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ENGLISH LITERATURE

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Congreve's *The Way of the World*
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THE
INDIAN CONTRIBUTION
TO
ENGLISH LITERATURE

BY

K. R. SRINIVASA IYENGAR

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Dedicated

TO

SIR C. R. REDDY

IN

admiration & affection

PREFACE

In December 1940 I was awarded a grant-in-aid by the University of Bombay to enable me to make a study of the contribution of Indians to English literature. Already, in October 1939, I had completed for the P. E. N. All-India Centre a brochure giving a rapid survey of Indo-Anglian literature, although the actual publication of the brochure had to be delayed till 1943. The University grant helped me to study the subject in some detail. I made the first draft of the present book in October-November 1942 ; a year later, in the light of suggestions from two esteemed friends, Sir Bomanji Wadia and Principal K. M. Khadye, I enlarged some of the later chapters and omitted references to many minor writers. Although the final typescript was ready for the press in December 1943, the publication of the book has had to be delayed so long owing to many unforeseen difficulties. It has thus been not possible for me to comment on the literature produced during the last two years : even so, I added a word or two wherever possible when I had the opportunity of passing the galley proofs. Further, the Postscript, reproduced from the *All-India Weekly Annual*, seeks to redress the balance by surveying the work done in 1944.

I prefer the term " Indo-Anglian " to " Anglo-Indian " or " Indo-English ". The late Principal P. Seshadri included, not only Sir Edwin Arnold and Trego Webb, but also Tagore and Sarojini Naidu, in his brief survey of " Anglo-Indian Poetry "; and Mr. George Sampson, in his *Concise Cambridge History of English Literature*, gives a section to " Anglo-Indian Literature " and refers in it, among others, to Tagore, Manmohan Ghose and Sri Aurobindo. But I thought it desirable

to distinguish between Englishmen who write on Indian themes and Indians who use English as the medium of artistic expression ; and I saw no harm in applying the already current terms " Anglo-Indian " and " Indo-Anglian " to these two categories of writers. I do not know who first coined the term " Indo-Anglian "; at any rate, in 1883 a book was published in Calcutta entitled *Indo-Anglian Literature* containing " specimen compositions from native students ". More recently, especially during the past two decades, " Indo-Anglian " has acquired considerable currency. Further the term can be conveniently used both as an adjective and as a noun, whereas to write " Indo-English writer " every time is awkward and to talk of " Indo-Englishman " or " Anglo-Indian " is absurd or misleading.

I have given the term " literature " a wider connotation than is usually done by referring in the course of my book to the work, not only of poets and dramatists and novelists, but also that of critics, historians, philosophers, jurists, journalists, orators, etc. The right of these " pseudo-literary men " to a place—any place whatever—in a survey of literature may be disputed by some of my readers. Let us, however, guard ourselves against being betrayed into false or ludicrous positions. What is literature ? If we like, we can deny the title to history and science—but how about Gibbon and Hume and Darwin ? Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch would go further and say that Euclid himself is among the world's greatest men of letters. If we start excluding " applied literature ", there is no knowing where we will stop ; all prose will have to go sooner or later, and then all objective poetry will be sent tumbling after ; and we shall end by admiring only a few supremely poetical lines or phrases, containing as it were the pure gold, the quintessence, of literature. On the other hand, as Sir Walter Raleigh once pointed out, it is wise to choose among the many

definitions of poetry (and let us add, of literature) the widest. This is the reason why the Cambridge historians of English literature have given so much space in their volumes to a consideration of English historians, theologians, philosophers, scientists, jurists, etc. No doubt, creative literature—poetry, drama, fiction—ought to dominate the prospect in literary histories ; but I see no reason, except the one engendered by literary snobbishness, why "applied literature" should be at all "untouchable" by the literary historians. Let us by all means rate things at their true worth ; there can be good histories as well as bad histories just as there can be good poems and novels as well as bad specimens of these *genres* ; but there is no need to introduce a sort of caste system in the realm of letters as well.

No survey of a living literature can give entire satisfaction to everybody. Readers ever come across unaccountable omissions and even more unaccountable inclusions. One of the well-known histories of English poetry omits all reference to Langland ; another gives more space to Dryden than to Milton ; some others refer to third-rate Englishmen and Canadians, but shut their eyes resolutely to American literature. Perhaps, a literary history ought to be in principle a wholly objective and scientific record ; but the subjective element is too potent to be kept out, and it cannot but modify the narrative to a greater or a lesser extent. For one thing, mine being in effect a pioneering work, many writers were bound to escape my notice ; for another, the space at my disposal was strictly limited and I had to endeavour to write a readable book rather than an exhaustive directory of names and dates and titles. My "Select Bibliography" is a half-hearted attempt to rectify the omissions in the text itself. I am afraid that this "Select Bibliography" is not quite as satisfactory as it might have been. I have not been able in several instances to give the

dates of publication or have had to satisfy myself with approximate indications. The paucity of accessible data hampered my work at every stage; and with the heavy routine work of lecturing to students and examining note-books and answer-scripts that is the lot of all professors, it has not been possible for me to make my book—and especially the Bibliography—more comprehensive than it is. I hope none the less that the book will meet a long-felt want and introduce the Indian and foreign reader to the creditable contribution that the Indians have made to English literature. And I trust that some other historian, more happily circumstanced than I am, will very soon complete and perfect the picture.

Some reviewers of my earlier book questioned the propriety of my classing Rabindranath Tagore as an Indo-Anglian. Tagore is without question primarily a Bengali classic; but he has also a legitimate place in Indo-Anglian literature. Surely we cannot have it both ways: the complaint is often heard that Tagore's works are not (or are not more frequently) included in the curricula of English studies in our schools and colleges; if Tagore can thus be an English classic in the class room, he can certainly be so treated in a literary history. The Authorized Version of the Bible is but a translation—and yet, it is an *English* classic. Why then should there be an objection to the inclusion of Tagore in a survey of Indo-Anglian literature? It is admitted that Tagore wrote works like *Sadhana* and *Personality* and even an occasional poem like *The Child* in English alone in the first instance; several of his other works, although originally written in Bengali, were Englished by Tagore himself, while the other translations were published under his general supervision. In these circumstances, there were three ways of dealing with Tagore: (1) one could just refer to Tagore by name as a prose writer along with Radhakrishnan, Brajendranath Seal, and others; (2) one could men-

tion him as the competent translator of his own Bengali works, and leave the matter there ; (3) one could accept the fact of his pre-eminence as a Bengali classic, and at the same time assess his general significance with reference to Indo-Anglian literature, either on the score of achievement or influence. The third seemed to me the most satisfactory way of tackling the great phenomenon of Rabindranath Tagore.

A similar objection may be raised to my discussing Mahatma Gandhi's *My Experiments with Truth* as an Indo-Anglian classic. Gandhiji is among the great masters of English prose and he should have been referred to anyhow in a survey of Indo-Anglian literature ; but his autobiography was originally written in Gujarati though it was later, with Gandhiji's full approval, Englished beautifully by the late Mahadeo Desai and revised conscientiously by the Rt. Hon. V. S. Srinivasa Sastri. Should I have omitted all reference to it and considered merely Gandhiji's weekly contributions to *Young India* and *Harijan* ? My difficulty here is similar to the difficulty that faces a historian of English literature in regard to Sir Thomas More. Willy nilly every historian refers to More's *Utopia* and often describes it in considerable detail—although it was originally written in Latin and rendered into English long afterwards, and that too neither by More himself nor yet with his approval. More's specifically English writings—generally of a polemical character—are but casually mentioned, or not mentioned at all. It is all very illogical and unscientific, but a literary historian has to be guided by his common sense and he has to deal with human beings, not with abstract premises or lifeless substances. If I have erred in including an appreciation of *My Experiments with Truth* in my book, I am at least in very good and very honourable company.

Parts of this book have already appeared in the columns of periodicals either as articles or as reviews. The chapter

on Tagore originally appeared in the *Visvabharati Quarterly*; that on Aurobindo Ghose in the *New Review*; the chapters on Nagesh Wishwanath Pai and Goan Poetry in the *Scholar*; those on Derozio and Malabari in the *Indian P. E. N.*; the sections on Manmohan, Dongerkery, Bharati Sarabhai, Nolini Kanta Gupta, Shahid Suhrawardy, D. F. Karaka and Mulk Raj Anand in the *Social Welfare* under the general caption "The Crystal Vase"; those on K. D. Sethna and Adi K. Sett in the *All-India Weekly*; and stray paragraphs originally appeared as reviews in the *Aryan Path*. These individual appraisements, written journalistically in the first instance, have since been revised, enlarged or abridged before their incorporation into this book. Even so I must plead guilty to the charge that I have not been able to maintain throughout a rigid sense of proportion in the space allowed to individual writers. In some instances—for example, in discussing the poetry of Nagesh Wishwanath Pai—I have deliberately given more space than I need have in view of the fact that the authors considered are at present very little known and their books are out of print and are almost impossible to obtain. I count as my personal friends quite a good number of the writers whose work I have commented upon in this book. I have nevertheless striven to be fair and unbiassed in my assessments of all the writers who come within the scope of this literary history. After all, a literary history is not—it cannot be—a sustained piece of creative criticism. Some sections are bound to dwindle into catalogues; others are likely to be made up of unenthusiastic summaries of books that have not evoked a positive response from the historian; but now and then one may also come across a body of sound and weighty criticism. Omniscience is denied to an average literary historian, and he is not seldom obliged to dole out second-hand or third-hand information. And yet, if the man is honest, if he genuinely loves literature

and if he is generous in his sympathies, he will somehow be able to produce a readable enough book and a reliable enough guide. But I dare not claim that I have succeeded in producing either the one or the other.

Before I conclude, I have the pleasant duty of recording my gratitude to the University of Bombay for making a grant-in-aid towards the cost of publication of this work; to the many friends who willingly loaned or presented their publications to me and otherwise co-operated with me when I was engaged on this book; to my friend Mr. Shankargauda Patil for placing at my disposal his unique collection of books; to Mr. G. L. Gajendragadkar, Retired Deputy Collector, Belgaum, for the loan of many rare old books and magazines; to my esteemed friend Prof. R. Sadasiva Aiyar for kindly drawing my attention to many a forgotten classic of Indo-Anglian literature; to my old professor, Fr. Jerome D'Souza, now Principal of the Madras Loyola College, and my friend, Dr. S. C. Nandimath, my principal first at the Lingaraj College, Belgaum, and now at the Basaveshvar College, for their continued sympathetic interest in my literary labours.

Lastly, I am especially indebted to my revered friend, Sir Bomanji Wadia, not only for acceding to my request for a Foreword to my book, but also for generously encouraging me in my literary work during the many years that I have been privileged to know him.

Bagalkot, SRINIVASA IYENGAR.
15th August, 1945.

FOREWORD

I have been asked by Professor K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar to write a foreword to his book,—"The Indian Contribution to English Literature", of which a type-written copy was sent to me in advance. The author calls such contributions "Indo-Anglian Literature", but, frankly speaking, that expression is not a very happy one. Moreover, all that is written by Indians in the English language cannot be called "literature". The book is nevertheless comprehensive, and as far as I am aware there is no other survey so wide and detailed as this. Poetry, drama, the essay, fiction, history, philosophy and biography, criticism and journalism have all come within its purview. It seems that in point of quantity the author has, if anything, erred on the side of excess. What the book has gained in comprehensiveness it has lost perhaps in selection and concentration, for it includes writings many of which belong at their best to the sphere of well-cultivated mediocrity, and at their worst to what Schopenhauer once called "the everlasting deluge of useless books." It can be safely said that only a small portion of the prose and verse here reviewed possesses the real qualities of literature, though it must also be owned that so vast a survey must inevitably take account of the pinchbeck as well as of the gold. The book is undoubtedly a mine of information which will always be useful and is often really pleasant. It starts with Raja Rammohan Roy, the prophet of the New India that was to come, and runs over more than a hundred years down to our own time. Among the great names that figure in these pages we find Tagore, a real Titan who united the wisdom of the ages with all the fancy of the poets and the wit of the world, Romesh Chunder Dutt, the translator of India's great epics in English verse, Aurobindo Ghose, the recluse of Pondicherry, Toru Dutt and her elder sister Aru

Dutt, both cut off in their prime, and Sarojini Naidu, patriot, politician and poetess, happily still with us. Others perhaps will be known to the reader after reading these pages ; they at any rate cannot claim to be " inheritors of unfulfilled renown ". But when a writer is really great, Professor Iyengar rises to the occasion and gives us sound and weighty criticism. He is at his happiest when dealing with those whose names will live even after Time, the old ravager, has done his worst. Such criticism itself is literature.

The question whether Indians should or should not write in English has been ably dealt with in the last chapter entitled " Prospect and Retrospect." In one sense anything written in English by an Indian must to some extent be artificial, as artificial as it is for a westerner writing in his own language about an Indian subject to give adequate expression to the real glamour of the East. But it is not impossible for an Indian writer to largely conquer the difficulties of writing in an alien tongue. In Shakespeare's time the English language was spoken by about four millions in the world. To-day it is spoken by two hundred millions, nearly twice the number of those who use its nearest competitor among other western languages. An Indian therefore writing in English certainly opens the doors of cultural contact between his own country and those two hundred millions, and such contact is highly necessary if India is not to remain in splendid isolation from that higher culture and scholarship which knows no geographical bounds in the midst of a civilized world.

The effort of the learned author deserves every encouragement, and scholars are sure to give it a fine welcome. The book is replete with information about various Indian writers who have expressed their thoughts in a language which, as some enthusiasts claim, is the world's language of the future.

