be no plebiscite on the question of separation, one would have expected you to insist on the withdrawal of India's reference to the UNO, and on the fighting out of the issue, peacefully if possible, by force of arms if necessary. Instead of that you have temporised. You have not paused to consider what would happen if the result of the plebiscite is not to our liking. What happens then to the fundamental with which you start?"

Mr. Banerji has put his case very well indeed, and at first sight his argument seems absolutely devastating. But we would beg him to believe that when the article was written the author was not oblivious of the points raised here. Only, the treatment of them was based on a different vision of fundamentals

than the one Mr. Banerji attributes to him.

### The Fundamental of Fundamentals

We should certainly never have allowed partition. But, having allowed it, what is to be done? Obviously, we should do our best to remove it and to prevent further loss of parts of India. Whatever means—in consonance with our dignity and integrity as a great nation—are most likely to help us must be adopted. A plebiscite happens to be one of the means in the case of Kashmir. Pakistan cannot morally object to it, since in relation to the issue of a province's accession or secession it is a means originally brought forward by Pakistan herself. If in the case of Kashmir we accept it, we are legitimately trying to hoist the engineer with his own petard. And in accepting it there is no giving up of fundamentals: Mr. Banerji appears to think that a plebiscite in itself is inconsistent with fundamentals, whereas the fundamental of fundamentals that

was insisted on is the indivisibility of India. A plebiscite in Kashmir was declared to be irrelevant because the issue itself of Kashmir's accession or secession is irrelevant; but when the issue is raised, a plebiscite is right or wrong, relevant or irrelevant, according as it is likely to favour accession or secession. A plebiscite is not wrong under all conditions: it is wrong only when it partitions a country, but it can be quite right when it serves to check partitioning. Our critic takes us to be anti-plebiscite: we are only anti-partition. He has mistaken our fundamentals. We have not really ended up with empiricism.

### Why Pakistan Tries to Bypass Plebiscite

He may, however, doubt our belief that the result of a plebiscite in Kashmir will be a vote for accession to India. We are convinced that his doubt arises from confusing two entirely different situations. Kashmir today and the North-West Frontier Province when Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan lost it to Pakis-

tan are not in the same frame of mind. Kashmir has suffered terribly at the hands of the raiders and the Pakistanis who supported the raiders. All their instincts are for joining India who has gone to their succour. If the foreign elements planted by Pakistan in Kashmir are given no chance to load the dice, and if the so-called Azad Forces are disarmed and disbanded and thus prevented from terrorising the people, Kashmir will accede to India. Gaffar Khan was defeated because Muslim religiosity weighed against sound sense. Here whatever religiosity may be there is effectively counteracted by intense suffering on the part of Muslims and by the overwhelming gratitude they feel to their liberators. That is why Pakistan is attempting to bypass the plebiscite proposal and has already committed eighty violations of the truce-agreement and is doing her utmost to bring about a partition instead of a straight choice by the whole province one way or the other.

### India's Stand

If there were any uncertainty about the outcome of the plebiscite our paper would not back up the Government's stand. If the terms under which the Government want a plebiscite are not fulfilled India will unhesitatingly withdraw her reference to the UNO and fight out the issue on her own. To the purely academic question as to what should be done in case India, despite getting the plebiscite held on her own terms, finds that the vote goes against her, the answer is: "We are an honourable nation. We shall abide by the result, provided there has been no underhand manoeuvring. As for the future, nothing very definite can be affirmed. If Pakistan endeavours to use Kashmir as a base for military operations against India we shall take the firmest measures we can in order to ensure the safety of our beloved motherland which has suffered enough mutilation."

## Theme of Themes

My songs have but a single theme:  
Thy love, Beloved, and Thy grace;  
The world is but a dream in dream,  
And truth's the beauty of Thy Face.

They say my themes are narrow, small,  
For they can hardly understand  
That Thou, O Love, art all in all,  
And all the worlds are in Thy hand;

That when I sing of Thee, I sing  
Of worlds beyond and worlds above;  
That even my poorest song can bring  
Eternal answers from Thy love.

TEHMI

## INDIA THE SECULAR STATE

Continued from page 1

political and communal oppression. When the present period of intercommunal unsettlement is over, we should not be afraid of having the word "theocracy" hurled at us, provided we take care to be different from orthodox semi-obscurantist theocracies like Spain and Eire and Pakistan.

### Secularity and the Presence of Ideals

A final point to remember is that an India which sets up the ideals of liberty and quality is bound to answer why these ideals are selected. No answer short of saying that they are the true principles of life will satisfy. And once we start speaking of "truth" we are in the realm of what are termed "values" and confront the enigma of the "ought". Why ought we to cherish liberty and quality? If we reply that they conduce to the welfare and happiness of a country, the question arises: why ought we to conduce to a country's welfare and happiness? The "ought" is a riddle we can never read except by going beyond the world of passing facts. If there is no Law eternal behind the codes and statutes of men, a Law which men strive to embody according to their best lights, then nothing fundamentally bars the right of cunning and selfish opportunism to have full play and the only commandment is—"Thou shalt not be found out." If honesty and other virtues are held to be the best policy in the long run, it is only because some eternal Law is on their side and the sense of it in human breasts works ultimately on their behalf. Our morals and ideals may not always image the divine depths of the eternal Law; but there can be nothing like morality and idealism without an effort or aspiration to image the depths that are divine of a Law that is eternal.

This is plain logic. And every State must either accept this logic or else forfeit all claims to attempting an ideal government worthy of allegiance. Not only the ideals of liberty and equality but all ideals whatever must imply a divine sanction when they are offered us as true. The sense of unconditional imperativeness and

inherent validity, without which no "ought" exists, leads ever to a theocracy of the universe. And if India or any State wishes to escape the charge of being a monstrous monument of cynical opportunism it must be overtly or covertly theocratic. A Secular State which is indifferent to religion and yet tries to be based on true ideals is a contradiction in terms!

### Secularity in the Most Appropriate and Vital Sense

If words like "theocratic" and "religious" smack of an outward credal formality, let us choose a word like "spiritual" which has a freshness and wideness and inwardness of suggestion. But let us clearly perceive the right significance of secularity. Especially a country like India cannot keep indulging in a misinterpretation of it, for predominantly spiritual is the Indian genius. And until this character of the Indian genius is fully recognised—nay, felt in the heart and all along the blood—we shall never rise to the golden top of our bent and we shall waste the magnificent possibilities that seers like Sri Aurobindo bring us today of initiating a new world-order inspired and illumined by the divinity hidden within man.

Mention of Sri Aurobindo lays bare a further shade of the right significance we should attach to secularity. One meaning of "secular" is: "concerned with the affairs of this world"; it is opposed to "other-worldly". Spirituality in India has had two orientations: an earth-renouncing orientation and an earth-embracing one. The Aurobindonian spirituality is averse to all escapism, however sublime, and is emphatic about the need of transmuting and fulfilling earth's life with the light of the Eternal, the Infinite, the Perfect. It can therefore be described as secular spirituality, and it is the dynamic modern *Zeit-Geist*, the active temper of our time, in the finest and deepest form. As such, it illustrates the most appropriate and vital sense in which India can be faithful to her spiritual genius without either failing to be abreast of modernism or ceasing to be a Secular State.



# THE CREATION OF INDIAN INDIA

## IS HINDUISM SECTARIAN AND COMMUNAL?

BY "CHANAKYA"

Commenting on my article on the R.S.S. in which I had said that the R.S.S. was not communal or anti-national in wanting to revive the Vedanta and the Gita and teach the present to move forward with the help of India's great spiritual past, Mr. V. H. Mehta of Bombay has raised an issue which is of the greatest importance; namely, whether we want to create a Hindu India or an Indian India.

In the course of his letter, Mr. Mehta writes "The past which is attempted to be resurrected and worshipped is a Hindu Past evidently: it cannot be any other. The Vedanta and the Gita are Hindu Philosophy and Hindu Religion. If the country is to be guided by these, then Mahomedans and Christians can have a place in the country by sufferance only. Therefore the insistence on the secular character of the constitution that is being shaped. In the past there never was an Indian nation: there is none even today. The INDIAN NATION of our fond hopes is STILL IN THE MAKING. ALL THOSE WHO ADVOCATE THAT THIS INDIAN NATION SHOULD BE BASED ON VEDANTA AND GITA ARE THINKING OF A HINDU INDIA—NOT AN INDIAN INDIA AND ARE TO THAT EXTENT PURELY AND UNDENIABLY COMMUNAL AND THEREFORE ANTI-NATIONAL."

### Hindu State and Indian State

At the very beginning we want to stress the fact that though the term Hindu is now being used to denote a community, the majority in India, many people still use it in the sense of Indian. We are sure that most of those who want a Hindu State want only a political system constructed not on western lines but on lines evolved in India throughout the ages and suitable to the peculiar conditions in this vast country of ours. Thus what Mr. Jayaswal meant by the term Hindu Polity in his great book with that title is only the system of Polity prevalent in ancient India. That was not Hindu in a narrow sectarian sense.

As Sri Aurobindo writes in *The Spirit and Form of Indian Polity*, "The whole Indian system was founded upon a close participation of all the orders in the common life, each predominating in its own field, the Brahmin in religion, learning and letters, the Kshatriya in war, kingcraft and interstate political action, the Vaishya in wealth-getting and productive economical function, but none, not even the Shudra, excluded from his share in the civic life and an effective place and voice in politics, administration and justice. As a consequence, the old Indian polity at no time developed, or at least it did not maintain for long, those exclusive forms of class rule that have so long and powerfully marked the political history of other countries. A priestly theocracy, like that of Tibet, or the rule of a landed or a military aristocracy that prevailed for centuries in France and England and other European countries or a mercantile oligarchy, as in Carthage and Venice, were forms of government foreign to the Indian spirit. The democratic republics of the intermediate times were in all probability polities which endeavoured to preserve in its fullness the old principle of the active participation of the whole body of the people in the assemblies and not democracies of the Greek type, the oligarchical republics governed by more limited

senates drawn from the more dignified elements in all the orders as in the later royal councils or urban bodies. In any case the system finally evolved was a mixed polity in which none of the orders had an undue predominance".