B. J. WADIA.

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CHAPTER I

THE PIONEERS

I

It is a strange story. The sixteenth century was truly the seed-time of British expansion. The Britisher, who had been more or less vegetating in a remote corner of the 'old' world, suddenly awoke one morning, incredulously rubbed his eyes, and found himself at the very centre of a brave new world. America to the west and Africa and Asia to the east—these vast, unexplored regions seductively beckoned him from afar. And the adventurous countrymen of Shakespeare and Marlowe, of Drake and Hawkins, of Sidney and Raleigh, crossed the Atlantic or rounded the Cape of Good Hope, and founded little colonies far and near and all the way. Wherever he went, the Britisher took with him, not only the tools of trade and the implements of war, but also his language and his literature.

The Britisher came to India when the Mughals were still firmly in the saddle. He hoped to trade and "get rich quick" in India; he gained a footing in two or three places, he traded with the 'natives', and he prospered. One thing led to another; the Britisher was more and more in evidence, and not alone as trader; it was clear that he would not go back. The Britisher remained in India to govern, and by the end of the eighteenth century the incredible transformation had been all but completed. An Anglo-Saxon people ruling over a vast sub-continent, peopled by Aryans, Dravidians, Semites, and who not—a curious concatenation! But it was true; the internecine feuds were over at last; the country was at peace, albeit under the dubious shadow of foreign rule; nevertheless it *was* peace.

The Britisher could give his attention now to the arts of peace, to Education, for instance. At first the British adminis-

trators in India, even when they were well-meaning and conscientious, were without any spontaneous interest in Hindu culture and Oriental learning and hence they did not boldly tackle the problem of illiteracy among the masses. Warren Hastings, indeed, founded and liberally endowed the Calcutta Madrassa in 1781. (In the previous year, James Augustus Hicky had founded at Calcutta India's first newspaper, *Hicky's Bengal Gazette.*) It was, however, the arrival of Sir William Jones that ushered in a new era in the education of India. He loved the peoples of India and their sacred literature and he looked upon himself as a servant, rather than as a ruler, of the people in whose midst he had been privileged (as he thought) to live, move and have his being. In his poem, *Ode in Imitation of Alcaeus*, he pointed out that not "high-raised battlement, or laboured mound" constitutes a State; "starred and spangled courts" are but dens "where low-browed baseness wafts perfumes to pride"; who then constitute a State? Jones answered :

> No ! Men, high-minded Men,
> With powers as far above dull brutes endued
> In forest, brake, or den,
> As beasts excel cold rocks and brambles rude ;
> Men who their duties know,
> But know their rights, and knowing dare maintain,
> Prevent the long-aimed blow,
> And crush the tyrant while they rend the chain ;
> These constitute a state.

(Jones was certainly one of such "high-minded Men"; he founded the Bengal Asiatic Society; he published vigorous renderings of *Sakuntala* and *Hitopadesa*; he addressed an astonishing series of odes to various Hindu gods; and he wrote a long verse tale, *The Enchanted Fruit*, based on a *Mahabharata* episode. Jones was an enlightened Englishman whose work inspired, not only other Englishmen, but also Indians to study the sacred Indian literature reverently, to bring it to the notice of the masses, and to help the Indian renaissance to its

fruitful blossoming in the fullness of time. Our debt to Sir William Jones is immense and cannot be acknowledged too often. He is one of a select band of Englishmen who have, in Wordsworth's phrase, carried "freights of worth to foreign lands".

Jones and his comrades in Oriental scholarship were no doubt inspired by a stern, missionary zeal. But there were difficulties in communicating the message of the renaissance to the unlettered masses. The humanists were one and all compelled to face this question: Was India to adopt a wholly westernized system of education with English as the medium of instruction, or was she merely to revive the study of Sanskrit and Persian and impart general education with the various mother tongues as the media? Opinion was sharply divided and things drifted for two or three decades. Meanwhile, Jonathan Duncan started the Sanskrit College at Benares; Charles Grant and Lord Moira issued their weighty "Observations" and "Minutes"; and a Committee of Public Instruction was constituted in 1823.

II

Of a sudden three factors now emerged and, acting as a solvent of the doubts and perplexities of the situation, they defined with unmistakable clarity the course of education in India for the next one hundred years and more. These were: (1) the new intellectualism and renascent ardour among the Indians, as symbolized in Raja Rammohan Roy; (2) the perseverance of the Christian missionaries; and, above all, (3) the persuasiveness and metallic clarity of Macaulay's English prose style.

Rammohan Roy and his friends had tasted the fruits of western literature and culture and were persuaded that India required a western type of education with English as the medium of instruction. With the help of two Englishmen, David Hare and Sir Edward Hyde East, Rammohan Roy brought into existence the Calcutta Hindu College, which later

developed into the Presidency College. Starting with only one hundred students in 1817, the College steadily grew more and more popular and the number was quadrupled within the next twenty years. In Bombay and Madras, however, people with the conviction and energy of Rammohan Roy were wanting and these provinces were content then to follow in the footsteps of enterprising, energetic and ever-experimenting Bengal.

The second factor which determined the course of education in India was the advent and activities of the Christian missionaries. The ultimate aim of these latter has always been the proselytization of the Hindu, Muslim and other non-Christian communities in India. And yet nothing but simple prejudice will belittle the pioneering work of the missionaries in the fields of education and social service. The Serampore College was founded in 1818 by Carey, Ward and Marshman, and it is to this day a flourishing institution. Other missionary schools and colleges were started presently all over India. English was generally the medium of instruction in these missionary institutions and western curricula and methods were more or less transported wholesale to make Christian liberal education possible to the 'natives' of India.

The third factor was Macaulay's 'Minute' urging that it was necessary and possible "to make natives of this country good English scholars and that to this end our efforts ought to be directed." Lord William Bentinck perused the 'Minute' and his former perplexities vanished for ever; he hesitated no longer. On March 7, 1835, the Governor-General-in-Council gave official imprimatur to Macaulay's policy by resolving that "the great object of the British Government ought to be the promotion of European literature and science among the natives of India, and that all funds appropriated for the purpose of education would be best employed on English education alone."

On English education alone ! The emphasis was deliberate. The intention was by no means to educate the masses through

the medium of English. Government was to organize secondary and collegiate education with the available funds; and the young men who went out of these schools and colleges were expected either to enter Government service as clerks or to go back to their villages and confer the blessings of the new education on the masses. Thus was the new culture to filter from the higher and intellectual classes down to the parched throats in India's seven lakhs of villages.

An admirable arrangement on paper,—only, it refused to work. The average educated Indian refused to return to his village, and became rather an absurd copy of the European in India, imitating his dress, speaking his language, and thinking his thoughts; thus the redeemed Indian was alas almost a total loss to the country. Later educational experiments have tried to broaden the basis of education and to carry its message to the villages; but English continues to dominate the curriculum. Willy nilly, men and women in India, in very considerable numbers, still read English, write and talk in English, often think even in English.

Be that as it may, the first Indo-Anglians of over a century ago had no heart-searchings and patriotic self-questionings. (Western culture was a good thing. English Literature was a very good thing indeed! Christianity, too, had its good points. Renascent India should be free to borrow from the West; the regional literatures could gain a new lease of life only by sucking inspiration from English Literature; and Hinduism itself could re-assert its greatness by eschewing some of its obscurantisms and taking over from Christianity its best features.) What was wanted was action more than meditation; science more than the humanities; language as a fit medium of vigorous expression and not as a play-ground for grammatical gymnastics; education to fit one for citizenship and a profession and not to isolate one from one's countrymen; and, above all, a burning desire to effect a fusion of the best in two seemingly alien civilizations, the Western and the Oriental, so that the "two minds shall

flow together" and effect a nobler synthesis than had been achieved ever before!

(Rammohan Roy, Keshub Chandra Sen, and their comrades and immediate successors were possessed of this faith and they laboured in the strength of this conviction. They wrote in their mother tongues to appeal to the masses; more often, or on more weighty occasions, they wrote or spoke in English, so that their words may carry their message to the length and breadth of India or even to the ears of the powers that be in far off Britain. Indians thus became Indo-Anglians out of necessity; but, be it said to their credit, they made a virtue of this necessity.)

III

The earliest writings of the Indians in English were, naturally enough, in prose. After all, as Molière's hero discovered to his great astonishment, we are talking prose all the time without quite realizing what we are doing. The Indians of a century or so ago were often obliged to talk or to appeal to their English rulers on various subjects of public importance. A speech had to be carefully prepared; more occasionally, a pamphlet had to be written and published; or, may be, a Bengali publicist wished to make an appeal to the intelligentsia of the whole country. As the number of Indians who were familiar with the language increased, English publications also increased in number, in bulk, and in variety. Even English verses were boldly attempted by these pioneers. And they were actually read and praised by the "proper authorities" in India and England!

(Raja Rammohan Roy, who did much pioneering work in Bengali prose and founded the journal *Sambad Kaumudi*, was also a master of effective English prose.) In 1820 appeared his *Precepts of Jesus, the Guide to Peace and Happiness*. Rammohan found Hindu society decadent; many Hindu customs and practices seemed to him abhorrent; repelled by the accretions that Hinduism had gathered during the past,

Rammohan had not the patience to discriminate nicely between the soul of Hinduism and its separable trappings. On the other hand, he responded readily (as other Hindus then and later have responded) to the message of Christ and found in it what he had been too impetuous to find in Hinduism. As he read and re-read the Gospels, he felt that Christianity alone could revitalize Hinduism; he very much desired to evolve a form of theism out of Hinduism by eliminating from it all questionable practices and principles; and he declared that he had found "the doctrines of Christ more conducive to moral principles, and better adapted for the use of rational beings," than any other that had come to his knowledge.

Rammohan was a sincere soul; social injustices angered him to the pitch of frenzy; however his denunciations of Hinduism may appear exaggerated to us of a later generation, it is out of question that he was largely responsible for the re-awakening in the Hindu fold which the country has witnessed during the past two or three generations. This awakening has borne fruit, negatively in reforms like the abolition of *sati*, widow remarriage, the Sarda Act, and the gradual removal of the disabilities of the Harijans, as also positively in the emergence of Hindu leaders like Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, Dayanand Saraswati and Sri Aurobindo, Mahatma Gandhi and Radhakrishnan. To-day we are witness to the fact that tens of millions of professed followers of Jesus Christ are busy reducing the world to a mutual suicide club; this no more affects the purity of Christ's teachings than *sati* and child marriage proved the futility or immorality of Sri Krishna's or Yajnavalkya's teachings.

Among Rammohan's other writings mention may be made of these two brochures: *Brief Remarks regarding Modern Encroachments on the Ancient Rights of Females according to the Hindu Law of Inheritance* (1822) and *Exposition of the Practical Operation of the Judicial and Revenue Systems of India, and of the General Character and*

Condition of its Native Inhabitants (1832). Besides, he published several other papers and pamphlets touching upon almost every aspect of national life. He was indefatigable and he refused to spare himself; he was perhaps too cocksure of his positions, but in a pioneer this is a merit rather than otherwise. He met the Britisher on equal terms and compelled him to recognize the fact that even a 'native' could be pre-eminent morally and intellectually. He laid New India's foundations after first clearing the ground of much rubbish; his was a dedicated life, a life of daily toil and constant endeavour. His strong and determined personality shows itself in his many prose writings in English; and for this reason they will always be treasured by his countrymen.

Many other books in English, by other Indian writers of Rammohan's time, can be inspected in old libraries; but their intrinsic importance is negligible. Hasan Ali's *Observations on the Mussalmans of India* (1832) is among the earliest books written by a Muslim on Muslims; P. Rajagopaul's *Mission to Siam* (1820) and Mohan Lal's *Travels in the Punjab* (1834) are among our early books of travel or memoirs; Kavali Venkata Ramaswami's *Biographical Sketches of Dekhan Poets* embodies crude attempts at biography; and Kasi Prasad Ghose's *The Shair and Other Poems* (1830) is certainly one of the first exhibits of Indo-Anglian verse. English had seemingly come to stay; and Indo-Anglian Literature had definitely begun "muling and puking" and thus showing some disagreeable signs of vigorous life. Truly, there is nothing like all this in history; a very strange story indeed, this story of the pioneers of Indo-Anglian Literature!

CHAPTER II

HENRY DEROZIO

I

In the India of over one hundred years ago, the Britisher spoke—or at least attempted to speak—the vernacular of the

locality in his dealings with the public, for 'natives' who knew English were as yet few and far between; but he made up for this by talking in English at home or at the club, and by reading English books, and by writing English letters to correspondents in India or abroad. Presently, many an Englishman in India started writing to the press or publishing books in prose and verse. These books were meant for consumption, not only in India, but also in Britain. (Sir William Jones, John Leyden, Bishop Heber, Haldane Rattray, David Lester Richardson, Meredith Parker, Calder Campbell and several others had published packets of meritorious English verse dealing with Indian themes.) Other types of literature, too, like fiction and drama, were by no means unattempted. Books from England used to come but rarely and were luxuries; and the Anglo-Indians turned this disadvantage to good account by producing a literature of their own.

(The young Indians of the day, besides reading their Shakespeares and Miltons and Byrons, eagerly read as well and read aloud Leyden's *Ode to an Indian Gold Coin* and similar Anglo-Indian verses of the time.) The educated Indian was now accustomed to talk in English in public while using his mother tongue at home. He was becoming semi-English, in fact; if he could read English and talk in that alien language, could he not write in it as well? There were masters whom he could imitate; there were Jones and Leyden, Parker and Richardson, not to mention the great poets of the British Romantic Revival. And if he wrote, his verses and his prose writings were sure of an audience, composed of the Englishmen in India and the educated Indians. This was how the earliest Indo-Anglian poets argued in the depths of their being and bravely solicited the English muse. Henry Derozio was among the first of these knight-errants, and the best of them all.

II

Henry Louis Vivian Derozio was born in Calcutta on the 10th April, 1809. His father was a Portuguese gentle-

man, his mother was an Indian lady. When he was only fourteen, Derozio entered the Mercantile firm of Messrs. James, Scott & Co. Soon, however, he was transferred to Bhagalpur where, all of a sudden, he discovered that he was a poet. Intimacy with Nature quickened his poetic sensibilities, and as he lisped the numbers came,—and they came freely and gracefully. He had achieved the apparently impossible, he had become an English poet!

Derozio's early pieces attracted the attention of Dr. John Grant and others who then counted in Calcutta. At the age of eighteen, Derozio secured a professorship in the Calcutta Hindu College and quickly gained the esteem and affection of his wards. He was one of the earliest teachers of English in the country and he was more than a mere teacher of English Literature—he was an example, and an inspiration, to his pupils. He made them listen, he made them read, he made them think for themselves. His love for his students later found poetic expression in the lines :

Expanding like the petals of young flowers,
I watch the gentle opening of your minds,
And the sweet loosening of the spell that binds
Your intellectual energies and powers,
That stretch (like young birds in soft summer hours)
Their wings to try their strength. O! how the winds
Of circumstance, and freshening April showers
Of early knowledge, and unnumbered kinds
Of new perceptions, shed their influence,
And how you worship Truth's omnipotence!
What joyance rains upon me, when I see
Fame in the mirror of futurity,
Weaving the chaplets you are yet to gain—
And then I feel I have not lived in vain.

Apparently, the teacher and his students got on well together, giving and receiving freely. But it was too good to last. Derozio was misunderstood and misrepresented by the public, and he had to resign his professorship. He now turned

to journalism and *The East Indian*, his paper, did some notable work. But already his days were numbered ; and hardly twenty-two years old, Derozio died of Cholera on the 23rd December, 1831. In Mr. Oaten's words, "what English literature lost through the early death of Keats, Anglo-Indian literature lost, in lesser degree, when Derozio died ; for in both men there was a passionate temperament combined with unbounded sympathy with nature. Both died while their powers were not yet fully developed."

Eurasian though he was, Derozio was an Indian in his love for the country and in his aspirations on her behalf. He knew India's past, but he knew too that the "glory that *was* Ind" little availed her in the days of her misfortune : he therefore apostrophizes his country in these moving lines :

My country, in thy days of glory past
A beauteous halo circled round thy brow,
And worshipped as a deity thou wast,—
Where is that glory, where that reverence now ?
The eagle pinion is chained down at last,
And grovelling in the lowly dust art thou ;
The minstrel hath no wreath to wreathe for thee
Save the sad story of thy misery.
Well, let me dive into the depths of time,
And bring from out the ages that have rolled
A few small fragments of those wrecks sublime
Which human eye may never more behold ;
And let the guerdon of my labour be,
My fallen country, one kind word for thee.

So much indeed Derozio identified himself with the country of his birth that he has been called, not inaptly, the National Bard of modern India, a true predecessor of the great Rabindranath. Derozio himself was not unconscious of his mission, for he said with commendable self-knowledge and humility :

Many a hand more worthy far than mine
Once thy harmonious chords to sweetness gave :

Those hands are cold, but if those notes divine
May be by mortal wakened once again,
Harp of my country, let me strike the strain.

III

As a poet, creditable as are his achievements, Derozio is to be chiefly admired for the great promise underlying his published work. Like Keats and Chatterton before him, like Toru Dutt and Aru Dutt after him, Derozio moved in the fields of poesy for all too brief a period; all of them were alike, in the Shelleyan phrase, "inheritors of unfulfilled renown." Derozio's sonnets and poems are competent, sustained by deep feeling and executed with good craftsmanship; again and again, he achieves that fusion between thought and expression, feeling and form, which signifies all true poetry.

No doubt, the technique of most of his poems is, not unnaturally, derivative; writing as he did in the eighteen-twenties, Derozio inevitably came under the spell of Byron and Thomas Moore. Derozio's most ambitious work, *The Fakir of Jungheera,* is full of Byronic echoes. The Brahmin widow, Nuleeni, is well delineated; she escapes *sati* at the last moment, being carried away by a robber-chief; but other sufferings are now her portion in life and she loses her robber-chief and she is thus widowed a second time. She clasps the dead body frantically

as if she dreamed
Of him in her embrace: but they who thought
That life was tenanting her breast, and sought
Some answer from her heart to hush the doubt,
Found that its eloquence had all burned out.

Nuleeni has found her peace in blissful union in the fact of death!

While Derozio's language is reminiscent of Byron and Moore, his ardent love for his country, his passion for social reform and his tender and courageous humanity are entirely his own. Even on his death-bed he did not lose either his

equanimity or his brave faith. Almost like Donne, Derozio faces the awful mystery of Death challengingly, triumphantly :

But man's eternal energies can make
An atmosphere around him, and so take
Good out of evil, like the yellow bee
That sucks from flowers malignant a sweet treasure,
O tyrant fate ! thus shall I vanquish thee,
For out of suffering shall I gather pleasure.

Derozio lived a beautiful life—it was, in fact, the best poem that he wrote. He loved his pupils, he loved his vocation, he loved his country, he loved life in its seeming turmoil as also in its quintessential harmony ; and when he could live in the world no more, he was brave in the hour of death. His tomb is located in the South Park Street burial-ground in Calcutta and, to quote his own words,

There all in silence, let him sleep his sleep
There nothing o'er him but the heavens shall weep,
There never pilgrim at his shrine shall bend,
But holy stars shine, their nightly vigils keep

CHAPTER III

TORU DUTT

I

After Derozio, the next outstanding name in the story of Indo-Anglian poetry is Michael Madhusudan Dutt (1827-1873). A Bengali by birth, Michael Madhusudan embraced Christianity and migrated to Madras in search of a vocation and edited for some time an English newspaper in that city. He married a European lady, qualified for the bar in England, and tried to make a living as a lawyer. His was a chequered career and he died in the prime of his life and at the height of his powers in a Calcutta hospital. His long metrical romance in English, *The Captive Ladie*, was an

attempt to tell the story of Prithvi Raj, the Rajput king of Delhi; the poem, published in 1849, won general approval with its Byronic fluency and gusto. His other works in English include *Visions of the Past* in blank verse, translations of *Sarmista* (1859) and *Ratnavali* (1858), and the farce, *Is this called Civilization?* (1871).

During the latter part of his life, Michael Madhusudhan wrote mainly in Bengali and his fame rests in particular on the Bengali Epic, *Meghnad-Badha*, of which an English rendering appeared in 1879.

Michael Madhusudhan has been a great inspiration to successive generations of poets. The poet Nabokissen Ghose (Ram Sharma) wrote an 'In Memoriam' piece, in the course of which he said :

> Hushed is the tuneful voice that thrilled the soul,
> Silent the lyre whose swelling notes did roll
> In streams of music sweet that did impart
> A life—a soul even to the dullest heart !

And Sri Aurobindo concluded his moving commemoration ode with these memorable lines :

> No human hands such notes ambrosial moved ;
> These accents are not of the imperfect earth ;
> Rather, the god was voiceful in their birth,
> The god himself of the enchanting flute,
> The god himself took up thy pen and wrote.

II

The year after the death of Michael Madhusudhan, died Aru Dutt, at the age of twenty ; and three years later, on the 30th of August 1877, died Aru's younger sister, Toru Dutt, at the age of twenty-one. Both were poetesses of the first order, though Toru has left more finished work behind her than her elder sister ; of Aru no less than of Toru the historian of Indo-Anglian literature can but say, in the words of Marlowe :

Cut is the branch that might have grown full straight
And burned is Apollo's laurel bough.

Their father, Gobind Chandra Dutt, besides contributing to *The Dutt Family Album* (1876), also published *The Loyal Hours* (1876) and *Cherry Stones* (1881), both containing good English verses. His wife, Kshetramoni, was well versed in English as well as Bengali. Born in such a cultured family, it was natural for Aru and Toru to indulge in literary exercises from a very early age. A stay of about four years in France, England and Italy, in the course of which the sisters acquired a high degree of proficiency in both French and English, completed their education and vigorously quickened their creative pulse. Returning to Bengal towards the close of 1873, the sisters plunged, in Mr. Edmund Gosse's words, into "a feverish dream of intellectual effort and imaginative production." Aru broke under the strain sooner than her sister; and Toru herself, after working at high imaginative pressure for three more years, gave up the battle at last and joined Aru and the "choir invisible" in heaven.

Aru's creative period was barely a few months. Six or seven of her exquisite essays in verse appeared, along with Toru's, in *A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields* (1876). Since the title-page showed only Toru Dutt's name, Mr. Gosse, who reviewed the book in *The Examiner*, attributed Aru's pieces also to her sister. It was, in fact, Aru's beautiful rendering of Victor Hugo's "Morning Serenade" that first filled Mr. Gosse with "surprise and almost rapture"; and, indeed, neither Aru nor Toru ever did anything more perfectly tuned to the very genius of English poetry:

Still barred thy doors! the far east glows,
The morning wind blows fresh and free.
Should not the hour that wakes the rose
Awaken also thee?

All look for thee, Love, Light, and Song,
Light in the sky deep red above,

Song, in the lark of pinions strong,
And in my heart, true Love.

Apart we miss our nature's goal,
Why strive to cheat our destinies?
Was not my love made for thy soul?
Thy beauty for mine eyes?

No longer sleep,
Oh, listen now!
I wait and weep,
But where art thou?

Hardly less hauntingly exquisite is the lyrical cry of a stanza like this :

O echo, whose repose I mar
With my regrets and mournful cries,
He comes—I hear his voice afar,
Or is it thine that thus replies?
Peace! hark, he calls!—in vain, in vain.
The loved and lost comes not again.

Like Toru, Aru also was an accomplished musician and, besides, she could draw with ease and grace. Aru (and her brother Abju, who had died very young in 1865) doubtless inspired this piercingly beautiful stanza in Toru Dutt's *Our Casuarina Tree* :

But not because of its magnificence
Dear is the Casuarina to my soul :
Beneath it we have played ; though years may roll,
O sweet companions, loved with love intense,
For your sakes shall the tree be ever dear!
Blent with your images, it shall arise
In memory, till the hot tears blind mine eyes!
What is that dirge-like murmur that I hear
Like the sea breaking on a shingle-beach?
It is the tree's lament, an eerie speech,
That haply to the unknown land may reach.

III

While Aru has left but a few splendid specimens from which to let us infer the fury of her imaginative life, her sister, having been granted a few more months of ceaseless poetic activity, has left behind her a body of achievement to which it will be difficult to find a parallel in the history of English literature. (A novel in French, a novel in English, many magazine articles and studies, and several scores of poems : these constitute an unbelievable achievement for a girl of twenty-one, to whom French and English were alike totally alien languages.) No wonder *The Saturday Review* categorically declared : " Had George Sand or George Eliot died at the age of twenty-one, they would certainly not have left behind them any proof of application or of originality superior to those bequeathed to us by Toru Dutt."

Her first published volume (and the only one published during her all too brief life), *A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields*, contained nearly two hundred verse translations from the French poets,—poets mainly of the Romantic school like Victor Hugo, Soulary and de Gramont. People who are competent to judge them as translations have pointed out that they re-capture the *spirit* of the originals with a subtle and sure mastery. (Mr. Gosse went further and declared that " if modern French literature were entirely lost, it might not be found impossible to reconstruct a great number of poems from this Indian version.")

But, after all, it is simpler to look upon the pieces in the *Sheaf* merely as delightful and moving English lyrics. An Indian girl rendering French poems into English : this is a phenomenon too good to be true ! But, the marvel is there, and it must discomfit mere reason. Was it Beranger's or her own soul's intimate questionings that she rendered in pulsating lines these ? It is not unnatural to look upon them rather as the recordation of her own frustrations, longings, and hopes :

A waif on this earth,
Sick, ugly and small,
Contemned from my birth
And rejected by all.
From my lips broke a cry,
Such as anguish may wring ;
Sing,—said God in reply,
Chant, poor little thing.

In the *Sheaf* Toru found her vocation as well as her voice ; she, "poor little thing", would sing—she would sing now of India's heroes and heroines, of Savitri and Satyavan, of Sita and Lakshman, of Dhruva and Ekalavya (Buttoo), of Dasaratha and Sindhu, of Prahlada and his father Hiranya-kasipu ; she that could so accurately render the heart-beats of a French poet of the sixteenth century would now interpret the great creations of Sanskrit seers and poets. Toru was steadily at work on her new enterprise since her return to her parental home in Calcutta. She completed some of the tales, but the projected cycle could not be completed ; she herself was not to see the publication of her Ballads and Legends. It was her father who, five years after her death, arranged for the publication of *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan*, with an appreciative memoir by Edmund Gosse. This slim volume brought together nine 'ballads' or 'legends' as also seven occasional sonnets and poems, including the justly famous *Our Casuarina Tree*.

IV

It is not necessary to elaborate the merits of the *Ballads and Legends* ; immature the poems may be here and there, but they have the important merit of being readable and re-readable. Toru had heard the stories of Savitri and Sita and Prahlad and Dhruva from the lips of her own mother ; she had long revolved in her mind the inner significance of these Puranic stories ; and she has little difficulty in re-telling these oft-told tales, and none of their magic is lost in the new shapes

that they have assumed in her books. There is no modernist attempt at underlining psychology or prettifying emotion; the unvarnished tale works its own magic even in an English garb and we realize that the primary human emotions of love, filial piety, devotion, gratitude and the rest are the stuff out of which great poetry is made—poetry that moves men's hearts "More than a trumpet."