We need not enter into details and it is not our proposal that that Indian system should be revived in its entirety. But, we are sure, only that system will succeed in India which is based on those essential principles underlying the ancient Indian polity and not any parliamentary or totalitarian regime borrowed from the West. The Hindu Mahasabha has demanded a Hindu State in this sense; as regards the R.S.S., it is not a political body and thus has never made any such demand. Mr. Golwalkar, the leader of the R.S.S., wrote in one of his letters to Pandit Nehru: "By the grace of God, we are humble servants of our people in the cultural field, aloof from politics, building character, building unity." It is only to find an excuse to suppress the R.S.S. that the cry has been raised that they are trying to create a Hindu State.

### Meaning of Hindu Culture

But now the charge is a little modified. Sardar Patel is now saying that the R.S.S. want to impose Hindu culture on the Muslims by force. You can put a piece of beef into the mouth of a Hindu by force, you can abduct a Hindu woman by force to increase the numerical strength of your community, but how you can force a person to accept a culture passes our understanding. By Aryan or Hindu culture is meant the cultivation of the highest moral and spiritual values, and if the R.S.S. can induce others to accept that, they will be rendering a great service to mankind and fulfilling the aspiration of the ancient Rishis of India, *krinavantu visvan aryam*, "We will make the whole world Aryan". But we do not know whether the R.S.S. were doing any propaganda among the Muslims; they have given special attention to the development of the Kshatriya side of the Aryan character among the Hindus, as it has deteriorated very much.

As depicted in the Gita, the Kshatriya creed says; "Know God, know thyself, help men; protect the Right do without fear or weakness or faltering thy work of battle in the world. Thou art the eternal and imperishable Spirit, thy soul is here on its upward path to immortality; life and death are nothing, sorrow and wounds and suffering are nothing, for these things have to be conquered and overcome. Look not at thy own pleasure and gain and profit, but above and around, above at the shining summits to which thou climbest, around at this world of battle and trial in which good and evil, progress and retrogression are locked in a stern conflict. Men call to thee, their strong man, their hero, for help; help them, fight. Destroy when by destruction the world must advance, but hate not that which thou destroyest, neither grieve for all those who perish. Know every-

where the one Self, know all to be immortal souls and the body to be but dust. Do thy work with a calm, strong and equal spirit; fight and fall nobly or conquer mightily. For this is the work that God and thy nature have given to these to accomplish." (*Essays on the Gita*, by Sri Aurobindo).

### Can Vedanta and Gita be Given Up?

Mr. Mehta inveighs, in block letters, against what he considers the Hindu and therefore communal and anti-national character of the vedanta and Gita. Strange indeed! What will remain of India if we give up the Vedanta and the Gita? Mr. Mehta forgets that they belong as much to the Indian Muslims and the Indian Christians as to the Hindus. "The vast mass of the Mussalmans in the country were and are Indians by race, only a very small admixture of Pathan, Turkish and Mogul blood took place." Indian Muslims and Indian Christians have not come to India from Arabia or Palestine, they are the descendants of people who cherished the Gita and the Vedanta as their highest treasures. If they disown that great heritage, it is they who are narrowly communal and anti-national, not those who advocate that the Indian Union should be based on the Vedanta and the Gita. Mr. Mehta himself admits at the end of his letter, contradicting his previous statement, that "the Vedanta and the Gita, properly understood, are spiritual treasures which may be gladly shared with all." So instead of denouncing them as Hindu scriptures, let us see to it that they are properly interpreted and understood so that they may furnish the spiritual basis of all religions and also the basis on which all humanity can be unified.

### Best Basis of Human Equality

Mr. Mehta writes of a State based on the essential principle of human equality. But where can you find a deeper basis of this equality than in the Vedanta which teaches that it is the one Self that has become the self of all beings and that man in his inmost self is one with God and all other men? Superstitions of ages of degradation and degeneration are to be seen and relentlessly discarded, but that does not mean that all religion is to be put under a ban. Religion, no doubt, is a thing of creed and dogma, but that has its use for the general ity of men, and if properly practised prepares the mind and the heart for the true spiritual life. It is the characteristic of Hinduism that it recognises the validity of all forms and modes of worship as a preparatory discipline, and it has as much regard for Christianity and Islam as for its own forms and ceremonies. "The religion which embraces Science and Faith, Theism, Christianity, Mahomedanism and Buddhism and yet is none of these is that to which the World-spirit moves. In our own, which is the most sceptical and the most believing of all, the most sceptical because it has questioned and experimented the most, the most believing because it has the deepest experiences and the most varied and positive spiritual knowledge, that wider Hinduism which is not a dogma or combination of dogmas but a

law of life, which is not a social framework but the spirit of a past and future social evolution, which rejects nothing but insists on testing and experiencing everything and when tested and experienced turning it to the soul's uses, in this Hinduism we find the basis of the future world religion."

### Cultural and Spiritual Unity

Mr. Mehta says, "In the past there never was an Indian nation; there is none even today." That may be true, but the spiritual and cultural unity of India was established long ago and that is persisting even now, making this vast country from the Himalayas to Cape Commorin an entity one and indivisible. "The true question is whether the people of India as a whole had not developed from ancient times the sense of unity and a self-conscious collective individuality separate from others. There can be no doubt about the answer. National consciousness in European countries has grown from certain external circumstances that shaped and unified a collective life, unity of race, language, position, government, economic interests and the rest. But in India it is a unity of the spirit that has grown from within outward; it is the ancient soul of India expressed in her culture and religion that constructed the real bond of oneness of the Indian people. The Vedic Rishis and their successors made it their chief work to found a spiritual and cultural unity of the many races and peoples of the peninsula."

A spiritual oneness is a flexible thing and does not insist on the so-called "unities" of national existence; "rather it lives diffused in the system and permits readily a great diversity and freedom of life." This principle peculiarly suited the unique psychological and physical conditions of this great land, and the life of its people was allowed to develop through numerous autonomous centres of culture and power. The ancient Indians did not persistently cherish, like the ancient Romans, the idea of founding an outward imperial unity by military and political means, as that would have required a mechanical uniformity and centralisation which would have seriously hindered the free growth of the cultural life of the people. Instead of insisting on a mechanical unification under a centralised political power they sought to evolve first a general cultural life which would be the firm foundation of their national life. This inner unity, spiritual in its aspiration and motive was established completely at an early period and it became the very stuff of the life of all 'the great surge of humanity between the Himalayas and the two seas'. The necessity of a political unification of the whole country was not left out of sight, but the genius of the race sought to effect it in its own way and, left to itself, would have achieved this end less by an artificial and outward method than by a natural inner development out of the free cultural growth of the people." (*Mother India* by Anilbaran Roy).

Is this cultural and spiritual unity of India, achieved through the ages as the foundation of a sound national

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# BENGAL CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS

BY B. C. SEN

Secretary, the Unity Party.

The report of the linguistic committee, accepted by the Congress Working Committee, comes as a shock to us. After all that has passed, and especially after the luminous message given by Sri Aurobindo to Andhra University, it was expected that the High Power Committee would at least accept the principle of linguistic provinces, though the actual implementation may still be delayed for pragmatic reasons. But the Committee has vigorously opposed that principle itself and have said that they are not bound by what they call the 'old' policy of the Congress.

Here are their own words: "We feel that the conditions that have emerged in India since the achievement of independence are such as to make us view the problem of linguistic provinces in a new light. The first consideration must be the security, unity and economic prosperity of India and every separatist and disruptive tendency should be rigorously discouraged." So the principle goes to the winds, the demand for linguistic provinces is stigmatised as separatist and disruptive tendencies to be rigorously opposed, and each case must be considered on its merits, and the merits will have reference to administrative convenience as envisaged by the present Congress high command. Dr. Sitaramayya said, explaining the report of the Committee: "If it is on administrative grounds, not linguistic, that we get the Andhra Province, we do not mind it." They obviously favour the principle of a unitary state with a strong centre ruling over all. This would be difficult if this vast country is divided and subdivided on a linguistic basis. Then why did the Prime Minister and his Deputy agree to join the Committee? If they had stated their conviction clearly at the beginning, that Committee need not have been appointed at all.

## Injustice to Bengal

The High Committee have, however, made one concession: that if the people can make enough fuss, they will have to "submit" to it as democrats, but that also only in southern India and more especially in the case of Andhra. About the border disputes in Northern India, they have categorically stated, without giving any reason, that the question should not be raised or discussed at all until some future time. In the meantime the constitution of the country is being so framed as would make it well nigh impossible for Bengal to get back her districts which a cruel foreign bureaucracy, in a vindictive spirit wrenched away from her and joined to Bihar. So poor Bengal will

have to continue with a fractured limb—for it is nothing short of that—for how long God only knows. In a representative gathering held in Bengal in March to send an appeal to the linguistic committee on behalf of the Bengalis, both of Bengal and Bihar, the President Justice C. C. Biswas observed: "All Bengalis support the claim of Bengal to the Bengali-speaking tracts now joined to Bihar, and this is not a new demand. This is being pressed since 1911. The leaders of the Congress have all supported this claim. It is a rightful claim to demand the formation of a province on the basis of language and culture. On this basis we have every right to demand certain parts of Bihar. We expected that with the attainment of independence, the leaders would fulfil our hopes. But those hopes still remain unfulfilled." He also referred to the treatment that is being meted to the Bengalis in Bihar; they are being forced to learn Hindi, and some prominent Congress leaders are behind this movement, said he. A resolution unanimously passed on these lines was submitted to the three-men linguistic committee. That committee have now given their verdict: "We are clearly of the opinion that no question of rectification of boundaries in the provinces of Northern India should be raised at the present moment, whatever the merit of such a proposal might be."

Will the clear opinion of three men (really two men, for Dr. Sitaramayya has obviously been overborne by the other two, Pandit Jawaharlal and Sardar Patel) prevail over the persistent claim of all Bengalis for about half a century? Why this particular question cannot be taken up just now has not been stated at all by the committee; all their arguments about administrative and other difficulties refer to formation of new provinces; there is absolutely no such difficulty in returning one or two districts to Bengal. This question of difficult times was not raised when Pudukota was

unceremoniously joined to a district of Madras. The whole life of the population of this native state in South India has been upset by this merger. More than twenty Acts prevalent in British India, relating to social, economic, administrative matters have been imposed on them, and they were not at all consulted about their fate. Pudukota was a progressive ancient state with a distinct individuality, in many respects far more advanced than the adjoining districts of British India. All this has been destroyed by an executive fiat from Delhi. If such a major operation can be done at this moment without causing any inconvenience to the baby state of India, why cannot a district be returned to Bengal?