The munificence of our racial memory is richly embodied in our Puranic tales and legends; but they will dry up and scatter as dust if they are coldly and ultra-rationally dissected, as some Bright Young Things have done in the past. Toru Dutt approaches her task with reverence and she sings her ballads as though they are so many intimate songs of her abiding faith. Humour and satire and irony are kept rigidly out of her universe and only the clear light of faith throws its radiant beauty on the almost unearthly figures of Savitri pleading with Yama, of Sindhu lifting up his reproachful face to Dasaratha, of Lakshman slinking away from Sita's presence with evil forebodings in his heart, and of Buttoo heroically severing his thumb as his great preceptor's fee. Toru had the root of the matter in her; she could seize her stories imaginatively, and live in the worlds created by them; and she could breathe into plain English words universes of thought and feeling. The *Ballads and Legends* have been often reprinted and some of the tales are tried favourites with school-children; breathing as they do "a Vedic solemnity and simplicity of temper", they are among the most satisfactory productions of the Indo-Anglians; there is no doubt that they will live.

Merely as technical exercises in English verse, the *Ballads and Legends* will do credit to any modern poet. Toru Dutt manages the octosyllabic line with considerable dexterity; her rhymes are rarely far-fetched and the sense glides along without interruptions. Perhaps, her blank verse is somewhat wooden; but, then, blank verse yields its peculiar charms only

to the lucky few who have mysteriously learned its 'open sesame.' Who knows what Toru Dutt might not have achieved had fate spared her for some decades more? Might she not have written a powerful sonnet-sequence or poetic tragedy in the years of her self-confidence and maturity if, as a mere girl, she could achieve a stanza like :

He said, and straight his weapons took
His bow and arrows pointed keen,
Kind,—nay, indulgent,—was his look,
No trace of anger there was seen,
Only a sorrow dark, that seemed
To deepen his resolve to dare
All dangers. Hoarse the vulture screamed,
As out he strode with dauntless air ;

or a sonnet like this, as genuine a work of verbal embroidery as there is :

A sea of foliage girds our garden round,
But not a sea of dull unvaried green,
Sharp contrasts of all colours here are seen ;
The light-green graceful tamarinds abound
Amid the mango clumps of green profound,
And palms arise, like pillars gray, between ;
And o'er the quiet pools the seemuls lean,
Red,—red, and startling like a trumpet's sound.

But nothing can be lovelier than the ranges
Of bamboos to the eastward, when the moon
Looks through their gaps, and the white lotus changes
Into a cup of silver. One might swoon
Drunken with beauty then, or gaze and gaze
On a primeval Eden, in amaze.

"This fragile and exotic blossom of song" withered and fell ere it could unfold all its petals or dedicate its full beauty to the world. For weeks she knew that her end was coming, and she was brave and composed till the end ; and her end was "perfect peace". We can but conclude in Mr. H. A. L. Fish-

er's words that "this child of the green valley of the Ganges" will for ever remain "in the great fellowship of English poets." Not Love only, but the measure of her achievement as well, will ever defend her from proud "Oblivion's curse."

CHAPTER IV

RAM SHARMA AND ROMESH CHUNDER

I

Renascent Bengal was by now seething with literary activity of all kinds. The great Bankimchandra Chatterji was producing in rapid succession his extraordinary series of Bengali novels. Of him Sri Aurobindo justly wrote: "Among the rishis of the later age we at last have realized that we must count the name of the man who gave us the reviving *mantra* which is creating a new India, the *mantra* of *Bande Mataram*." Although Bankimchandra did begin a novel in English, he did not complete it, and did instead the vast bulk of his work in his own mother tongue. But his very presence on the literary scene was an inspiration to other Indian writers, and hence the last quarter of the nineteenth century saw a phenomenal increase in the number of English and vernacular publications. Not Bengal merely, but all India, seemed to have recovered from its stupor, and renascent India was well under way. Rightly therefore Mr. Priyaranjan Sen remarks that Bankimchandra "awakened the country to the greater world outside, and linked the two together. The East and the West met in him."

Here we can merely catalogue the many publications of the early Indo-Anglian poets, reserving detailed comment to just a few significant among them. Sashichandra Dutt, a member of the Dutt family and thus related to Aru and Toru,

published a considerable body of English verse in *Miscellaneous Verses* (1848) and *Stray Leaves* (1864). Harachandra Dutt had at least one book to his credit, *Lotus Leaves, or Poems chiefly on Ancient Indian Subjects* (1871). Lal Behari Dey's *Govinda Samanta, or the History of a Bengal Raiyut* (1874) and *Folk Tales of Bengal* (1883) are both "competent rather than brilliant." Sir Saurindramohan Tagore seems to have been an indefatigable and versatile writer. *English Verses* (1875), *A Vision of Sumeru and Other Poems* (1878), *Hindu Drama* (1880), *The Binding of the Braid* (1880) and *Taravali* (1881) are some of Sir Saurindramohan's contributions to poetry and drama, although many of his works were mainly derived from the original Sanskrit. Ramkrishna Pillai's *Tales of Ind* appeared in 1895 over Fisher Unwin's imprint, but the book had no particular merit except a creditable fluency.

II

A copious writer of English verse for whom extravagant claims have been made was Babu Nabokissen Ghose, better known as "Ram Sharma." He was born in 1837 and died in 1918. He held various administrative posts but retired from service when barely forty. He seems to have lived a singularly blameless life and to have won the affection of a large number of friends, both Indian and European. Being somewhat of an unpractical idealist, he could not always trim his sails to the prevailing breezes in officialdom and hence he retired earlier than he need have done and was consequently a poor man to the end of his days. He has described himself as one

> Who, rough in manner, and of sharpest tongue,
> Yet owned a heart that felt most warm and strong
> For even the meanest life beneath the sun.

Ram Sharma's English verses have been collected and published by his friend, Debendrachandra Mullick, and they make a sumptuous volume of over three hundred pages. There is no doubt at all that Ram Sharma could write with facility. Many of the merely commemoration pieces—like those addressed to or dedicated to important personages like the Prince of Wales, Gladstone, Lord Ripon, Bradlaugh, Sambhuchandra Mukerji, Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, Kesub Chandra Sen and Dwarakanath Mitter—are no worse than the general run of the type, but they are rarely poetry. Nor is it necessary to look down upon a muse that waxes eloquent about Viceroys and British Prime Ministers, unmindful of the fact of Indian slavery ; Ram Sharma shared the feelings of the vast bulk of his countrymen and it is no use criticising him for not writing English verse in terms of a "Quit India" movement of 1942. Ram Sharma was a simple and sincere soul, and he had the courage of his convictions. He was responsive to the shifting movements in the life of the Indian nation and he was as willing to welcome an imperial plenipotentiary as to castigate a local die-hard, as eager to wish the Allahabad Congress godspeed as he was ready to condemn the "pseudo-social reformers".

And yet, in spite of their fatal facility, these numerous commemoration and topical verses are certainly not poetry pure and simple. The authentic poet is, however, revealed in such sustained pieces as *The Last Day, Shiva Ratri or A Glimpse of Maya Fair, Bhagabati Gita or The Doctrine of Sakti Worship, Willow Drops, Daksha Yagna* and the *Swayambara Lila.* As a dream fantasy, *The Last Day* is a notable achievement ; it contains a series of vividly portrayed contemporary figures, the most notable among them being Raja Rammohan Roy, David Hare, Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy, Sir Salar Jang, Mohendralal Sircar, Shambhuchandra Mukerji and

Harish Chandra Mukerji. There are also satirical portraits of other types of humanity, as distinguished from the above noble types; and the whole poem evokes a splendid portrait gallery presenting, as it were, a significant cross-section of contemporary humanity,

Shiva Ratri is conceived as an Indian Vanity Fair and Ram Sharma vivifies the scene with pictorial detail :

> On a rocky height
> With deodars crown'd, Dharmji now stood alone.
> Before him lay an undulating plain,
> Glitt'ring with gorgeous palaces and sheds,
> With hill beyond hill—wooded to the top—
> Standing like blue-clad sentinels around.
> A crystal lake, by crystal streamlets fed,
> Gleamed on the west beneath the evening glow.....
> Here were rick thickets of sweet sandalwood,
> And cinnamon, and cardamum, and clove,
> And avenues of bokula and palm
> And pine, with vistas lengthening to the sky.
> There, groves of kadamb, champac, and tamal,
> Mango and orange, and of many a flower
> And luscious fruit-tree, on whose leafy boughs
> The stately peacock spread his starry tail,
> And song-birds of mellifluous notes—the koil,
> Papya, shama, doel, and bahau,
> Poured out their throats in rivalry of song.

Dharmji wakes up in time from his "dismal trance"; but he has had a glimpse of the Maya Fair and found it wanting.

In *Bhagabati Gita,* perhaps Ram Sharma's best poem, the theme is Bhagabati, the Eternal She, the "home-of-all womb-of-all" created things; Bhagabati is visualized in all her sacred and awful majesty, surrounded by the band of Yoginis, "spirits of earth and flood, of fire and air." A hymn of praise

comes up from below,—"from holy Brahmins, hoar with snows of age" :

Hail ! ten-armed Goddess of the Lion-throne,
Whose power Time and Space and Being own !
The seed of things was in Thy mighty womb,
Their source prolific and their final doom !
From Thee the mystic Trinal Unity—
Virinchi, Vishnu, Shiva—one in three—
All sprang, Thou primal dread Divinity,
Thou great First Cause and End to be !
May brother brother clasp in close embrace,
And pleasure beam on each familiar face,
As friend meets friend around the festive board,
And tells of pangs endured or triumphs scored !.....
In varied names we worship only Thee ;
In vain the creeds veil Thee in mystery ;
For God or Goddess, Thou art all the same—
In every form we but adore Thy name !

Here and there we stumble upon bad verses and whole passages are sometimes flat ; but, taken in mass, these three poems are nobly articulate. Ram Sharma's blank verse shows a conscious desire to imitate Milton and the peak passages do undoubtedly recall similar, but more triumphant, improvisations in *Paradise Lost*. Besides, Ram Sharma wields the ballad measure effectively, especially when he wants to produce comic effects. *Daksha Yagna*, "an Indian ballad in English verse", is among Ram Sharma's most successful poems. From the first stanza—

Daksha, a royal saint of old,
Made up his mind, as legends tell,
A ceremonial rite to hold,
A yagna on the grandest scale—

the story of Daksha's discomfiture at the hands of Shiva unrolls itself briskly ; the drama is as good as acted before our very eyes ; and the touch is impish and light throughout.

(Ram Sharma may not be quite what his editor thinks he is—"perhaps the greatest poet of India writing in English verse"; but he is an accomplished poet enough, and he deserves to be more widely known and read than he is.)

III

A brother of Sashichandra Dutt, Romesh Chunder gained greater renown as an administrator and as a Bengali and English writer. Romesh Chunder Dutt was born eleven years later than Ram Sharma but predeceased him by nine years. Romesh Chunder had his education at the Calcutta Presidency College and later successfully competed for the Indian Civil Service examination in England. After attaining the rank of divisional commissioner in Bengal, Romesh Dutt retired before reaching the age of fifty and devoted himself, for a time, exclusively to literary work. He was returned to the Legislative Council at Calcutta and subsequently served as revenue minister and dewan of Baroda.

His works include Bengali novels, English renderings of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata,* and various other publications dealing with the economic condition of India in the nineteenth century. *Lays of Ancient India* (1894) showed Romesh Chunder's happy facility with English numbers; his fame as an Indo-Anglian poet must, however, rest on his classic renderings of *Ramayana* (1900) and *Mahabharata* (1898). Manmathanatha Dutt, too, had already produced his translations of the great epics; and there was also Pratapchandra Roy's monumental translation of *Mahabharata* in eighteen volumes (1883-95). There were besides other translations in existence, done by Indians or by Europeans, of varying degrees of merit. Romesh Chunder's partial translations of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* are nevertheless the best and most poetic of them all;

others produced translations, but Romesh Chunder produced happy renderings that are poems in their own right. They are the best introductions that we have in the English language to our two great national epics and they have therefore more than earned their right for inclusion in Dent's *Everyman's Library of the World's Best Books.*

Romesh Chunder Dutt has succeeded where others have failed because he knew the wisdom of resolved limitation. He has reduced the 24,000 couplets of the *Ramayana* and the over 200,000 couplets of the *Mahabharata* to about 4000 couplets of rhymed English verse in the *Locksley Hall* metre. He has accomplished this feat of condensation, not by actually summarizing the original epics, but by rendering only the comparatively more important portions (more important, that is, from the story point of view) and supplying the connecting links by means of concise prose narratives. "The advantage of this arrangement", says the translator, "is that, in the passages presented to the reader, it is the poet who speaks to him, not the translator. Though vast portions of the original are skipped over, those which are presented are the portions which narrate the main incidents of the epic, and they describe those incidents as told by the poet himself. . . . Not only are the incidents narrated in the same order as in the original, but they are told in the style of the poet as far as possible. Even the similes and metaphors and figures of speech are all or mostly adopted from the original ; the translator has not ventured either to adopt his own distinct style of narration, or to improve on the style of the original with his own decorations." The episodes, the endless discussions on ethical, philosophical and political problems, the many obvious interpolations, all these have been omitted, although the *Mahabharata* retains, for a specimen, the episode of Savitri and Satyavan. The accounts of battles, again, have been here and there condensed to good effect.

In result, Romesh Chunder's versions, while they are doubtless faithful to the spirit of their originals, have none of the looseness and prolixity that mar the modern recensions of these ancient epics. Similar condensed editions of the originals, with prose translations in English, have recently been published by Messrs. G. A. Natesan in Madras.

IV

If Romesh Chunder was wise in not attempting a full-length translation of the original epics, he was no less wise in discovering in the *Locksley Hall* metre an ideal equivalent to the original *anushtubhs*. The seeming bareness, spareness, the utter simplicity, the insinuating cadence and magic of the *anushtubhs* of Valmiki and Vyasa, unique as they are and hence as inimitable as Homer's hexameters or Dante's terza rima, can hardly be wholly reproduced even by such a master-craftsman as Romesh Chunder. But, such as it is, Romesh Chunder has done his very best, and the norm of his verse is elastic enough to reproduce many of the potent spells of the originals.

It is not possible, within the limits of this book, to give adequate illustrative extracts to show Romesh Chunder's admirable metrical resilience and mastery of phrase. We have descriptions of nature, so painstakingly accurate and so suffused with a colouring of the imagination, as in this passage on the Nilgiri mountains :

"Mark the shadowing rain and tempest," Rama to his brother said,
As on Malya's cloud-capped ranges in their hermit-guise they strayed,
"Massive clouds like rolling mountains gather thick and gather high,
Lurid lightnings glint and sparkle, pealing thunders shake the sky,

Pregnant with the ocean moisture by the solar ray instilled,
Now the skies like fruitful mothers are with grateful waters filled !
Mark the folds of cloudy masses, ladder-like of smooth ascent,
One could almost reach the Sun-god, wreath him with a wreath of scent,
And when glow these heavy masses red and white with evening's glow,
One could almost deem them sword-cuts branded by some heavenly foe ! '

We have fury itself turned into poetry in these words which Dasaratha addresses to his wife, Kaikeyi, who has just asked for Rama's banishment and Bharata's coronation :

" Traitress to thy king and husband, fell destroyer of thy race,
Wherefore seeks thy ruthless rancour Rama rich in righteous grace,
Traitress to thy kith and kindred, Rama loves thee as thy own,
Wherefore then with causeless vengeance as a mother hate thy son ?
Have I courted thee, Kaikeyi, throned thee in my heart of truth,
Nursed thee in my home and bosom like a snake of poisoned tooth,
Have I courted thee, Kaikeyi, placed thee on Ayodhya's throne,
That my Rama, loved of people, thou shouldst banish from his own ? "

And here, piling simile upon simile, the poet turns the pathos of Abhimanyu's death itself into poetry that is truly too deep for tears :

Like a tusker of the forest by surrounding hunters slain,
Like a wood-consuming wild-fire quenched upon the distant plain,
Like a mountain-shaking tempest spent in force and hushed and still,
Like the red resplendent day-god setting on the western hill,

Like the moon serene and beauteous quenched in eclipse dark and pale,
Lifeless slumbered Abhimanyu when the softened starlit fell !

(Whether in portraiture or in dialogue, in description or in exhortation, Romesh Chunder is always convincing ; alike in depicting the horrors of war and in delineating the primary human emotions, he shows himself worthy of his originals ; and that is the measure of his greatness as an Indo-Anglian poet.)

CHAPTER V

BEHRAMJI MALABARI

We have in the main discussed the work of the Indo-Anglians who hailed from Bengal ; but other provinces were not slow to follow in her foot-steps and considerable literary activity, in English as also in the local vernaculars, was presently evident in Madras, in the United Provinces, in the Punjab, and especially, in Bombay. Behramji Malabari and his pioneering work deserve to be stressed here, for he symbolized a type that is fast disappearing from our midst.

Three or four decades ago, there was hardly a cultured Indian or Englishman who had not heard of Behramji Malabari. It was universally taken for granted that he was eminent in his own sphere as were Dadabhoy and Ramkrishna in theirs. Higher grade school pupils all over India used to be taught a life-sketch of Malabari ; consequently, he used to rub shoulders with a Sir Salar Jung, an Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar and a Pachayappa Mudaliar within the well-thumbed covers of school texts. A publicist, an ardent social reformer, a poet in English as well as in Gujarati, and a facile and forceful writer of English prose, Malabari's position in the scroll of eminent Indians seemed quite secure.

And yet, how many among the younger generation of to-day have even heard of Behramji Malabari's name? A new stage has now been set; other actors are playing their several parts; and the Indian scene bewilderingly merges with the international scene, and confounds everybody. These are the days of hysteria, of quick lunches, of *blitzkrieg*, of megalomania and race hatred. We have our new leaders, our new slogans, our new writers. However, Malabari was a path-finder in the trackless jungles of those less spacious days, and we owe it to ourselves to acknowledge our debt to this daring pioneer who broke fresh ground in many fields of activity.

II

Mr. Dayaram Gidumal's biographical sketch of Malabari, with an appreciative Introduction by Florence Nightingale, was published over Fisher Unwin's imprint nearly fifty years ago. The burden of the story is that "slow rises worth by poverty depressed." Malabari was born in 1853 in Surat and lost both his parents early. He adored his mother; and her death, when he was but in his early teens, was a turning point in his life. When barely twelve years old, Malabari was compelled to earn his livelihood. He taught pupils in the mornings and evenings, and in between studied in the Surat Mission School under the Rev. Mr. Nixon. Malabari retained to the last the liveliest feelings of gratitude towards Mr. and Mrs. Nixon.

A few years later, Malabari migrated to Bombay to sit for the Matriculation Examination. He settled down in Bombay, passed the Matriculation at the fourth attempt (thanks to his pet aversion, Arithmetic), and in due course became an author, an editor, a publicist and a social reformer —a sort of William Cobbett for the teeming millions of India.

Malabari published in quick succession *Niti Vinod* in Gujarati and *The Indian Muse in English Garb* (1876). The former was called by *Rast Goftar* "the first book of the first Parsi poet". *The Indian Muse* was, perhaps, the earliest considerable collection of English verse to be published from Bombay by an Indian writer. Dr. John Wilson remarked that the verses "displayed an uncommonly intimate knowledge of the English language" and that they were "the outcome of a gifted mind, trained to habits of deep meditation and fresh and felicitous expression."

Several of the pieces in the book had been composed when Malabari was no more than a pupil-teacher at Surat, and some of them therefore deal with his Surat experiences. The portraits of his early preceptors are forceful and arresting Minochehr Daru was—

> A man mysterious of the Magus tribe
> A close astrologer, and a splendid scribe
> A faithful oracle of dead Hormuzd's will
> A priest, a patriarch, and a man of skill.

Of another teacher, a crueller and fiercer one, Malabari writes with some pungency :

> With pointed paws his fierce moustache he'd twirl,
> And at his culprits the direst vengeance hurl
> Sharp went the whizzing whip, fast flew the cane,
> And he fairly caper'd in his wrath insane.

The youth's idealism is well expressed in these lines :

> There's pleasure luring me to ruin ; I'll never the siren heed ;
> If once my soul is wrecked, she's naught but shame to wed indeed ;
> But no, I'd honest death prefer to being Pleasure's knave ;
> So up and on to glory, soul, — glory or the grave.

These verses are certainly creditable in a lad who had all along been compelled to battle with adverse circumstances and had been denied the privileges of a formal and liberal education.

Malabari's subsequent poetical work consists of a few commendatory pieces and the Gujarat *Wilson Virah* and *Sarod-i-Ettefak*. Mention may also be made of his translation of Max Muller's Hibbert Lectures on "the Origin and Growth of Religion, illustrated by the Religions of India". While Malabari was personally responsible for only about one-half of the Gujarati translation, it was nevertheless due to his untiring efforts that the publication of the five translations proved at all feasible. For India and for the time, it was truly a giant undertaking, and Malabari alone could have pushed it through to a successful conclusion.

III

Of Malabari's prose writings, special reference should be made to *Gujarat and Gujaratis* (1882) and *The Indian Eye on English Life* (1893). The former is racily written. Malabari sees clearly and writes with unfailing zest and humour. The scenes are recaptured with an uncanny exactitude, and every touch tells. The Holi, the Aghori Mendicant, the Marwari, the Vaishnava Maharaj,—they are pictured in all their crudity and their glamour and their horror. Things have changed considerably during the past seventy years : and hence there is all the greater reason why we should be thankful to Malabari for the account of an age that is no more.

The Indian Eye is a disarming account of Malabari's European tour. "With all its unattractiveness", says Malabari, "London is still a Mecca for the traveller in search of truth, a Medina of rest for the persecuted or the perplexed in spirit. Though the centre of perpetual motion, it is still the Persepolis of human grandeur and repose."

Malabari made many contacts in London ; he interested the powers that be on the urgency of social reform legislation in India ; he visited many continental cities, enriching the store of his varied experience,

His book is written with pellucid candour and there is no straining after effect. His generalizations are as natural as are his apostrophes. His appreciation of the Passion Play at Ober-Ammergau has the authentic ring about it. "Dear old Bobby", he addresses the London policeman, "roughly tender in your attentions to all in need, seldom losing your temper, though distracted by a score of tongues at a time, or your presence of mind among the confusion and clatter of a hundred feet."

Malabari's book was well received in England ; and in India, *The Times* closed a long, appreciative review of the book with this statement : "No Indian journalist has done more than Mr. Malabari to maintain between the two races a feeling of friendliness based upon reciprocal respect."

It is not necessary to dwell here in detail on Malabari's public activities ; they belong to Indian history, not to Indo-Anglian literature. Malabari's stewardship of *The Indian Nation* raised in the eyes of the world the standing and status of Indian journalism. He was an indefatigable propagandist in favour of the raising of the "age of consent." He concluded his pamphlet on *The Indian Nation* (1894) with these ominous words. "A wife at 10, a widow at 12, (in many cases the age limits stand much lower), a mother at 13—these are monstrosities in the face of which it is madness to think of a consistent, progressive public life." Like many another patriot, Malabari firmly believed that political progress was impossible before the eradication of the many social evils in our midst. His pioneering work in the matter of social reforms bore ultimate fruit in the raising of the "age of

consent" and in the focussing of public attention on the plight of the Indian widow.

Behramji Malabari died in 1912, mourned by his many friends and admirers. He had lived a blameless life, never tampering with weights and measures; and he left behind him an unsullied memory, a great example.

CHAPTER VI

NAGESH WISHWANATH PAI

(I

In any study of the contribution of Indians to English literature, a place must certainly be found for the work of Nagesh Wishwanath Pai. It is a matter for regret that while early Indo-Anglians like Toru Dutt, Manmohan Ghose and Michael Madhusudhan Dutt are generally well known, there are very few indeed who have even heard of Mr. Pai. The present writer knows next to nothing about Mr. Pai's life. Nagesh Wishwanath was born about the year 1860; he graduated from St. Xavier's College, Bombay, in 1881 and took the LL.B. degree one or two years later. He then practised, first as a High Court Pleader in Bombay, and later as Government Pleader in Sholapur. He published two books, *Stray Sketches in Chakmakpore* (1894) and *The Angel of Misfortune* (1904). He died about 1920.

Of his two publications, *Stray Sketches in Chakmakpore from the Note-book of an Idle Citizen* was in prose. It belongs to that class of books—in which may be included Malabari's *Gujarat and Gujaratis* and Venkataramani's *Paper Boats*, to be noticed later—which aim at giving a first hand and sympathetic interpretation of Indian life through the medium of sensitive English prose. Mr. Pai explains his purpose as fol-

lows: "These sketches are chiefly intended to amuse, but the writer is not without hopes that the Western reader will find in them sufficient novelty to excite his curiosity and interest. The main idea has been to give pictures of Indian life, pure and simple."

Mr. Pai's "Chakmakpore" is any town in India—Madras, or Belgaum, or Bombay, what you please; it is, however, in a very special sense, the Bombay of forty years ago. There are thirty-six sketches in all and they embrace a diverting variety: the Parsee girl of the period; the Pooranik; the Pariah dog; the irritable Sahib; the Pedagogue; the Mithaiwala; the Zealous Reformer; the Medicoes of the Street; the Bairagee; the Street Singer; the Mother-in-law; the Smart Student; the Gowlan; the Hindu Lady (old school); the little Street-hawker; and there are even sketches on the bullock and the crow.

The many specimens of humanity or animate creation that figure in Mr. Pai's sparkling pages are all life-like, perennially interesting, and absolutely convincing. The average foreigner who attempts similar sketches sees India only from the outside, and his knowledge is therefore partial, at times even perverted. Mr. Pai, on the other hand, is rooted in the soil for all his sophisticated life in modern Bombay; he presents Indian life from the inside, having as it were seized his characters by direct vision; and hence his portraits are not merely vivid and arresting, they are also lit by a sympathy that endears them to our hearts. Moreover, the book is throughout written in a simple and homely style that seems singularly appropriate to Mr. Pai's themes.

II

Mr. Pai's next book, *The Angel of Misfortune*, is a metrical romance in ten books. It consists of over 5000 lines of blank verse. Mr. Pai's is without doubt one of the best of

the longer poems that the Indo-Anglians have given us so far. The verse is flowing, the story is well-knit and is full of incidents that surprise and satisfy ; the atmosphere is wholly Indian and the book is redolent of Hindu Culture ; above all, the book is eminently readable. It does deserve to be more generally known and read in India and abroad.

Mr. Pai explains in his Preface that the story of the poem is founded on two popular Indian legends ; however, " after selecting from the materials available such as suited his purpose, the author has felt himself at liberty to draw on his own imagination for the rest. Be that as it may, *The Angel of Misfortune* is a coherent whole and not a mere patched-up affair.

The story of the poem may be briefly summarized here. King Vikrama (or Vikramaditya) of Avanti and Ujjain has had to surrender his crown to the Angel of Misfortune (Saturn). As Vikrama is resting under a banyan tree, leagues away from his domains, he sees a crouching tiger ready to spring upon two tired horses slaking their thirst in a nearby stream. Vikrama gives battle to the tiger and slays it. The owner of the horses is a rich jeweller by name Motichand, who now gratefully takes Vikrama to Champa, an adjoining city. There Vikrama serves the rich Motichand as guard to his treasures.