The same laws prevail in Bihar and Bengal so far as both formed parts of British India, and the administrative change involved would be very little. Travancore and Cochin are to be integrated, their individualities are to be broken up in spite of the protest of the majority of the people. In a meeting in Trichur on April 1st., called by the Independent M.L.A.s of the Cochin Legislative Assembly to protest against the proposed integration, Dr. A. R. Menon former Cochin Minister, and Congress Leader, said: "About 95 per cent of the people are against the integration." That does not disturb the equanimity of the Delhi gods. The French possessions, which have developed a distinctive individuality under French rule for the last two centuries are sought to be dismembered and merged into the adjoining districts and subdivisions of India. Out of 562 native states 538 could be joined to India within a few months, but one or two Bengali districts cannot be joined to Bengal! There is absolutely no point in saying that this cannot be done at present. The real reason is that our leaders, with the best of intentions, do not believe in the principle of linguistic provinces. Therefore they do not see the urgency of the situation. The report says: "While language is a binding force, it is also a separative one." What they mean is that if provinces are formed on the basis of language, one province will be separated from another and the unity of India will be destroyed. Indeed Pandit Nehru said in the recent political conference held in Bihar that we should not raise these border questions but should develop the sense of Indian unity. This view was thus expressed by Mr. Kodanda Rao: "Let us all be Indians first and last and nothing else."

## The Vital Value of Language

But the sense of Indian unity is already there so strongly established (no doubt helped by the pressure of a massive foreign rule), that the Provincial differentiation on the basis of language cannot affect it at all. That was proved year after year in the annual sessions of the Indian National Congress. In the Congress grounds, we used to have different camps for all the different provinces (and for that matter linguistic provinces), but the provincial feeling was wholly subordinated to the ecstatic feeling of Indian unity. We felt no less Indian though we were distinctively Bengalis, Madrasis, Punjabis and so forth. Language does not really separate but

differentiates, thus making the life of the whole richer and more colourful. As this cultural and national value of language is not being fully appreciated by our topmost leaders, we shall make here a rather extensive quotation from the writings of Sri Aurobindo, one of the greatest nation-builders of modern India.

"Diversity of language serves two important ends of the human spirit, a use of unification and a use of variation. A language helps to bring those who speak it into a certain large unity of growing thought, formed temperament, ripening spirit. It is an intellectual, aesthetic and expressive bond which tempers division where division exists and strengthens unity where unity has been achieved. Especially it gives self-consciousness to national and racial unity and creates the bond of a common self-expression and a common record of achievement. On the other hand, it is a means of national differentiation, and perhaps the most powerful of all—not a barren principle of division merely, but a fruitful and helpful differentiation. For each language is the sign and power of the soul of the people which naturally speaks it. Each develops therefore its own peculiar spirit, thought-temperament, way of dealing with life and knowledge and experience. If it receives and welcomes the thought, the life-experience, the spiritual impact of other nations, still it transforms them into something new of its own and by that power of transformation it enriches the life of humanity with its fruitful borrowings and does not merely repeat what had been gained elsewhere. Therefore it is of the utmost value to a nation, a human group-soul to preserve its language and to make of it a strong and living cultural instrument. A nation, race or people which loses its language cannot live its whole life and its real life. And this advantage to the national life is at the same time an advantage to the general life of the human race. . . . Modern India is a striking example. Nothing has stood more in the way of the rapid progress of India, nothing has more successfully prevented her self-finding and development under modern conditions than the long overshadowing of the Indian tongues as cultural instruments by the English language. It is significant that the one sub-nation in India which from the first refused to undergo this yoke, devoted itself to the development of its language, made that for long its principal preoccupation, gave to it its most original minds and its most living energies, getting through everything else perfunctorily, neglecting commerce, doing politics as an intellectual and oratorical pastime, that it is Bengal which first recovered its soul, respiritualised itself, forced the whole world to hear of its great spiritual personalities, gave it the first modern Indian poet and Indian scientist of world-wide fame and achievement, restored the moribund art of India to life and power, first made her to count again in the culture of the world, first, as a reward in the outer life, arrived at a vital political consciousness and a living political movement not imitative and derivative in its spirit and its central ideal. For so much does language count in the life of a nation; for so much does it

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## THE CREATION OF INDIAN INDIA

Continued from page 3

life, to be destroyed to accommodate the narrow communalism of the Muslims and the Christians? Should it rather not be made the basis on which all the people of India can be welded "into a single national strength in the life of a great and united people?" "India has a super-personality which is evolving minor differences in her regional life, while in the West its many separate, long warring and still mutually distrustful countries are unable to evolve a living collective personality of Europe. It is this super-personality of India that we call Mother India, the Shakti of India; for this personality is a power of the Universal Divine that manifests in the nature of the country and supports the evolving soul of a great people.

The Indian Shakti creates a sort of a 'mandal', a circle, and all those who come within the circle acquire the same fundamental characteristics and the same central nature. Even the present communal troubles are due to a formative pressing down of the Indian Shakti, a pressure that is bringing the difficulties of her task to the surface so that she may compose differences, manifest and refound on new lines, in the diverse peoples who have made this land their home, the essential spiritual and cultural unity of India, blend them into a harmonious outward whole and offer to the world an ideal of human unity diverse in oneness." (Ibid).



# GERMAN SAVANT IN INDIA

## An Interview With Dr. Frederic Spiegelberg.

While the rising generation of Indians has a tendency either to imitate the European and American way of life or to turn to Communism, many Westerners, especially the intellectuals, who have realised the limitations of their own rationalistic culture and seen behind its surface glitter the stark tragedy of frustration, are turning towards the Vedanta, and look towards India to give human life a spiritual orientation.

Some of these men conscientiously practise Yoga, whilst others take a keen intellectual interest in the Vedantic Philosophy; but they all are firmly convinced that only by attaining a spiritual union with the Divine Reality and acting from its Truth can man ever hope to create a better life upon earth. Many are inspired by Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, some are drawn towards Sri Raman Maharishi, whilst others find the light they have been seeking in Sri Aurobindo. All of them recognise India as the home of spirituality and come here whenever they find an opportunity to do so.

At present India has a distinguished guest in Dr. Spiegelberg of Stanford University, California. He is a German by birth, and has studied under famous philosophers like Rudolph Otto, Paul Deussen, Nicolai Hartmann and the Existentialist Martin Heidegger. In 1938, he left Germany for America, where he was appointed Professor of Comparative Religion at Columbia University. Since 1941, he has been teaching, at the Stanford University, among other subjects Indian Philosophy and Survey of Indian Civilisation. He is the co-editor of *The Bible of the World* and is the author of *The Religious Experience of Plotinus*, *Freedom and Authority: Martin Luther and the Bible*, *Raja Yoga* and the recently published *The Religion of No-Religion*. He is travelling at present in India under the Rockefeller Grant. When I interviewed him he had already visited a number of interesting places, among them being spiritual centres, famous temples, and museums.

We talked for a while about Americans and Europeans who were following a regular spiritual discipline. He spoke admiringly of Gerald Heard, Aldous Huxley, Christopher Isherwood and the "California Group", and also mentioned Alan Watts and Mrs. Ananda Jennings. Then he spoke about the Existentialists. "You know," he began, "Martin Heidegger, is the greatest living Existentialist philosopher. I shall speak about him in my lecture on "the Theology of Existentialism" which I am going to deliver before the P.E.N. Club.

"But are not the Existentialists supposed to be atheists?" I asked.

"Not all. The School of Jean Paul Sartre definitely is atheistic, but Heidegger cannot be called an atheist".

Then we talked about his visits to the various spiritual centres. "Yes, I had very fine talks with Swami Ramdas; he is the only one of the three with whom I could manage to have long discussions. But my best stay was at the Pondicherry Ashram. That darshan day—I shall never forget it."

"Why, what was it that so much impressed you?"

"Well, it is difficult to describe it exactly. It was the look in Sri Aurobindo's eyes, and the way he kept on looking at me steadily." He

paused for a few seconds, perhaps trying to recapture the moment. Then he continued, "I am very grateful that I came into contact with Sri Aurobindo so late in life, for after having wrestled with the ultimate problems of existence for years, I am now in a position to appreciate his answers to them. In 1947, I read his *The Life Divine* and was completely knocked over. I have never come across a philosopher so tolerant as Sri Aurobindo. He always knows why there was the necessity for a certain system of philosophy to exist at a particular time".

"Yes, many intellectuals think that Sri Aurobindo is a great philosopher", I remarked. "I think it was Sri Francis Younghusband who said that *The Life Divine* is the greatest book of our times".

"But the words philosopher, spiritual genius, mystic, seer or saint, do not describe him correctly. They leave me unsatisfied—these words have too many wrong associations. But I can say this, that the highest significance that can be attached to these words can only give a bare idea of what he really is."

I was very much impressed when I heard this; but before I could ask him another question, he continued, "Even if I regard him as only a philosopher, I shall not restrict his greatness to this age only. We have Plato, Spinoza, Kant and Hegel—but they do not have the same all-embracing metaphysical structure, they do not have the same vision".

"Well, if you have such a high opinion of Sri Aurobindo as a seer and a philosopher, why don't you have some of his books prescribed in the American colleges?" I asked.

"That is not very easy. The people connected with our Universities are under the anti-metaphysical influence of John Dewey and his Instrumentalism which is the American form of what is called Logical Positivism in Europe. But at the Stanford University where I take the Bhagwat Gita Class my students study Sri Aurobindo's *Essays on the Gita*."

Then he talked about the other places he was going to visit. "I am going to Almora, Santiniketan, Benares and finally to Tibet. From there I shall return to America. I expect to be there on the first of July".

"I hope you will come again to India some day".

"Well, not for the next three years, I am sorry to say."

I shook hands with him and was about to leave when I suddenly remembered that I had forgotten to ask him a very important question. "Tell me, Dr. Spiegelberg", I said, "What is exactly the object of your visit to India?"

"To see if spirituality in India is still a living reality". Then with a smile he added, "I knew the answer, but I had to convince the American people".

"VIVEKA"

## THREE POEMS

### THE CARPET

I saw a flying-carpet of souls in space:  
Each light beside, within, enfolding Light;  
And yet  
All separate:  
For each was named, each had a golden face,  
But all went whistling the same Will through space.

### THE SUN'S QUIET SIDE

Blake's Moon "with delight  
Sits and smiles on the night":  
I've known that Moon—but smiling on a day.

It was in me,  
And round our hub, gyrating Possibility:  
Wind smoking along grasses,  
And quiet, heavy horses;  
People, and creative and destructive forces—  
But which was which, or what was meant or was a meaning distorted—  
Of that, no knowledge.

O which is which, and what is meant, and how is meaning distorted?  
Seh! This Moon is a strange Moon—  
And wisdom reachable by being still in it wholly delighted.

### RED CATTLE

Artifacts of the Sun—  
Where there's division—  
They surge through the bracken,  
The cows like meteors  
With burning young.

I would like to herd them  
Where they began—  
They were light-herds then—

On my light-horse.  
And I think....  
If I stare, I can. Yes, I can.

I can stare through the skins and I am there; the light sang:  
Each dazzle of the moulding that was cattle-making rang—  
And it does still—  
Like a low-toned, or a clashing, or a sweet bell. Then....  
Anyone can hear—if he tries to—the music  
Of a cow's brilliant basis, a cow's  
Furnace of completeness?

JOYCE CHADWICK,  
Gate Farm House, Battle,  
Sussex ENGLAND.

# THE WORLD CRISIS AND INDIA BY "Synergist"

## VI: CONSCIOUSNESS, THE TRUE DETERMINANT

In the preceding essays we have tried to show that the inner determines the outer, and that the culture of a people reflects the type of consciousness that creates it, that in his present stage of evolution man possesses a particular type of consciousness, an ego-centric physical-vital-mental consciousness, and creates a vitalistic-rationalistic culture that is its direct reflection; if he were to evolve further and possess a spiritual consciousness he would create a greater culture and would also be able to master the external world and mould his environment by making the Light and Power of the Spirit bear upon them. This thesis now requires a more detailed exposition.

Man is aware of his own existence and of that of the external world around him—he looks upon himself as "self" and the rest as "not-self". He observes the world through the refractive medium of his senses, and these sense-impressions are carried to the mind which interprets them. This means that his act of knowing is conditioned by the nature of his senses and by the particular constitution of his mind which uses them as its instruments; his knowledge of the external world therefore refers to his consciousness and is by no means absolute. It should not be construed from this that such a philosophical standpoint denies the reality of the external world by stating that whatever a man knows is a mental construct and has a reality only in his consciousness, which would ultimately amount to Solipsism, the doctrine that "I alone exist." This exposition is not solipsistic, it admits the reality of the external world whilst maintaining that the knowledge we have of it refers to our consciousness, because the act of knowing is conditioned by the nature of our sensory equipment and the particular constitution of our mind; it further states that the knowledge we have of it does not correspond exactly with what exists outside of us, but is a knowledge of it as represented to our consciousness.

Here we come across a difficulty which carries us right into the midst of the Idealist-Realist controversy. It is not within the scope of this essay to examine this controversy in detail; we shall here only consider the relation between the observing consciousness and the object observed, for this relation will show how the knowledge a man possesses is determined by the nature of his consciousness.

The problem is this: if our knowledge of the external world does not correspond exactly to what that world really is, then how far do qualities like hardness, opaqueness, and colour, for example, belong to the object, and how far are they mental—sensible constructs? Supposing a man is looking at a tree—he sees a particular form, a solid and opaque trunk, green leaves and so forth. Now, in the act of looking, if the construction of the visual sense were to change suddenly so that it could look through things, then the image of the tree will also change—the trunk will appear to be transparent, its opaqueness will disappear and it will look as if it was made of brown-tinted glass. So the question before us is this: Is the trunk really opaque, that is, is opaqueness a quality inherent in the tree, or has it a reality only in the mind of the observer?

### The Observing Consciousness and the Object Observed

The knowledge a man has of the external world has for its basis an inter-connected relation between his consciousness and the object he apprehends. Both he and the object are creations of universal nature forces and are parts of a whole connected by a network of energies; they are not isolated entities existing by themselves. The nature forces exist as various kinds of vibrations, each kind possessing different grades, magnitudes and intensities; out of these vibrations a few are contacted by the human consciousness and translated into a particular order of reality which we call the solid actual world. Certain vibrations are translated as light, others as sound, and so on. When there are inter-acting vibratory contacts between the different strands of these nature forces, certain formations are created, nuclei of energy units. The densest and grossest of these formations when they are contacted by the apprehending human consciousness are designated as matter. The subtler ones which escape the senses are partially known through instruments, whilst the rest are beyond the ken of the scientific mind, because they belong to an order of reality other than the physical world which alone comes under its survey.

An example will help to illustrate how this inter-action exactly takes place. A man touches a stone and feels that it is hard; the question is, is the hardness a quality residing in the stone, or has it a reality only in his consciousness? The answer is, "Neither of the two". The stone is a formation of atoms which are themselves concentrations of energy units; now when these atoms are contacted by the nerve ends of the man they send to his mind a sensory impression which is at once translated by it as 'hardness'. This means that hardness as experienced by the man comes into existence only when there is the inter-action between the apprehend-

ing consciousness and the stone. The same applies to the tree and its opaqueness. Neither the tree is opaque nor is its opaqueness entirely mind-constructed, but there is something in the tree (which is not, for example, in a piece of glass) which in response to the human gaze appears as opaque. The opaqueness is neither a purely mental construct nor is it a quality as we observe it, but it comes into existence as opaqueness when the observer visually contacts the tree.

To divide and understand is the characteristic way of knowing of the mind—for its own convenience it creates divisions out of wholes which are again parts of greater wholes, it creates categories and makes classifications and declares that an object is of blue colour, that it is heavy, that it is solid, and so on. But then it sometimes forgets that these are only mental interpretations of contacts made by the human consciousness through its sensory apparatus with the external world. Opaqueness is a term created to explain a certain vibratory contact between an observing human subject and an object, which in our case happens to be a tree. It is not very difficult to understand that observation is dependent upon the inter-action between the observer and the object observed when it is realised that the observer himself is part of the "field" in which the object he is looking at exists. He is not an isolated entity who is being acted upon by forces other than those that precipitate the formation under observation, the object—one who can observe with scientific detachment and arrive at so-called pure "objective knowledge".

As we have seen, man is a nature organism, a formation created by the action of mental, vital and physical universal forces, and therefore related to the world around him; but for the sake of attaining scientific knowledge he has to stand apart mentally as an observer as much as is possible for him.

### Soul And Nature

But man is not only a nature organism: behind his outer nature personality, there is an inner soul-being. He is not a creature of Universal Nature, Prakriti; he is also a Conscious Soul, a Purusha.

When by withdrawing himself from his surface-consciousness he awakens to this reality, he recognises the truth behind the ego. He finds that his mental-vital-physical personality that he calls "I" is a knot of Universal Nature, a formation created by the interplay of the mental, vital and physical strands of the one Universal Force, Prakriti. When his consciousness ascends to the higher gnostic ranges of the Spiritual Consciousness at the summit of which is the Supreme Truth, he realises that each plane of existence reflects a relation between Purusha and Prakriti, that on the lower planes Purusha is enmeshed in the workings of Prakriti, but that on the higher planes he first appears as the silent witness, and then as the lord and master of Prakriti, till finally on the summits of the Spirit he finds that both are One—that Conscious Soul and Executive Force of Nature are a single Reality, that Force is the energism of Consciousness.

This means that the witness soul and its creative nature formations which are known as two separate realities on the terrestrial level on the human scale of observation are actually one. There is an identity between the observing subject and the observed object in the realisation of the Supreme Truth, but in the pragmatics of the earth formula they appear as separate entities.

### Direct Knowledge and Knowledge by Identity

Over and above this indirect way of knowing, man is capable of attaining a more direct and intimate knowledge through inspiration, intuition, and revelation. This knowledge also refers to his consciousness. A direct knowledge by identity is also attainable by him, but only in the highest spiritual realisation where the knower and the known become one, where the whole world-manifestation is finally known to be the self-projection of the Supreme Consciousness. On this level the question about subjective or objective knowledge does not arise, for the observer by identifying himself with the Supreme Being knows himself as the All-Existent; the observer himself becomes the object observed, because it is the Supreme Consciousness itself watching one of the formations created by the action of its own Force.

This acquired knowledge becomes the basis on which man creates his culture. From this it is clear why we maintain that the knowledge a man has of the world around him and the philosophies of life he erects upon this knowledge are determined by the nature of his consciousness.

# LIGHTS ON LIFE-PROBLEMS

(6)

One of our chief aims will be to provide authentic guidance in regard to the many perplexing questions with which the common man is faced in his daily life. This cannot be better done than by considering these questions in the light of Sri Aurobindo's writings, because Sri Aurobindo is not merely a Master of Yoga in possession of the Eternal Spiritual Truths, but also a Guide and Helper of mankind in the many trying situations that arise in the course of its day-to-day existence. To bring home the light of this guidance and to make it directly applicable to the concrete problems of life, a series of questions of common interest along with precise answers based on Sri Aurobindo's writings will regularly appear in these columns.

Q. 1: In modern times, especially in Europe, the place of religion in life has not only been very much minimised and restricted but often religion has been violently attacked as a force making for retardation, oppression, superstition and ignorance. This revolt against religion has sought to keep science and philosophy and art, politics and practical life and even ethics entirely immune to the influence of religion and in its extreme form has tried to destroy religion altogether. To what extent this indictment against religion is justified?

A. This aggressive indictment against religion in modern times has much to justify it, not in its conclusion but in its premiss,—not that religion in itself must always be, but that historically and as a matter of fact the accredited religions and their hierarchs and exponents have too often been a force for retardation, have too often thrown their weight on the side of darkness, oppression and ignorance and that it has needed a denial, a revolt of the oppressed human mind and heart to correct these errors and set religion right. Though we may not lay excessive stress on the superstitions, aberrations, violences, crimes even, which churches, cults and creeds have favoured, admitted, sanctioned, supported or exploited for their own benefit we have to note the fact that such a thing was possible.