Meanwhile, Motichand is commissioned by a neighbouring king to make a necklace for his queen. When the costly necklace is ready, Motichand is overpersuaded by his handsome wife to allow her to wear it for a day. At the time of her bath, she leaves the necklace in the custody of Vikrama. The Angel of Misfortune now swoops down in the guise of a swan and, in spite of his shafts, carries the necklace away. Vikrama's story is not believed by Motichand and his wife ; he is taken before Champa's ruler who orders that Vikrama should be chained to the ground till he dies. It is also decreed

death to try to feed Vikrama. An aged hermit, who had been previously nursed back to health by Vikrama in the woods, pleads with the king of Champa, but in vain. He therefore betakes himself to Avanti to beg King Vikrama (not knowing that Vikrama was really in Champa, the victim of its ruler's wrath) to save the condemned man from the wrath of Champa's King.

Vikrama is at last overcome by fatigue and swoons. An old widow, disregarding the King's edict, sprinkles water on Vikrama's temples. He recovers, but the widow herself is now taken before the King. Her unselfishness and tender humanity moves the King, who permits her to tend Vikrama, though still in chains, in her own hut. Vikrama recovers his normal health and helps his benefactress by daily driving the ox round her oil mill. He is now care-free and sings in joyful abandon. His music is accidentally overheard by Champa's princess, Indira, who calls him out. It is the day of Holi, Kamadeva's day : and whoever loved that loved not at first sight ? Chained and in disgrace, Vikrama is still the purest of the pure, the bravest and the best in Indira's eyes. The swarthy Angel of Misfortune tempts Vikrama yet once more—he could gain his heart's desire if only he would break his promise to his whilom suppliants. But Vikrama is Vikrama still, and he resolves to lose Indira herself, rather than become a perjurer !

Even the Swarthy Angel is appeased at last. She would now repair her wrongs ; she compels Champa's King to hold a durbar to which all are invited, among them Vikrama in chains. Publicly the Angel confesses her part in the theft of the necklace and returns it to Vikrama. Motichand and the King profusely apologise to Vikrama ; his chains are removed ; and he is now the guest of the King.

The aged and enraged hermit has in the meantime reached Avanti and brought with him a huge army to the environs

of Champa. The Angel has surrendered Avanti's crown to the army leaders and asked them to seek their rightful King in Champa. Their emissary threatens to destroy Champa if its King fails to restore Vikrama to his army. Champa's King is very much intrigued by all this, but Vikrama now reveals himself, and all is well that ends well !

Vikrama now asks for Indira's hand. Mr. Pai here introduces some delicate irony ; Champa's King and his daughter speak at cross-purposes, he pleading for King Vikrama, she refusing him, loving in her heart only the ex-prisoner who had won her affections on Kamadeva's day. The misunderstandings are cleared and she meets Avanti's king alone and, in reply to his fervent protestations of love,

> Whilst her youthful heart
> Beats fast, in tremulous accents answers low
> And sweet, " My lord ! — My gracious lord : I am thine."

III

From the foregoing summary, it will be seen that Mr. Pai's is an interesting and moving story. He is lucky in his hero, for Indians respond naturally to stories about Vikrama, the great King, the King of Kings. His heroism, his capacity for suffering, his manly bearing, his humanity, these are subtly woven into the texture of the poem. The unbending rationalists may object to the introduction of the Swarthy Angel ; But Mr. Pai himself calls his poem a " fairy tale " and anyhow the supernatural is not ruled out in romantic epics.

The Angel is indeed integral to the scheme of the poem ; she is pitted against King Vikrama, ruthless power is in conflict with uncompromising virtue. It is the same old theme of Harischandra, of Nala, of Job, enacted once again with a view to showing virtue ever triumphant in the end. Towards his 'enemies', so to call the Angel and Champa's King and

the rest, Vikrama bears no malice ; he is the true satyagrahi and can never harbour sheer violence within.

Vikrama as portrayed by Mr. Pai is a hero cast in the mould of Rama himself. He gladly surrenders his crown to save his subjects from misery ; he shows no eagerness to return to his kingdom, nor even to get his chains removed ; it is only when duty calls him back that he accepts the sacred trust of kingship. These words of Mr. Masti Venkatesa Iyengar, though written in a different context, are pertinent to King Vikrama as well : " The heroic man does not become an exile from power to be free from responsibility. Whether on the throne or out of it, his burden is his own. No one else can carry it. On the throne he may have some comfort along with the toil of kingship ; off the throne he is free of the comfort, not the toil ..... It is the outlook that makes acceptance or renunciation great or small."

While, not inappropriately, Vikrama dominates the scene, the various other characters too are memorably drawn. Indira, the heroine, is an adorable creature. Mr. Pai's language takes wings as he describes the dawn of her sweet adolescence and he almost smothers his heroine under a load of finely conceived imagery :

> And now the magic touch of youth has wrought
> A miracle of beauty in her form
> Making what was already lovely shine
> With added loveliness, each graceful curve
> And dimple look more 'witching than before,
> And what was soft seem softer, what was bright
> Grow brighter still. And as a tender bud
> Kissed by the sun's warm beams as it expands,
> Unfolds its hidden wonders to the view ;
> So, here, the ardent rays of youth's bright morn
> Disclose a hundred charms and graces all
> Unknown and unsuspected till they burst

Upon the startled eye like poet's dream
Or wondrous vision of the world to come.

Her loyalty to her heart's promptings, her tender solicitude for Vikrama while yet in chains, her refusal to be overawed by the mere name of a King of Kings, these are among the beautiful things in the book. And what can be more moving, more in accord with Hindu traditions, than this picture of Indira;

All trembling like a startled fawn now stands
The gentle princess, whilst the youthful king
In burning accents speaks the boundless love
That fills his generous heart. She modest bends
Her lovely head to hide the tell-tale blush
That might betray the love she would conceal.
Nor does she boldly raise her lustrous eyes
To Vikrama's noble face, but shyly steals
A side-glance, and as it meets by chance
His ardent gaze, her eye-lids softly droop
In sweet confusion.

Similarly, the jeweller Motichand, his wife, the old widow, the hermit, and the other minor characters in the tale are also convincingly drawn. In no more than a dozen lines Mr. Pai invokes the wan figure of Motichand's aged mother, her eye for the surpassing beauty of the necklace, her motherly pride in her son's exquisite craftsmanship, and her silent prayer for his continued safety and happiness. In like manner, Mr. Pai succeeds in portraying the physiognomy and behaviour of men in the mass, whether in moments of jubilation, or of awe, or of frenzied alarm.

IV

As a poet of Nature, too, Mr. Pai's achievements must commend themselves to the Indian reader. His birds and beasts, his flowers and trees, his seasons and his rills and his dingles, are decidedly and recognizably Indian. He writes at times

with a Keatsian sensuousness; and his admiration for Tennyson is evident. Like Spenser, he loves to elaborate the felicities of bowers of bliss and the blossoming of youthful love. The description of a summer noonday with which the poem opens is excellent:

> Hushed is now
> The mingled din of insect, bird, and beast
> That in the cool and freshening air of morn
> Made vocal all the leafy wood around.

The description of Vasanta (Spring) in Book IV is even better as a piece of embroidery. "Like the first hopes of youth, Wasanta comes":

> He seems at first to tread on tip-toe o'er
> Tree, shrub, and creeping plant, as if he feared
> To wake them from their wintry sleep . . . .
> And then the delicate lilies on the lake
> That revel in the sun's resplendent beams;
> And tender *kumuda* flowers that coyly wait
> The silver moonlight, and then softly ope
> Their beauteous face, and smile upon the calm
> And cloudless heavens; the overpowering breath
> Of the bright golden *champah*, and the soft
> But exquisite odour of the modest buds
> Of *malati;* all, all are strangely sweet
> And 'witching to the sense.

Mr. Pai thus perceives Nature's habiliments accurately and sketches them beautifully. The elephant, the tiger, the swan, sunrise and noonday, the feast of Love, the cloudless azure of the skies, the ærial courtship of the Indian butterflies, they are all verbally re-created and securely niched in the poem.

Mr. Pai is essentially a poet, interested in the values and verities that constitute our cultural heritage; occasionally, however, the social reformer speaks, though ever so insinuatingly. Thus moans Vikrama's benefactress.

A poor widow I
..... of our mother Earth's
Unhappy daughters one .....

Elsewhere Mr. Pai remarks :

For thus it was
Of yore in this rich sunny land of Ind.
Not less as now was helpless little child
And half-grown youth together tied for life
With ancient words they scarce could understand ;
For warriors bold and lovely women claimed
Freedom to give their hearts where'er they chose.

But such passages do not impair either the integrity or the unity of the poem.

Mr. Pai's versification is uniformly good. Blank verse is a difficult instrument to handle, but Mr. Pai cleverly wields it. His is a creditable achievement, truly indigenous in setting, in theme, in sentiments. In conclusion, let me extract the following passage from an article in *East & West*, contributed by Dr. Michael Macmillan, sometime Principal of the Bombay Elphinstone College : " It is impossible for a European writer, however keen may be his powers of observation, and however richly endowed he may be with imagination, to thoroughly understand Indian life and character and look upon Indian palaces, gardens, jungles, pageants, and all the other richly coloured elements of Indian surroundings with the eye of a native of the soil. Thus it appears to us that neither Mr. Moore, nor Southey, nor Sir Edwin Arnold, nor Mr. Rudyard Kipling, nor Sir Alfred Lyall, nor Professor Bain of Poona, in their most brilliant efforts to give poetic expression to the glamour of the gorgeous East, have succeeded in producing as true a picture of India as the less ambitious and more homely verses of the author of *The Angel of Misfortune*."

CHAPTER VII

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

I

Rabindranath Tagore's essays and verses appeared in Bengali periodicals as early as 1875 ; his moving lines on Death were dictated shortly before he passed away on the 7th of August 1941. During the intervening period of over sixty-five years Tagore rarely, if ever at all, allowed a year to pass without adding something fresh and vital to the heritage of Bengali literature, and to a lesser extent, of English literature.

Rabindranath was born in the rich and noble family of the Tagores on the 6th of May, 1861. His grandfather, Dwarkanath Tagore, had been a friend and co-worker of Raja Rammohan Roy ; his father, Debendranath, the *Maharshi*, had been a pillar of the Brahma Samaj movement. Rabindranath was thus heir to great traditions. He lost his mother when he was quite a young boy ; and his father was not often at home. Young Rabindranath, therefore, lived his own life —and it was essentially a lonely life. He came in time to love loneliness, even to make a religion of it. "There are many paradoxes in the world and one of them is this, that wherever the landscape is immense, the sky unlimited, clouds intimately dense, feelings unfathomable—that is to say, where infinity is manifest—its fit companion is one solitary person." It was thus Tagore later generalized from his own apprehensions.

Tagore was, of course, no misanthrope—far from it ; he loved all the creations of man and God and loved to live amidst them, but the infinity of solitude charmed, chastened, and made a different man of him. Out of this mystic union of Man and Nature great poetry was born, and born again and again.

(The many-sided achievements of Tagore almost take one's breath away. Lyrics, poetic plays, plays of ideas, social plays, novels, short stories, essays in criticism, philosophical essays, autobiographical fragments, letters, addresses, educational dissertations, these have uninterruptedly flowed from his pen.) He was an actor, a producer, a musician, a painter, and a platform speaker of extraordinary power. He played a conspicuous part in the activities of Brahma Samaj ; he was a prominent figure during the 'Partition of Bengal' agitation, though he did not subscribe to its wilder heresies ; he made his Visva-Bharati at Shantiniketan the rallying-centre of international culture ; he travelled the world over, raising India's stature in the process ; and the figure of the aged poet, with the flowing beard and immaculate white clothes, soon became the visible symbol of India's antiquity, her reserves of poetry and her living philosophy.

During the earlier half of his career, the storm of controversy broke now and then over him, and threatened to engulf him. However, by the time he was fifty years old, Bengal as one man was ready to honour him. The meeting on January 28, 1912 at the Calcutta Town Hall was the homage paid by the Bengalees as a whole to their Poet Laureate.

During his subsequent English tour, some of his English renderings from the original Bengali, while still in manuscript, elicited the unqualified approbation of people like W. B. Yeats, Rothenstein, May Sinclair, Professor Bradley, Henry Nevinson and others. *Gitanjali* (1912) was published in England with Yeats's well-known Introduction, in the course of which he said : "I have carried the manuscript of these translations about with me for days, reading it in railway trains, or on the top of omnibuses and in restaurants, and I have often had to close it lest some stranger should see how much it

moved me. These lyrics—which are in the original, my Indians tell me, full of subtlety of rhythm, of untranslatable delicacies of colour, of metrical invention—display in their thought a world I have dreamed of all my life long."

Gitanjali took the English world by storm. Presently, in 1913, Rabindranath was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. Although the honour was really won by Bengali literature, the Indo-Anglians, not unjustifiably perhaps, wished to share the great joy and pluck from it inspiration for creative work in the future. Thus the award was a major land-mark in the history of Indo-Anglian literature.

II

One should, however, carefully guard against over-estimating the importance of the Nobel award. In Mr. Nagendranath Gupta's words, "For Rabindranath the Nobel prize has served as an introduction to the west.....for the rest the Nobel Prize has been of no more use to him than his cast off knighthood." The lionising of the poet that the award inevitably led to, really depressed the sensitive poet. He was utterly sincere when he remarked : "I shall never get any peace again. I shall be worried with appeals, all kinds of people will be writing to me. My heart sank when I saw those people at Bombay and realized that they were going to make a public show of me there."

However, this "introduction" to the west was no negligible matter. It put him—and through him, *modern* India—on the map of world literature. Indians realized that at last the West was paying homage to the East. "A poet's mission is to attract the voice which is yet inaudible in the air ; to inspire faith in the dream which is unfulfilled ; to bring the earliest tidings of the unborn flower to a skeptic world." It was thus

Tagore's work gave a standing and an inspiring status to the Indian renaissance, making the fulfilment of its visions now only a matter of time.