Q. 2: What is the explanation of so much evil perpetrated in the name of religion?

A. The root of this evil is not in religion itself but in our ignorant human confusion of religion with a particular creed, sect, cult, religious society or church. The human tendency to this error is extremely strong and the whole root of the historical insufficiency of religion as a guide and control of human society lies in this tendency. Churches and creeds have, for example, stood violently in the way of philosophy and science, burned a Giordano Bruno, imprisoned a Galileo, and so generally miscondacted themselves in this matter that philosophy and science had in self-defence to turn upon religion and rend her to pieces in order to get a free field for their legitimate development; and this because men had chosen to think that religion was bound up with certain fixed intellectual conceptions about God and the world which could not stand scrutiny, and therefore scrutiny had to be put down by fire and sword; scientific and philosophical truth had to be denied in order that religious error might survive. We see too a narrow religious spirit often oppressing and impoverishing the joy and beauty of life, either from an intolerant asceticism or, as the Puritans attempted it, because they could not see that a religious austerity was not the whole of religion, though it might be an important side of it, was not the sole ethico-religious approach to God, since love, charity, gentleness, tolerance, kindness are also and even more divine, and they forgot or never knew that God is love and beauty as well as purity. In politics religion has often thrown itself on the side of power and resisted the coming of larger political ideals, because it was itself in the form of a Church supported by power and because it confused religion with the Church, or because it stood for a false theocracy, forgetting that true theocracy is the kingdom of God and not the kingdom of a Pope, a priesthood or a sacerdotal class. So too it has often supported a rigid and outworn social system, because it thought its own life bound up with social forms with which it happened to have been associated during a long portion of its own history, and erroneously concluded that even a necessary change there would be violation of religion and a danger to its existence; as if so mighty and inward a thing as the religious spirit in man could be destroyed by so small a thing as the change of a social form or so outward a thing as a social readjustment! This error in its many forms has been the great weakness of religion as practised in the past and the opportunity and justification for the revolt of the intelligence, the aesthetic sense, the social and political idealism, even the ethical spirit of the human being against what should have been its own highest tendency and law.

Q. 3: In ancient times religion was the most dominant thing in man's life and governed all his individual and social activities. The modern age on the contrary considers religion as the enemy of progress and, as stated before, has tried to banish it from life. How to reconcile these two divergent attitudes?

A. Both the attitudes rest upon a certain strong justification and their quarrel is due to a misunderstanding. It is true that religion should be the dominant thing in life, its light and law, but religion as it should be and is in its inner nature, its fundamental law of being, a seeking after God, the cult of spirituality; on the other hand it is true that religion when it identifies itself only with a creed, a cult,

a Church, a system of ceremonial forms, may well become a retarding force and that it may become a necessity for the human spirit to reject its control over the varied activities of life.

Q. 4: But by spirituality religion often means something remote from earthly life, different from it, hostile to it. The spirit then becomes something aloof which man can reach only by throwing away the life or by persistently discouraging, mortifying and killing it. If that be the true sense of religion, then how can it have any positive message for human society in its effort or aspiration for progress or perfection in its own sphere? If religion discourages life and holds out no hope to it how can it be its true law and guide?

A. All such religious pessimistic notions of life which have weighed so heavily on men's minds both in the East and the West in the past are a denial of the fullness and power of the Spirit, an impatience with the ways of God in the world, an insufficient faith in the divine wisdom and power which created the world and guides it. It admits a wrong notion about that wisdom and power of the spirit to which the world can look for guidance and for the uplifting of its whole life towards the Divine.

In spirituality, then, understood in this true and complete sense we must seek for the directing light and the harmonising law, and in religion in proportion as it identifies itself with this spirituality. So long as it falls short of this, it is one human activity and power among others, though the most important and the most powerful, and cannot wholly guide the others. If it seeks always to fix them into the limits of a creed, an unchangeable law, a particular system, it must be prepared to see them revolting from its control; for although they may accept this impress for a time and greatly profit by it, in the end they must move by the law of their being towards a freer scope and activity. Spirituality respects the freedom of the human soul because it is itself fulfilled by freedom; and the deepest meaning of freedom is the power to expand and grow towards perfection by the law of one's own nature, one's *dharma*. This liberty it will give to all the fundamental parts of our being. It will give that freedom to philosophy and science which ancient Indian religion gave,—freedom even to deny the spirit, if they will,—as a result of which philosophy and science never found in ancient India the necessity of divorcing themselves from religion, but grew into it and under its light. It will give the same freedom to man's seeking for political and social perfection and to all his other powers and aspirations. Only it will seek to illuminate them so that they may grow into the light and law of the spirit, not by suppression and restriction, but by expansion and a many-sided finding of their greatest, highest and deepest potentialities. For all these are potentialities of the spirit.

Q. 5: Mahatma Gandhi, commenting on Dr. Ambedkar's advocacy of change of religion, stated: "But religion is not like a house or a cloak which can be changed at will. It is more an integral part of one's self than of one's body. Religion is the tie that binds one to one's creator, and while the body perishes as it has to, religion persists even after that." Is there not some exaggeration in this statement?

A. If it is meant by the statement that the form of religion is something permanent and unchangeable, then that cannot be accepted. But if religion here means one's way of communion with the Divine, then it is true that that is something belonging to the inner being and cannot be changed like a house or a cloak for the sake of some personal, social or worldly convenience. If a change is to be made, it can only be for an inner spiritual reason, because of some development from within. No one can be bound to any form of religion or any particular creed or system, but if he changes the one he has accepted for another, for external reasons, that means he has inwardly no religion at all and both his old and his new religion are only an empty formula. At bottom that is, I suppose, what the statement drives at. Preference for a different approach to the Truth or the desire of inner spiritual self-expression are not the motives of the recommendation of change to which objection is made here;—the object proposed is an enhancement of social status and consideration which is no more a spiritual motive than conversion for the sake of money or marriage. If a man has no religion in himself, he can change his credal profession for any motive; if he has, he cannot; he can only change it in response to an inner spiritual need. If a man has a bhakti for the Divine in the form of Krishna, he can't very well say, "I will scrap Krishna for Christ, so that I may become socially respectable."



# NEW TRENDS IN WESTERN THOUGHT

## HISTORY WARNS MODERN MAN

By ARNOLD J. TOYNBEE

World Review

Modern man is like a poker player who has increased the stakes until his bank account, his home, his job, his life, are all in the pot. The suspense has become appalling. He feels he has to win. But he has no certainty that either his cards or his skill will bring him through.

If he believed in tea leaves or astrology, he would implore the fortune-tellers to relieve his agony and let him know whether he will win—for he imagines that the outcome of the game is already decided by fate.

But modern man is not quite superstitious enough for fortune-tellers. And so he turns to the scholars for a peek into the future. He asks the sociologists and the psychiatrists: "When will you deliver the perfect society to us? Will it be in time to save us?" When they cannot give him the assurance that he wants, he asks historians like me: "What has been the end of the story when mankind got itself into this sort of jam before?"

Did mankind ever get itself into the sort of jam we are in today? Yes, many times. Modern technology should not confuse us about that. Men in other centuries have held poker hands not too unlike our own. But the stakes were not as high in earlier ages.

To change the figure, men have travelled before along the road we are travelling. The same traffic rules regulated them as govern us today. The only difference is this: In earlier ages, men travelled in donkey-carts and on foot. If they sauntered along on the left side of the road, the collisions were not fatal. If we, travelling the same road at eighty miles an hour in our latest cars, break the rules, we will bring about a major disaster.

But the rules have not changed. Neither has the road, although modern man often flatters himself that the gimmicks and gadgets of the industrial world are proofs of his superiority to his forbears.

Technical proficiency is not, in itself, a guarantee of wisdom or survival. Civilisations that in the past became fascinated by their own mechanical skill proved to have taken a step toward suicide. They might later reverse this trend and flourish again—but only if they abandoned their narrow concentration on tools as an end in themselves.

This is true even of the very earliest history. Among the cave-men, the Lower Neolithic man concentrated on the perfection of finely ground weapons—and ended up unable to accomplish much else besides make them.

The Upper Palaeolithic man never became lopsided. His tools remained crude to the end, but his general culture, as shown in surviving cave drawings, was a very high one. The Mayans, who established one of the great cultures of the past, never learned how to work metals. Their neighbours, the Mexics and Yucatecs, were skilled in metallurgy—but their civilisations were inferior.

### Can We Handle Our Power?

This is only one application of a lesson that runs through history: Nothing fails like worldly success. My study of twenty-one civilisations has convinced me that cultures are healthy only when they are creative, when they are responding with a fresh, creative response to some challenge of climate or immigration or internal change. The civilisation that solves its problems and rests on its oars has a sad future if it does

not respond to the next challenge with a different answer.

In quite small matters, this rule holds true. For instance, Americans invented the paddle steamer and, hypnotised by this discovery, continued to repeat their successes with it. European nations, meanwhile had developed the much better screw propeller. With it, they outstripped the American shipping companies. A little success can paralyse our search for something better.

Today we are endangered by our mastery of the machine. We are so bewitched by our own progress in technology that we may neglect the broader creative acts which alone will enable us to survive. Idolatry is one of man's strongest temptations; there is no surer way of drying up the sources of creativity than the worshipping of our own achievements of yesterday. Patriotism is a case in point.

One of the reasons why our times are dangerous is that we have all been taught to worship our nation, our flag, our own past history. Man may safely worship only God; the First Commandment is also the first law of Growth for individuals and for societies. When we break it and idolise our past, we fail.

The history of nineteenth-century Italy presents a clear case. In 1848, the Venetians rebelled against the Austrian monarchy and, stirred by the memory of their past freedom as a republic, fought bravely for a time, but accepted their defeat. The Piedmontese, who also rebelled, had no such proud memory; they fought ingloriously. But ten years later it was the Piedmontese who finally won their revenge and freed the Venetians.

What was the difference? The Piedmontese persisted because they were fighting to realise a creative dream—a united Italy, a thing which had never existed before. This gave them drive and helped them to survive a serious setback. But the Venetians were hypnotised by their own past glories, which they hoped to revive. There is no lasting dynamism in an effort to repeat our past success.

Patriotism always asks us to share the psychological error of the Venetians. It is a modern passion that hardly existed before the French Revolution. In ages when men really worshipped God, they gave the State only such a limited loyalty as we render our city governments today. They paid their taxes and cast their votes, but they did not allow the State to rule their consciences.

Patriotism has become the modern substitute for religion—and a very bad substitute, to my mind. Hitler and Mussolini carried their modern cult to its logical extreme when they declared that the State commanded all loyalty of its citizens. Both leaders urged their citizens to idolise the national past: Mussolini, by equating modern Italy with the Roman Empire; Hitler, by reviving the pagan gods of Valhalla. But all citizens of modern countries share in the error.

The fanatical State-worship which we take for granted today is a peculiarly dangerous form of idolatry.

So is our backward looking belief that science can give the answers to our present problems.

Our recent scientific progress was a creative answer to the challenge of industrialism, and a fine one. But the problems that we now face are not of a kind that will be answered in the laboratories. They are moral problems—and science is amoral.

The challenge of 1949 is clear: How are we going to employ the physical power our scientists have gained for us? If we try to answer this problem by the old response of piling up more and more scientific knowledge, we shall be heading for a grave disaster. Using an old successful response to meet a new demand is one of man's great temptations, but it rarely succeeds.

The Polynesians excelled as navigators, the Eskimos as fishermen, the Spartans as soldiers, the Nomads as horse-tamers. And in each case, the single skill was always the one on which they depended, even when circumstances called for a fresh and new creative efforts. As a result their cultures did not grow.

### Nationalism is a Threat

History shows that civilisations which have depended on military prowess to survive have fallen; a soldier's skill will not solve the problems victory brings. Charlemagne, Timur, the Athenian tyrants, the British Plantagenets—all failed because they counted on the one thing they had learned too well—militarism—and thought that it would serve them in any circumstances.

Life is not so easy. A single formula for success cannot be written. Every new challenge demands a new, spontaneous response from a man or a society.

But man is lazy. He does not like to think out new solutions when old ones are at hand. That is why it is hard for modern man to give up his hopes of finding a materialist solution to the problems of the world. Concentration on material progress has worked so well in other fields; it has spanned the oceans and harnessed the storm. Surely, says the child of our times, surely it can help us to form One World of friendly, prosperous human beings? But it cannot, in the nature of things. To expect a political solution to be found by the specialist is a dangerous delusion. Man has been very clever in gaining control over nature. But he is very backward in learning to control himself.

If a pat solution to the problem of world unity were possible, we could pay our scholars to find it. But if—as is true—the problem demands a spiritual change in modern man, we cannot hand the task over to any civil service class. Each of us has to do the job himself. That is a disconcerting prospect, but it is by a spiritual rebirth that every great civilisation has reached maturity.

One of the first things we shall have to learn, if we want this spiritual transformation, is to cease worshipping the pet idols of our day—machinery, our national flag, economics, science itself. The more we have accomplished to date with the help of these man-made devices, the harder it will be for us to outgrow them. The rich man has peculiar difficulties in entering into the Kingdom of Heaven in all ages.

Those who belong to highly successful nationalities will find it especially difficult to surrender patriotism in order to found a world state.

But there is a precedent for our problem. The Greek city states in the fourth, third and second centuries B.C., stood in acute need of political federation if they were to survive. The necessity arose then as now, because they had set up a brisk trade among themselves; the economic interdependence of these little states was a forerunner of the international trade of our own day. It was obvious that political union was the next needed step. For hundreds of years the wisest men of Greece tried to find a formula for federation—and failed.

Why? Because of city-pride. The Athenians were too proud of Athens' past to give their loyalty to a larger Greece. And so were the citizens of Corinth and of Sparta. These were all cities with a noble, well-remembered past. While the Greek cities declined as separate powers, the task of federation was being accomplished in those centuries with no great difficulty by the cities of Carthage, Syria, Egypt and Italy in their own areas.

### We Must Stop Idol Worship

These outpost empires finally hedged in the old Greek cities and eclipsed them. Why? Because the new cities were not handicapped by a history of success. They were able to create the right answer to their problem of the times because they owed no loyalty to other answers worked out in a glorious past. With no famous ancestors to imitate, they were free to create their own solution.

Today, the unification of the world may also be brought about by citizens of countries which have had no proud record in the past few centuries.

If the great Powers stubbornly insist on clinging to the old concept of nationalism—which is outdated now—peoples who have not found nationalism a happy experience may be the only ones who can give the world the fresh solution that it needs.

For the unification of the world must come, and it is desirable from every viewpoint that it should come through peaceful, voluntary means. If mere unity at any cost had been our goal, we might have accepted Hitler's offer to unite Europe through conquest. But the world is never willing to buy unity if the price is too high. The Roman Empire gave peace to the ancient world, but at too great a spiritual cost. Such unification through the sword has never in history been a lasting or happy solution.

We must have unity. But it is quite possible that in making One World, our primary hope, we may fail by aiming too low. For the Brotherhood of Man is, I am convinced, an utterly impossible ideal, unless men are bound together by belief in a Transcendent God.

The foundations of our own Western civilisation were not laid by men who wanted any such mean thing as economic progress or political union. These things came in the Middle Ages, but as accidental results of their efforts to realise the Kingdom of God on earth.

Certainly, our recent efforts to solve our problems in strictly

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# THE MARXIST CONCEPTION OF LITERATURE

## IS IT CONSISTENT WITH TRUE DEMOCRACY?

By K. RAGHAVENDRA RAO

The Marxists have revolutionised man's attitude to life so thoroughly that, for one who is steeped in tradition, it is absolutely impossible to take any consideration of their attitude. In their hands, no department of human activity has undergone such a radical change as literature.

### Two Camps of Literature in Europe

Though it is very difficult to be unbiassed in a discussion of this kind, one must try to be as impartial as one can. In Europe today, so far as literature is concerned, one finds two distinctly different and antagonistic camps. On the one side we have a group of writers who do not in the least subscribe to the Marxist view of life. This group is constantly attacked by the other camp for being reactionary and unprogressive. This group believes that Marxism when translated into reality results in the establishment of a highly centralised and disguisedly Fascist state. It points at Soviet Russia as an example of "Communist Fascism." This group also believes in individual liberty and political democracy.

In the opposite camp, we have a different set of writers who are convinced that Marxism is an infallible remedy for all evils. These call themselves progressive. Politically, they are out and out Leftists. They believe that the existing society—the capitalist society—is practically resting on the misery and poverty of a majority of human beings. They are determined to destroy Capitalism, root and branch, because it is held to be based on injustice and inhuman exploitation.

But we in India do not witness such clear-cut and well-defined camps. For one thing, literature and all arts in general could not have a vigorous and free existence in our country for well over three centuries. Slavery had sapped all our creative vitality. Now that we have attained our freedom, we have to start afresh and create a literature worthy of our great past. Very often in our country, we find weak and meaningless imitations of the literary movements of the West. We too are familiar with "progressive" writing in India. But one feels that "progressive" writing in India, more often than not, turns out to be a discreditable imitation or translation of many Russian masterpieces. The translation of Maxim Gorky's *MOTHER* in many Indian languages is a case in point. However, sooner or later, we too shall have to face the challenge of Marxism.

### Is A Writer A Lackey of the Money-Bag

First of all the marxists analyse the economic position of a writer. A writer, as anybody else, needs money for his existence. He has to be paid for his efforts. Now, who pays him? Obviously those who can afford to indulge in such luxuries as literature. So, literature is maintained by the moneyed class. Hence they conclude that the writers who are paid by the moneyed class become the slaves of that particular class and try to defend the cause of those who patronise them. They further conclude that the so-called individual liberty of a writer in a

capitalist society is an illusion. Is not a writer merely a lackey and henchman of the money-bag? Lenin declares, "The freedom of the bourgeois writer, artist, actress, is only a disguised (or hypocritically masked) dependence on the money-bag, on the bribe, on the financial slavedriver."

Lenin, in his attempts to defend the absence of liberty for a writer in a communist state, goes too far when he asserts that the liberty a writer enjoys in a capitalist state is an illusion. Unfortunately for Lenin, facts show that this liberty was not an illusion, but a reality. Most writers of the past, who have gloriously enriched literature, lived in poverty. They scorned to bow low before the money-bag. Lenin's statement might apply to a handful of cheap writers who shamelessly obeyed their rich patrons. But, for the most part, literature has been created by noble and adventurous souls who sacrificed earthly glory for the greater glory of being "pilgrims of truth and beauty."

### Literature as Propaganda

After declaring the liberty of a writer in a capitalist state to be an illusion, the Marxists next proceed to formulate the true functions of a writer. At this point comes the famous labour theory of value. In the ultimate analysis all wealth is produced by the labouring class. The peasants and workers who compose the Proletariat class are the real producers of all wealth. It is they who maintain the economic existence of a writer. Hence they conclude that a writer owes them a sense of duty. He must fight for their cause. He must fight for their emancipation. In other words, he must become partisan. Thus, to the Marxists, all literature is essentially political. They do not believe in non-political literature. Again to quote Lenin, "Literature must be partisan . . . Down with non-partisan writers!" Naturally they conclude that "all literature is propaganda."

Let us conclude that all literature is propaganda. We have a right to ask, "Propaganda for which party or ideology?" "Of course", they tell us, "Propaganda for the communist party". So the whole view, reduced to its essentials, means, "All literature is a propaganda of the communist party." Can any reasonable individual subscribe to such a view? In that case, every political party has as much right to limit the function of literature to a propagation of its own ideology. But what is propaganda? Eminent psychologists tell us that all propaganda is an attempt to achieve mass proselytisation, taking full advantage of mob-psychology. One who intends to do propaganda is essentially a prejudiced and partial votary of a particular belief. He must not hesitate to tell lies to get popular support. But the communists do not take psychology seriously.

### Soviet State-Control of Literature

Let us see how the Marxist theory is practised in the Soviet state. The state has set up a critical board which virtually controls the production of literature. The demands of this august body are very few and simple. Its judgments are final and inexorable. Firstly, this body demands that a writer must be a fanatical communist. Secondly, he must never get tired of eulogising the state. If he conforms to these two simple rules, then his works are passed as fit for the consumption of the great Soviet people.

It will be of considerable interest for many of our communist comrades in India to note that Soviet Russia is most fanatically national. Its tall talk of internationalism is just an eyewash. Comrade Zhanov, who is a very renowned Soviet citizen, says in his eloquent style, "Where do you find a people and a country like ours? Where do you find such magnificent qualities in people as our people displayed in the Great Patriotic War and as they display everyday in their labours of transition to peace time development and restoration of their economy and culture?" Is not this sheer self-glorifying nationalism and aggressive chauvinism? But, then, our communist comrades will retort, "Modesty is a bourgeois virtue!"

### The Case of Michael Zoshenko

Now let us examine few specific instances where the state has applied its criterion to ban certain literary works. The most significant of the recent rulings of the state-sponsored critical machinery is the notorious case of Michael Zoshenko, a great Russian humorist. He has been attacked chiefly because he wrote a satirical narrative entitled *ADVENTURE OF A MONKEY*, in which a monkey, the hero of the piece, is made to comment on certain aspects of Soviet life. Two very popular journals, namely, "Zvezda" and "Leningrad", both published in Leningrad, became the targets of severe and unjustifiable attacks from the state. The Soviet conception of democracy is so unusual that people in Russia are asked to form their likes and dislikes according to the dictates of the state. Your likes and dislikes are decided by the state for you. So the real reason for the state to ban Zoshenko's writings is that he is not a fanatical communist and he dared to criticise the Soviet way of life.