Tagore's vitality and fecundity as a writer were truly amazing. There are about two hundred items in the bibliography of his Bengali writings. He wrote nearly two thousand songs. His plays are as numerous as they are varied. Even his English translations constitute a respectable bulk. Collections like *Gitanjali*, *The Gardener*, and *The Crescent Moon* were put into their English garb by Tagore himself. In plays like *Chitra*, Tagore altered the original in many places when he produced his English version. Notwithstanding all this ceaseless activity, his work is not unequal, in the sense Wordsworth's or Coleridge's work is unequal. Rabindranath's lyrical poetry seems to suffer, when taken in mass, from a sort of sameness, but not from flatness or grotesqueness. When collections of his poems appeared in English one by one, each was a revelation, and it was received with a chorus of applause. English and American critics found them " of supreme beauty", " of trance like beauty " ; they thought that " to begin chanting these lyrics aloud is to pass majestically into a realm of spiritual ecstasy " ; they wondered if the rhythm of the lyrics was not comparable to that of the *Song of Songs*.

In course of time, however, as the bulk of the lyrics seemed to increase, and especially when the omnibus *Collected Poems and Plays* was published, the magic seemed somehow to fade away, and the critics sang a different tune : " much of Tagore's writing is only a kind of mellifluous musing or is even lost, to quote his own words, ' in the endless mist of vague sweetness'.. even his expression of ecstasy is apt to be diffuse and this diffuseness is the more obvious when we have his work as here in bulk."

III

An antidote to this feeling would be to read Rabindranath's longer poems which have, unfortunately, not reached as many people as have his shorter song-offerings and fluent musings. One of his great poems is *Sea Waves*, written to commemorate the wreck of a pilgrim ship carrying nearly one thousand passengers to Puri in 1887. The occasion and the moving poem it called forth remind one of Gerard Manley Hopkins's *The Wreck of the Deutschland*. Even in translation, the surge and the roar, "the burl of the fountains of air", the "buck and the flood of the wave", are reproduced; the Storm, the ogress shouting "Give! give! give!", these are vividly, fearfully, unforgettably visualized.

Again, in *The Child*, one of the few poems written originally in English by Tagore, there is an impressionistic description of men and women of all kinds to the hypothetical shrine of fulfilment. Ibsen's Brand is reincarnated in the poem. Men from the valley of the Nile, the banks of the Ganges, from Tibet and the "dense dark tangle of savage wildernesses", all gather in one place and start on their journey; the trials are unendurable to everyone except the Man of Faith; he is denounced by his erstwhile followers as a false prophet. None the less they reach the Journey's End; the child is discovered;

> They kneel down,—the king and the beggar, the saint and the sinner, the wise and the fool,—and cry:
> 'Victory to Man, the new-born, the ever-living.'

And of Rabindranath's *Farewell to Heaven, Urvasi, Ahalya, The Stream of Being* and *The Taj Mahal*, which are among the most sustained flights of his muse, it is difficult to speak with moderation. They seem to be perfect of their kind, implicating universes of thought and feeling; they seem to be rough

approximations to the traditional "music of the spheres"—so inwrought are they "in forms that luxuriate into arabesque, in colours that shimmer into iridescence, in speech that kindles into imagery." And the crowning wonder of all seems to be *Urvasi*,—a bursting scream of adoration at the sight of Ideal Beauty, the enchantress of Life and Love:

> In the assembly of Gods, when thou dancest in ecstasy of joy, O swaying wave, Urvasi,
> The companies of billows in mid-ocean swell and dance, beat on beat;
> In the crests of the corn the skirts of the Earth tremble;
> From thy necklace stars fall off in the sky;
> Suddenly in the breast of man the heart forgets itself,
> The blood dances!
> Suddenly in the horizon thy zone bursts,
> Ah, wild in abandon!

Rightly Dr. Edward Thompson, who is responsible for the above rendering, finds in this poem "a meeting of East and West indeed, a glorious tangle, of Indian mythology, modern science, and legends of European romance." Nor is Mr. Nagendranath Gupta, who has given us a beautiful verse rendering of the whole poem in English, off the mark when he affirms that the poem "scintillates and glitters like the Kohinoor in the poet's Golconda of flawless jewels."

IV

As a novelist, Tagore's fame rests on *Gora*, *The Wreck*, and *The Home and the World*. *The Wreck* is an immature work, although it is interesting enough; Ramesh is a Bengali edition of Oblomov, but is scarcely convincing. And the story is full of improbabilities and coincidences that leave a distaste in the end.

The Home and the World adopts the technique followed, among others, by Browning in *The Ring and the Book* and

Wilkie Collins in his *The Woman in the White.* The three chief characters, Nikhil, his wife Bimala, and their friend, Sandip, tell their own stories in the first person. Nikhil is a curious amalgam of Prince Muishkin and Stavrogin. His goodness is mistaken for weakness by others ; his sense of justice is denounced as treachery to the national cause. The clap-trap that passes for patriotism deeply pains him : "What I really feel is this, that those who cannot find food for their enthusiasm in a knowledge of their country as it is, or those who cannot love men just because they are men, who needs must shout and deify their country in order to keep up their excitement, —these love excitement more than their country." There is no doubt Nikhil is a partial projection of Tagore himself.

The Home and the World was greeted indifferently on account of its political implications. But *Gora* was a favourite from the beginning with Tagore's admirers. Its hero, Gourmohan, is the son of an English lady brought up in a Hindu household since the very day of his birth. He is presented to us therefore as the fusion of the best that the West and East can boast of. Gora, albeit he is a symbol, is very well realized in flesh and blood.

As a short-story writer, again, Tagore has some notable triumphs to his credit. *Hungry Stones, Mashi,* and similar collections bespeak the range of his art. These are not stories really, but are analogous to prose lyrics in fiction. The emotional background is the main thing ; the plot spins itself out effortlessly, inevitably almost. Tagore plumbs the depths of the human heart, and he has an understanding of women, their superficial wiles and their reserves of devotion and sacrifice ; Asha and Minnie and Kusum and Souravi and Bindya Bhashini are so many variations on the same theme of Woman who serves Man, and so serving fulfils her destiny.

Likewise, Tagore, "being rooted and grounded in the love of all the loveliness of earth", is able to transmit to his readers something of this love, something of this rooted kinship with Nature and "dear and dogged man." Tagore's novels and short stories are thus the composite testament of a seer's ripe wisdom; they suggest a way of life, but more through artistic implication than propagandist iteration.

There is not space here to speak in detail of Tagore's dramas. Some of them, *Chitra* and *Sacrifice, King and Queen* and *Post Office*, have proved very popular in English. Tagore had been writing plays during almost every period of his enormous career. Their range is therefore very wide; some are social studies reminding one of the plays of Henrik Ibsen; some are tragedies that take our minds back to the great Elizabethans; some are soaked in symbolism, recalling Maeterlinck's *Pelleas and Melisande* or Hauptmann's *Hannele;* there are others still, seemingly fragile and slight, that shift the action to the theatre of the soul.

A multitude of characters people these plays—Ila, Queen Sumitra, Raghupati, Aparna, Chitra and Arjuna, Malini, Karna and Kunti, Sati, the King of the Dark Chamber. Many of the plays no doubt seem to suffer from a thinness of content, a poverty of action, when merely read. But we have it on good authority that when they are *seen*—and these plays, one and all of them, are meant to be seen,—on the stage, they "are a delight which never falters from the first word to the last." Only on the stage the fluid visions crystallize, the words acquire a spiral of meaning, and the music and the pageantry coalesce into a noble synthesis.

V

Rabindranath Tagore has been different things to different men. Some are mainly attracted by *Sadhana* and *The Reli-*

gion of Man; some make a habit of frequently dipping into *Thoughts of Rabindranath Tagore,* culled and edited by C. F. Andrews ; some read his books on Nationalism and Personality, his letters and his addresses ; some like his poems short, others regret he has written no poem of epic magnitude ; some read the short story, *The Cabulliwallah,* again and again with tears in their eyes ; some speculate on his philosophy and discourse on his symbolism.

Tagore's genius shot out in many directions, dazzling and giving light ; and all through his life Tagore sought beauty and sought happiness,—sought happiness through beauty. He sought beauty in children, found it and exhibited it in books like *The Crescent Moon*—the beauty of innocence. He sought beauty in boys and girls, found in them the beauty of the gradual unfolding of the human personality ; he knew that as a teacher, and only as a teacher, he could come in daily and intimate contact with boys and girls, and hence arose the multifoliate edifice at Shantiniketan.

Tagore sought beauty, again, in Man in relation to other men and in relation to Nature ; Love and Friendship and Natural piety, these the poet found and portrayed in many a poem in *Gitanjali, The Gardener,* and *The Cycle of Spring.* Tagore went further ; he saw man in relation to tradition, the immemorial culture of the Hindus—the *Vedas,* the *Upanishads* and the *Gita*—and more generally the heritage of all Indians, including such a wonder of architecture as the *Taj* ; and he found the beauty of establishing a profound harmony with the springs of our great traditions.

Above all, Tagore saw Man in relation to the Universe, to God—sought the beauty of Holiness, and found it too ! Tagore's life was thus one long endeavour to reach Beauty—to scale one by one its heights—and so, even so, to realize

happiness here and now. He sought it and found it; he presently lost it, resought beauty once again, and found it once more. When the emotional adventure was in full swing, he wrote poetry, he sang his piercing songs; when the adventure was over for the time being and reflection set in, he wrote his philosophical essays and treatises. It was the same Tagore of course who wrote all his works; the emphasis varied, that was all.

We are too near to his age to be able to 'place' him. Judged by any standards whatsoever, Tagore's achievements must compel recognition. He is not of India's only, but the world's. He has given us his gifts lavishly, and a life-time of reverent study is not enough to take in all that he has given. He embodied in his life and work some of the characteristics of the great Rishis of old; a *kavi* like Valmiki, a *Brahmarishi* like Vasistha, and a *Rajarishi* and *karmayogin* like Vishwamitra. What then, for *us*, is the great fact of Rishi Rabindranath's achievement? He was a messenger of an immense future to come; "he has knocked at our gate and all the bars have given way. Our doors have burst open." It only remains for us to gather the harvest while we may.

CHAPTER VIII

SESHADRI, CHETTUR AND MANMOHAN

I

Professors of English are not necessarily poets; indeed, professor-poets are the exceptions rather than the rule, and this holds good as much in India as in England. A Matthew Arnold, an Abercrombie, an Edmund Blunden have shown that the thing is not impossible; so have Indo-Anglian professors like Seshadri, Chettur and Manmohan Ghose, who have all

left behind them a creditable body of English verse, some of which is poetry undeniable.

The late Professor P. Seshadri began his career in Madras and Salem, but subsequently made his mark as an educationist in Benares, Cawnpore and Ajmere. He visited England and Japan and made valuable foreign contacts ; he was a good speaker and vivacious conversationalist ; and he was reputed to be an inspiring teacher of English literature. His works include a monograph on the Anglo-Indian poet, John Leyden, a brochure on Anglo-Indian poetry, a hand-book on Benares, and the following volumes of verse : *Bilhana* (1914) ; *Sonnets* (1914) ; *Champak Leaves* (1923) ; and *Vanished Hours* (1925). He died, rather suddenly, in 1941.

Seshadri's prose works need not detain us : they needed to be done, and they were done well. *Bilhana* is a narrative poem of about 800 lines, based upon the original Sanskrit. The theme had already been treated by Sir Edwin Arnold in his *Chaurapanchasika*, but the tale was worth telling yet once again. The poet Bilhana is employed by Panchala's King to teach his daughter, Yamini ; a curtain separates teacher from the pupil at tuition time ; but love overwhelms them and they are secretly united :

> Their lives had found the highest heaven on earth ;
> The golden dreams of sweet romance now stood
> Revealed in crystal shape ; and thence their days
> Were such that song of hallowed fire could draw
> Its vital, moving breath from them, and blaze
> To glorious form . . . .
> The lovers closed their minds to yawning gulfs
> That royal wrath may ope beneath their feet ;
> They kissed the blossoming flower unaware
> Of thorns that lurk, or bees that hide their sting
> Within its perfumed walls of tender touch.

The King comes to know of their secret and orders the poet's execution. Bilhana's lament is justly famous and is sufficiently moving even in Seshadri's English rendering :

> . . . Like long-lost knowledge speeding back
> In sudden swelling flight, she fills my mind
> With bliss intoxicant. The full-orbed moon
> Swims not in greater glory up the heavens
> Than she within my sight ; her radiant youth
> Is dower which goddesses may like to own
> And love . . . .

The reprieve comes at the last moment, and:

> as her eyes beheld
> Her lover's palanquin now sway its course
> Towards the palace-gates, she darted down
> To meet her lord and all was endless joy,
> And blessedness.

Seshadri's blank verse is competent rather than beautiful : he is more at home as a writer of sonnets, some of which are very good indeed. It is no doubt true that Seshadri seldom rises to sheer lyrical heights. The emotion is almost always tranquillized and subdued. He is at his best in rendering literary criticism in terms of poetry as in the sonnets on Toru Dutt, Romesh Chunder, Dante, Gabriel Rossetti, Tolstoy and Jayadeva ; others on historical or legendary themes—those on Krishnakumari, Jebunissa's Lover and the Rajput Queen, for instance—are hardly less successful. Simply as the temperamental expression of a wistful mood, the following sonnet is quite a little triumph and may be quoted here in full :

> Which look of yours is graven on my breast ?
> Is it the one, when, with that gentle smile
> Of yours, you hailed me with a kindly zest
> That evening ? Or when we drove awhile
> Beyond the town, in neighbour forest-shades,
> You wondered at the mighty wrecks of time

Scattered about those hallowed, silent shades?
When bending on my latest book of rhyme
You wished to know each song? Or, when that night,
The full orbed moon aglow upon your face,
You gazed with rapture from the terraced-height
Upon the Ganges draped in dazzling rays?
Or when that morn you slowly said, 'farewell',
Struggling with varied thoughts which seemed to swell?