If the same thing had happened in a democratic country, the story would have been entirely different. In a democratic country, when a satire against its own way of life is published, it is not banned. If the targets against which the satire is directed are real, then the people will take the satire seriously and exercise their democratic rights to reform the unsatisfactory condition of the country. If, however the satire is against a non-existing defect, the people will take it as a big joke. After having a hearty laugh over it, they dismiss it. But not so in the Soviet state. Even when people

who supported the journals did not object to the writings, the state intervened to correct the popular taste. A democratic nation tolerates a satire against itself. How many writers, both English and foreign, have not ridiculed the English?

### Two Essential Features of Democracy

Whole-hearted willingness to accept any genuine analysis of its own shortcomings and a love of self-criticism are the two essential features of a truly democratic state. Are books against Communism allowed for circulation in Russia, just as books against Capitalism are allowed for circulation in a capitalist country? A communist uses the word democracy to mean dictatorship. We shall examine another instance. When the same two journals attempted to revive the works of Akhmatova, a poetess belonging to the pre-Revolutionary days, the state immediately saw to it that her writings were not published. So far as one can understand these architects of new culture, Akhmatova has been considered unworthy of public attention, for two reasons. Firstly, she happened to be a reactionary and not a communist. Secondly, she happened to write about herself. The first charge against her is as absurd as the charge of an average American businessman against Upton Sinclair, who is a socialist. But the second charge is of very great significance.

### Communism and Individualistic Writers

The communist conception of literature does not provide any place for individualistic writers. A writer's chief value is measured in so far as he contributes to the propagation of the communist ideology. A writer has absolutely no value as an individual. The communist attack against individualism in the field of economics is to a considerable extent justified. But it is sheer absurdity to apply the same criticism against individualism in the arts and literature.

Historically, as all students of literature know, personal or individualistic art is of a very recent growth. In fact, in Europe, it is only during the Renaissance that the idea of a writer as a distinct individual took a definite shape. According to all un-Marxist canons of literature, individual experience has great spiritual and aesthetic value. If we were to judge literary artists according to the Marxist criterion, some of the greatest writers of the world would have to be deprived of any place in the world of letters. Keats, Lamb, Wordsworth, Shakespeare (especially in his sonnets) Dostoevsky, Dante, and Goethe will be some of the writers who will be disqualified. No wonder, poor Akhmatova received nothing but scorn from the officially controlled literary dictators.

Even more sickening is the way in which these literary dictators attack those whom they do not approve of. Comrade Zhdanov's attack on Akhmatova at one point becomes malicious, sub-human,

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## HISTORY WARNS MODERN MAN

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materialist terms have failed and made caricatures of all our brave plans. We have made 'enormous strides', we say, in the development of labour-saving machinery. And so we have. But one of the odd results of this progress is that women today are overworked as never before. Wives in America can no longer get household help or afford to devote themselves exclusively to the home. As a result, the woman of today does two jobs: one as wife and mother in the home, one as employee in the office or factory.

During the war in England, this double-working of women was almost universal. And such a trend is not a hopeful one. In history, the ages of disintegration were usually the ages in which women had left the home. In fifth century Greece, the high point of classical history, women stayed in the home. But after Alexander's time, when the city states were breaking up, there was a feminist movement like our own.

There have been other tragic surprises from our recent efforts to cure all social ills by a solution that omitted God. The machine age has brought us unprecedented shortages, such as in housing, instead of plenty. It has given us alternate periods of unemployment with manpower shortages, instead of the leisure the name 'labour-saving' suggests.

We have tried allowing the machine to run us, with shocking results. It is now apparent that man's moral decisions are still necessary—even more fatefully necessary—than in simpler ages. Automatic abundance for all through industrialisation has not

been reached. Perhaps if our intention had been higher, if it had been the practice of Christianity, we should have come much closer to even this practical aim of controlling the machine.

The great decisions of history are always moral. Technical accomplishments can be used either for good or evil; some men must decide which it is to be. In ancient Egypt, the population ingeniously solved the problem of controlling soil and vegetation on the Lower Nile. Great power and prosperity were released, and all the men of Egypt might have been made free. Instead, the rulers chose to use the new prosperity to build self-glorifying pyramids. Like them, we today can always misuse power.

### We Have Freedom of Will

You cannot escape the moral choice. It lies in wait at the end of every path. For each new instrument we conquer intensifies the effects of our virtues and our vices. Every new scientific achievement offers a further test of our spiritual powers.

So do other kinds of technical advance. Once universal education was considered, in itself, the means for realising peace and progress. But we found that the yellow press came along in England just twenty years after the first batch of children had been taught their letters in the first free schools. It perverted the results of education by popularising sensational news.

Looking back over the twenty-one civilisations I have studied, I am not sanguine about man's ability to make a good moral decision if he

aims only at a worldly goal. Love of mankind has been a force in history—but only when it was a by-product of an intense love of God.

The great need of the modern world is a rebirth of supernatural belief. Without it, man—unregenerate man—is hardly to be trusted with the dangerous toys his laboratories have hatched.

Such a rebirth of Christian values is quite possible. It may come from some of the 'backward' peoples who have not yet had their moment in the limelight of history and have not, therefore, fallen victims to the pride and self-idolatry which may blind the great Powers.

But we of the 'Have' nations need not resign ourselves to obliteration. The fact that some earlier civilisations have failed to solve problems similar to ours by no means dooms us to their unhappy fate. We still have freedom of will—as individuals, as societies.

We can still shape our future for good or for evil, for survival or for suicide. If there is one thing of which I, as an historian, am certain, it is this: History never "happens". It is brought about by the free decisions of men as they decide whether to be courageous or cowardly in the face of tomorrow.

The question, "Will Western civilisation commit suicide?" is therefore as impossible to answer as the question, "Will Mary Jones of Jinner, Harrow, Middlesex, commit suicide?" May be she will—but she does not need to. Neither do we.

Based on an interview with  
GRETTA PALMER.

## THE MARXIST CONCEPTION OF LITERATURE

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nasty and indecent. He quotes the following lines of Akhmatova:

But I swear to you by the garden  
of angels,  
By the miraculous ikon I swear  
And by the smoke of our flaming  
night.

Comrade Zhdanavov, who obviously represents the very cream of Soviet culture, remarks thus on this passage: "Not exactly a nun, not exactly a harlot, but rather nun and harlot, in whom harlotry is mixed with prayer."

### What Should be Done?

According to the Marxist view, literature cannot have an independent existence. It must be partisan. It becomes a handmaid to politics. In Europe literature and the arts, whose growth was hampered by the ecclesiastical authority till the Renaissance, took a fairly long time to become free and secular. In Soviet Russia, a similar tendency towards "unpoliticalisation" of literature is bound to have as "tough" a time and it is doubtful if without help from abroad it will have a chance to succeed. Whether such help be possible or not in the near future, what we can most certainly do is to check the Russian influence in other countries and thus save them from the cultural tyranny that runs riot within the Soviet borders. This influence is no longer a distant enemy or an isolated factor. Its effects in China are most grave in Burma it is serious enough. If we do not sit up and take immediate notice, it will poison India.

## BENGAL CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS

Continued from page 5

count for the advantage of humanity at large that its group-souls should preserve and develop and use with a vigorous group individuality their natural instrument of expression." (*The Ideal of Human Unity*, by Sri Aurobindo).

### The Danger of not Reconstituting The Bengal-Bihar Border

That is why the Bengalis are so anxious to preserve their language and distinct group individuality. The High Power Committee apprehend that there will be trouble if the Bengal-Bihar border is reconstituted. We have absolutely no such apprehension; on the other hand, there are grave dangers if this is not done, and that without delay. The mortification of the Bengalis in thus being flouted by the leaders is itself a calamity. Then there are not wanting people who would readily exploit this discontent of the Bengalis. The communists have already begun their game in this direction. As they are exploiting the economic distress of the masses to increase their number, so they are telling the Bengalis that they cannot expect justice from the present government and that they must revolt against it. They have even an attractive programme of uniting the two divided parts of Bengal and declaring united Bengal a sovereign State separated from the rest of India.

Let no one belittle this sort of propaganda in disgruntled Bengal. Then the tension between the Bengalis and Biharis will grow more

acute. Already there are ugly stories of rowdism perpetrated on the Bengalis in Bihar, in some cases before the eyes of the Police. There are some influential elements in Bihar who are determined that either the Bengalis in Bihar must cease to be Bengalis or they must leave Bihar. It goes without saying that the Bengalis would not take all this lying down. At the time of writing this article, a Satyagraha campaign is going on in Purulia protesting against the imposition of

Hindi on the Bengalis in the schools. These are real dangers set against the imaginary dangers of a just distribution of the borders. Take a plebiscite and draw the boundary line according to that; there is absolutely no reason why this simple operation should be postponed indefinitely.

### What Must Be Done?

But to whom are we appealing? The leaders have already made up their minds and they will not listen to any talk about the Bengal-Bihar dispute. Indeed Pandit Nehru said that long ago in no uncertain terms, and he is a veteran no-changer. What is to be done under these cir-

cumstances is the question. We must advise patience to the Bengalis; this is no time for creating any disturbance which may endanger the very safety of our Motherland. We certainly want that the Bengali districts should be returned to Bengal, but not at the price of placing the whole of India under Soviet Communism. If the Government commit any mistake, we must follow peaceful and constitutional means to rectify it. We would prefer to take up this question as a part of a bigger question, that of reuniting the divided parts of India and framing a suitable constitution for the whole country. India must be re-united, as soon as possible, and we should now concentrate all our efforts on this consummation. But India can be united and Pakistan, a sore in the bosom of Mother India, can be dissolved only if we accept a constitution following the ancient genius of India in which every province and state and union of states will be a sovereign body delegating some powers to a central government for the purpose of defence and co-ordination, and every city, town and village will be a separate administrative unit, managing its own affairs as a self-governing body. This would automatically solve the problem of the big cities like Madras and Bombay. India will be a Federation of Sovereign States reconstructed on the basis of language and culture. In this way the Bengal problem will be an integral part of an All-India problem. Let us accept this as our immediate goal, reconciling by this all conflicting views and uniting all parties to achieve this by peaceful and legitimate means.

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# ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON EYE-TROUBLES

BY DR. R. S. AGARWAL

**Q.** What is hypermetropia?

**A.** Hypermetropia is the opposite of myopia. The eyeball is shortened instead of being elongated. Myopia is called shortsightedness while hypermetropia is called farsightedness because in hypermetropia the far sight is better than near sight. It is believed that hypermetropia is congenital, though it is seen in many cases being acquired at ten, twenty, thirty or forty years of age and under different conditions of life. The majority of persons at the age of forty or over acquire hypermetropia. Some people can read the finest print in a bright light but they become hypermetropic as soon as the print is read in a dim light. It is also experienced by many that the sight is good at the beginning of reading a print but after a short while the eyes develop hypermetropia. When the normal eye tries to read an unfamiliar print or language, hypermetropia is produced. Many persons acquire hypermetropia when they are under worries or physical discomforts. Eighty per cent of eye troubles are caused by hypermetropia. Headache, pain in the eyes, fatigue and other symptoms of dimness in vision in reading are mostly due to hypermetropia, at least at the beginning of many serious diseases of the eye as cataract, glaucoma, diseases of the optic nerve and

retina. Hence it is important to know now to relieve the symptoms of hypermetropia. Eye diseases are more readily cured in the early stages than when they become chronic or serious, because in the early stages the vision is slightly affected.

The cause of hypermetropia is a strain or an effort to see at the near point. The eye either stares at a letter or tries to see many words at a time. Just try to fix the gaze on a letter or try to see several words simultaneously and observe the dimness in the blackness of the letter or letters. You may also experience heaviness and tiredness. When ladies do some fine work of sewing and keep the sight fixed at a point, then they complain of headache or eye discomforts.

Hold your book and look at the first word or the first letter of a sentence and observe whether you see the letter or the word better than the other letters and words. If not, then you are straining and hypermetropia is produced.

**Q.** We have read something about the efficacy of your synthetic eye treatment in the papers. What is this synthetic eye treatment?

**A.** Synthetic eye treatment integrates all the known systems of treatment—namely, Allopathy,

Ayurveda, Homeopathy and Bates's Nature Cure. Allopathy has discovered very good methods of investigation and has nearly reached perfection in surgery and eyeglasses but has failed miserably in the prevention and cure of eye defects and eye diseases. Similarly, while Ayurveda did not discover glasses and modern methods of investigation, it has the merit of eliminating toxin from the physical system by means of herbs and other harmless medicines though most of the medicines are superfluous in the present age of civilization and developed mind. Homeopathy has discovered the subtle method of stimulation of the life force but it does not seem to have succeeded in the elimination of toxic matter from the body.

All these systems have failed to discover the action of the mind on the eye and the body. Dr. Bates's relaxation methods have filled this gap. Combination of all the above systems with all their good points has resulted in a new technique which I call Synthetic Eye Treatment. This synthesis has enabled its practitioners to prevent and cure eye defects and eye diseases very successfully.

**Q.** I am practising the methods to cure myopia. Sometimes, for short periods, I see perfectly, then

things fade away. Can you explain this?

**A.** This is what we call getting flashes of perfect sight. With continued practice these flashes will come more frequently and eventually the sight will be normal. Thus you will be cured.

**Q.** How long does it take to cure an average case of myopia?

**A.** Some patients are cured or benefited more quickly than others. The length of time is uncertain, as patients differ in their response to treatment. But this has been invariably found that patients do get some benefit in a few days, and that daily practice of central fixation eye-exercise for five minutes is just sufficient to keep up the improvement or to prevent deterioration.

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# THE MOTHER'S CENTRE AT GHAZIABAD

The opening ceremony of The Mother's Centre was performed by Sri Acharya Abhaya Devji of Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry (formerly Principal, Gurukul Kangri, Haridwar) on the 4th April 1949 at 41 Chatta, Delhi Gate, Ghaziabad, (U.P.) Sri Surendra Mohan Ghosh, MCA ex-President B.P.C.C., presided. About 250 guests were present.

The President unfurled the Flag of the Mother at 4 P. M. and the Opener thereafter unveiled the portraits of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

Acharyaji began his speech by reading the INVOCATION which had been composed by the Mother on the day of our country's liberation. Explaining the significance of the Invocation, he told the audience how Sri Aurobindo had nearly 40 years back seen the freedom of Mother India having been sanctioned by the Divine. Thereafter it was only a matter of time for it to be physically realised. He also explained that Sri Aurobindo was doing a work which was infinitely greater than mere politics. He said that Mother India was the

Soul of India and a force of the Supreme Mother. He stressed the need of invoking Mother India for help and guidance.

Speaking next, Sri S. M. Ghosh recollected the guidance he had often received from Sri Aurobindo in questions vital to the country's welfare. He was very much impressed by Sri Aurobindo's views. Sri Aurobindo always gave illuminating reasons in support of them and so many of the country's danger and difficulties would have been avoided if they had been followed. Sri S. M. Ghosh also read Sri Aurobindo's declaration that the division of India must and will go. Concluding his speech, he said that he had received blessings of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo for presiding over the function. The Force of the Mother, added Sri Ghosh, would remain in the Centre and those who kept themselves in touch with it would receive it.

After the speeches by the Opener and the President, meditation was held and flower-petals from the Ashram were distributed.

## April 24, the Darshan Day of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in the Asram at Pondicherry was celebrated at the following Centres in India

Sri Aurobindo Pathamandir, 15, College Square, Calcutta.	Sri Aurobindo Study Circle, 119, Big St. Triplicane, Madras.
Sri Aurobindo Circle, 1, Rakhal Ghose Lane, Belyata, Calcutta.	Sri Matri Kendra, 41 Chatta, Delhi Gate, Ghaziabad. Madhurachenna, P. O. Halsangi (Bijapur Dt.)
Dr. Bankubehari Ghose 14, Duff St., Calcutta.	Mohini Mohan Dutt. Boalkhali, Shakpura, (Chittagong Dt.)
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Sri Aurobindo Mandir, 15, Daryaganj, Delhi.	Sri Aurobindo Sadhanpith, Shakpura, Chittagong.
Sri Aurobindo Niketan, C/o P. Box 85, New Delhi.	Sri Aurobindo Sangha, Khulna, E. Pakistan.
Sri Aurobindo Chakra, 34, Kamala Club, Kanpur.	Sri Aurobindo Library, 369 Esplanade, Madras.
Sri Aurobindo Mandal, Athadaman, Rudranagar P. O. (Basti-U.P.)	Sri Aurobindo Centre, Bijapur. Sri Aurobindo Society, Jamshedpur. Usha Bhattacharya, Lady Keen's College, Shillong.
Sri Aurobindo Sadhanalaya, Panna (Vindhya Pradesh)	
Sri Aurobindo Circle, 32, Rampart Row, Bombay.	

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Arya Publishing House, 63 College Street, Calcutta 12.  
Sri Aurobindo Library, 369 Esplanade, Madras.

# The Owl's Banquet

BY "MINERVA"

Bernard Shaw's recent ticking off pedagogic pedantry is worth the publicity it has not. It all came out over an epitaph written by Shaw on his old housekeeper and her husband. The sculptor thought Shaw had slipped up in English. The epitaph ran: "Bernard Shaw, writer of many plays, raised this stone in grateful memory of . . . faithful friends and helpers . . . For many years they kept his home and garden at Ayot St. Lawrence, in the County of Hereford, thereby setting him free to do the work he was fitted for. No playwright was ever better served." The sculptor did not feel quite sure, "seeing that Mr. Shaw is such a famous man," that Mr. Shaw would like to have carved for him a sentence ending with a preposition. He referred the text back to Shaw who replied with one of his famous postcards: "Stick to my text: it will save six letters. I never use those for *whiches* and *and whiches*. 'He was fitted for' is good vernacular English; 'for which he was fitted' is school-masters' bad English."

Shaw has also decided opinions about other points in language. Most people, says Shaw, never progress beyond the comma; and it is said that he is responsible for all the semi-colons in T. E. Lawrence's *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom*. This is as it may be; it is a fact, however, that at the end of 1919 he set down in writing for a friend a short summary of his practice as a punctuator. Here it is:—

; precedes "and" when the nominative is unchanged.

; precedes "and" when there is a fresh nominative, or the previous nominative is repeated.

; precedes "but", "for", "yet", "still", "only", "hence", when they begin qualifications or explanations or contradictions or contingent statements with a fresh nominative.

; precedes "namely", "that is", "i.e.", or a list. Ex: "There were six brothers: John, James, Jerry, Jabez, Jaffer and Jenkins."

; never precedes "and". When one phrase confirms, repeats, or flatly contradicts another, it is preceded by a colon. Ex: "Bob was the photographer of the party: all the Pole films were taken by him." "Paul

did not make the Antarctic films: he never took a photograph in his life." Compare the semi-colon—"John exposed the plates; and Paul touched up the negatives." Compare the comma—"Paul touched up the negatives, and faked the prints." This comma is not indispensable; but strictly its absence would imply that Paul touched up the negatives *and* something else.

( ) makes a parenthesis. [ ] makes an interpolation by a quoter in a quotation.

Shaw's pronouncement on proper recitation, though exaggerative, is worth noticing, too. Yeats was instructing the actress Florence Farr in what he called the New Art of Cantillation. Shaw wrote to Miss Farr on June 6th, 1902: "The fact is that there is no new art in the business at all: Yeats thinks so only because he does not go to church. Half the curates in the kingdom cantillate like mad all the time. Toast-masters cantillate. Public speakers who have nothing to say cantillate . . . You want to get first an athletic articulation . . . that is the only thing that makes speech tolerable. Without it cantillation can do nothing except intensify ordinary twaddling into a nerve-destroying crooning like the maunderings of an idiot-banshee. Remember that even in singing, it is an Irish defect to lose grip and interest by neglecting the words and thinking only of the music. Cats do the same thing when they are serenading one another; but the genuineness of their emotion gives them poignancy . . . You still think of how you are doing your recitations instead of what you are saying . . . And Yeats is heaping fresh artificialities and irrelevances and distractions and impertinences on you instead of sternly nailing you to the simple point of conveying the meaning and feeling of the author."

Reading the above, one would not be surprised at Shaw's dictum on style: "Effectiveness of assertion is the Alpha and Omega of style. He who has nothing to assert has no style and can have none: he who has something to assert will go as far in power of style as its momentousness and his conviction will carry him. Disprove his assertion after it is made, yet its style remains."

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