This and some of the other sonnets—*A Wish, On the Ganges, The Return* and *An Hour*—in Seshadri's last volume of sonnets were obviously inspired by the memory of his wife to whom it was touchingly inscribed with a quotation from Catullus.

Thy death has shivered all my pride,
And all my house is in the grave with thee,
Yea, all my happiness with thee is dead
Which in thy lifetime on thy sweet love fed.

These lines give the key-note of the sonnets included in *Vanished Hours*. During the last fifteen years of his life, Seshadri wrote very little poetry, engrossed as he was in the rigour and routine of administrative and teaching work.

II

Govinda Krishna Chettur had a brilliant academic career in Madras before he proceeded to Oxford. His innate poetic sensibility was nurtured and patterned in the intangible, other-world atmosphere of Oxford. Returning to India, he became Principal of the Government College, Mangalore, and quickly established a name for himself as a teacher and writer.

Chettur published five volumes of verse: *Sounds and Images, The Triumph of Love, Gumataraya and other sonnets for all moods, The Temple Tank and other poems,* and *The Shadow of God*. A collection of short stories appeared under

the title, *The Ghost City* (1932). He also published, shortly afterwards, a book of Oxford reminiscences entitled, *The Last Enchantment*, which contains several passages of sensitive and eloquent prose. Under his editorship, *A Government College Miscellany* became the best college journal in India and was favourably noticed, once or twice, by *John O'London's Weekly*. His premature death in 1935 was a distinct loss to Indo-Anglian literature.

Chettur's first book of verse, *Sounds and Images*, had a good press in India and abroad; his love-sonnets struck the right note of excitement and were found by the *Aberdeen Mail* to be possessed of "a warm, voluptuous, and haunting beauty." Mr. Basil Matthews was equally generous in his praise. The next three volumes of verse came out simultaneously in 1932 and were received with a chorus of praise.

The Triumph of Love, a sonnet-sequence, contains some of Chettur's best work. The twenty-three sonnets of this sequence memorably sing of love's perennial perplexities and exhilarations. To Chettur the eternal and spiritual aspects of love appeal not less than its temporal aspects and carnal attractions. There is a vital continuity in the cosmic process in spite of the apparent disintegration of material forms and human ties. Earth-love cannot be the end of all; it seems to be a pitiful thing when compared with the profound harmony of night:

> Here are no fevered changes, late or soon,
> Nor hate, nor lust, nor all-exacting pride:
> Only the passion of a perfect plan
> Controls infinity; and these abide
> Beyond the sorrows of our mortal span:
> While we, a wanton hour yield and pass,
> Tumultuously, like shadows on the grass.

Love is not love that can be cabinned within the stern

barriers of Time and Space; Love is rather a clue to the mystery of existence, an intimation of the Eternal life to come; this is Chettur's Testament of Love—of Love triumphant and transfigured—and it acquires a memorable articulation in the last sonnet of the series :

> Who that has lived, and loved, and seen fair things,
> And striven with darkness beating into day,
> With spears dream-pointed, and climbed with wings
> Above the tumult of the lesser way,
> Shall speak thereafter slightingly of God?
> They that have known this brief infinity
> Are one with the immortals. They have trod
> The floors of Heaven in Heavenly company,
> Intoxicate with blessed harmonies.
> So we, the proud inheritors of love,
> Grown God-like in unmortal ecstasies
> Dream, God-wise, of a day that love shall prove
> Magnificently, in the after years,
> Beyond the mortal touch of time or tears.

The *Gumataraya* volume also contains three or four finely conceived sonnets. Like innumerable others, Chettur too has felt the magic of Gomata's serene majesty, and he rapturously breaks out :

> O Stone! O Might! O Heart of man made God!
> Thou art the emblem of our hope, our prayer,
> Aye, all our strength: and lo, on bended knees,
> With joined hands, and where rapt feet have trod,
> We yield the burden of our soul's despair
> And lifting eyes to thee, our hearts are peace.

The two sonnets on beauty are better still; the first asks the question,—the all too common question,—What is Beauty? Is it a hope? a longing? Nay, answers Chettur; Beauty is a certain sign :

> A sign, that of the living whole, we make
> A part incorporate, however small;

A fragment of the passion that doth fall
In sudden splendour upon hill or lake :
A symbol, a remembrancer to awake
The sleeping godhead to a memory
Of what has been, and what again shall be,
And still the heart's intolerable ache.
Nay more ; a pledge, renewed from hour to hour
In song, in love, in dream, in children's eyes ;
Writ on the laughing heavens, the sorrowing sea ;
Sealed on the morning face of every flower ;
And, even as the rainbow in the skies,
A covenant of God's integrity.

There is another poem on Beauty in *The Temple Tank*— but here the tone is less serious and the trochaic measure gives it a dexterous lilt and pleasing fluency :

Heart of maid ! Here Beauty lingers :
Seek her gently, touch her fingers . . . .
Now she trembles, and her eyes
Meet the ground in shy surmise.

In fact, in most of the poems included in *The Temple Tank*, the poet's exuberant fancy takes wings, and he is seen to be a pure and simple child of song. He no more packs thoughts into epigrams and he does not reason fancy out of existence. These are slight things, common things, unimportant and out-of-the-way things, but they are all woven into a texture of throbbing rhythm and word magic. *Triolets* is Elizabethan in its simplicity and direct force ; *Peacocks, The Temple Tank, The Sentinels,* and *The Cow* have but tenuous significance in meaning but much magic of sound. And *Nocturne* preserves an unruffled balance of qualities to the end and is one of the best pieces in the book.

Chettur realized that, however poetic one's perceptions, expression in an alien language will be possible only after an intimate study of its sound values and verse forms. As a

French critic wittily remarked, poetry is written with words, not with ideas! The more one reads Chettur's sonnets and other pieces, the more one admires his verbal felicity and his mastery over English verse forms. As "K.S.", the reviewer in the Literary Supplement of *The Hindu*, remarked, "so much of the beauty of Mr. Chettur's verse resides in its mere rhythm, in the sinuous and long-drawn graces of its movement." Whether his theme is the cow, or Samuel Johnson, or peacocks, or the Temple Tank, Chettur's improvisations in verse please the ear, even if they do not always improve the mind. In his last volume, *The Shadow of God*, Chettur's muse acquired a measure of mellowness and serenity, and seemed to embody his deeper thoughts and riper musings. It marked an improvement on his earlier work and added to the store of his revelation.

III

Manmohan Ghose (1867-1924), along with his brother Aurobindo, early went to England and remained there to take an Oxford degree. English became something of a mother tongue to them both and they both blossomed into poets even in their teens. Along with Arthur Cripps, Laurence Binyon and Stephen Phillips, Manmohan Ghose published in 1890 a volume of poems, *Primavera*. Manmohan's later publications were *Love Songs and Elegies* and *Songs of Love and Death*. He worked as a Professor of English literature after his return to India. He has been called by Mr. George Sampson, in *The Concise Cambridge History of English Literature*, as "the most remarkable of Indian poets who wrote in English." According to the same authority, a reader of Manmohan's poems "would readily take them as the work of an English poet trained in the classical tradition."

It is true ; in the body of Manmohan's verse there are few particles of explosive matter ; his is a fairly tranquillized and chastened muse. It is not that Manmohan cannot *feel* ; but he ever compels excitement to assume repose, and hence his stanzas glide softly along and insinuate their melancholy into our hearts.

A true poet, Manmohan has heaps of time to stand and to stare, to feel the heart-throbs of birds and beasts and trees. Thus intimately he addresses the weeping willow :

> Willow sweet, willow sad, willow by the river,
> Taught by pensive love to droop, where ceaseless waters shiver,
> Teach me, steadfast sorrower, your mournful grace of graces ;
> Weeping to make beautiful the silent water-places.

He is alike responsive to poplar, beech, the butterfly, bright stars, and the evening sky ; his eyes they cannot choose but see, his ears they cannot choose but hear ; above all, an exile in England during the impressionable period of his life, his heart cannot choose but yearn for his country and it was during such a moment of homesickness that Manmohan wrote the beautiful poem *Myvanwy*, concluding with this memorable affirmation of faith:

> Lost is that country, and all but forgotten
> 'Mid these chill breezes, yet still, oh, believe me,
> All her meridian suns and ardent summers
> Burn in my bosom.

The latter part of Manmohan's life was dimmed and darkened by the lengthening shadow cast by his dear and beautiful wife's prolonged illness and premature death. No wonder those who saw him during this period of his life found him "a broken man who bore the countenance of one tragically fated." After his wife's death in 1918, Manmohan found

life more or less without savour, and he was himself afflicted with a series of illnesses. He became blind, he retired from his professorship in the Calcutta Presidency College, he was a solitary soul like another blind poet in his declining years, the great Milton himself. His daughter has given us this vivid picture of the aged Manmohan : "For hours he would sit wrapt in thought. The sunset deepened into darker shades, twilight crept on apace, but my father sat in the darkening room looking straight before him, sometimes repeating a few lines aloud, unconscious of all that was going on around him. Always there was the same intense look in his eyes, the same radiance lit his face. As I looked, it seemed to me that I was gazing on the face of some ancient Yogi on the eve of gaining the fruits of his Yoga." He died in 1924, after an illness of two months, shortly before the date of his intended departure for England.

As against the portrait of the aged Manmohan given by his daughter, we might set here this other portrait of the youthful poet, attempted by his friend, Mr. Laurence Binyon. "I can still hear", says Mr. Binyon, "Manmohan Ghose standing up to read a poem in the crowded room. His long hair fell half over his eyes ; as he read he detached one of his dark locks and pulled at it with out-stretched hand : oblivious of his surroundings, lost in the poem, he appeared almost convulsed in the emotional effort of his delivery."

In spite of superficial differences, it is the same man that has been described by friend and daughter ; it is the dreamer weaving fancies, it is the poet hidden in the light of thought, it is the Yogi trying to achieve a synthesis of inner and outer experience. Neither the rigour of lecturing routine nor the daily impact of Pain nor yet the repeated shocks to his sensitive universe ever succeeded in hushing up Manmohan's creative

activity. Perseus fascinated him, as it did his brother Aurobindo, and he attempted a blank verse epic on this legendary hero ; the Great War of 1914-18 stung him to attempt another epic, something of a *Dynasts*, detailing the events of a later day ; he also wrote innumerable shorter poems, lyrics, dramatic fragments, and elegiac pieces.

It is to be supposed that much of his work yet remains unpublished ; but enough has been already published to give the discriminating reader an adequate idea of Manmohan's poetic achievement. We have referred to his Nature poetry, which is ever sensuously beautiful and suggestive ; it is also a strangely tantalizing amalgam of England and India. Are there many references to the English seasons and to English flowers and to English trees ? But the poems are equally broad based on India, and breathe *her* spirit of restrained rapture and tranquillity ; and anyhow the pieces are poetry undeniable, and that is all that matters to us.

When, however, Manmohan seeks to transmute the very edge of emotion into poetry, we get the true pathos and sublime of the best poetry. The pieces included in the two sequences entitled *Immortal Eve* and *Orphic Mysteries* constitute, perhaps, Manmohan's highest achievement in sheer lyrical poetry. Pain is fresh upon him and he cannot but daily taste the everlasting tears in things : but Pain does not embitter him, it only makes him gently moan the hurt that he has sustained and send forth his soul's prayer for repair and recovery :

> Paean of immortality,
> O Godward peal of praise !
> Ring, ring within my mortal ears,
> My fainting spirit raise !

It may be that the lost joys of his life are " far sunk beyond rave and fret " ; it may be he is but surrounded by

"the souls of dreams unflowered and the roses of regret"; it may be that he trembles and falters on the shores of desolation; but the "Godward peal of praise" is never quite stilled, and he can still catch "the great rhythm that thunders up to bliss."

CHAPTER IX

AUROBINDO GHOSE

I

Manmohan Ghose's younger brother, Sri Aurobindo, has just completed his seventy-first year and is, and has been for the last thirty-five years, living as a recluse at Pondicherry. In his *purva asrama,* he was a professor at Baroda, and subsequently a journalist and politician in Calcutta. Since his retirement to Pondicherry, he has in real truth become a Pilgrim of Eternity, and the Aurobindo Ashram has become one of the hallowed spots in the world.

As one of the editors of *Arya,* the philosophical review that had such a short but glorious existence, Sri Aurobindo wrote serially in its columns various sequences of articles, *The Life Divine, Essays on the Gita, A Defence of Indian Culture, The Secret of the Veda, The Ideal of Human Unity, The Psychology of Social Development, The Synthesis of Yoga,* and *The Future Poetry.* The two former sequences have been now issued in book form and constitute a monumental contribution to modern thought. Other prose publications include *Views and Reviews, Heraclitus, Bases of Yoga, The Mother, Kalidasa, The National Value of Art, the Renaissance in India, Ideal and Progress, A System of National Education* and *The Riddle of this World.* Some of these are but reprints of old articles, others are collections of letters to various correspondents.

Professor or politician, philosopher or mystic or yogi, Sri Aurobindo has all along been an English poet of remarkable power and range. Two sumptuous volumes of his *Collected Poems and Plays* have been recently published to commemorate his seventy-first birthday : but the editor, Mr. Nolini Kanta Gupta, says that " the work presented here is only a small portion of what he has actually written, the bulk of which has not yet seen the light of day. However, even the published seven hundred pages of the *Collected Poems and Plays* embody a reality of poetic inspiration and achievement which compels recognition at once. Unlike Tagore, who wrote most of his works originally in Bengali and only later translated them into English, Sri Aurobindo has all along expressed himself in English and English alone. This circumstance gives us the right to call him the most outstanding of the Indo-Anglians.

II

As an Indo-Anglian poet, Sri Aurobindo's work has always been characterised by a flawless metrical craftsmanship which has obviously been facilitated by his profound mastery of Greek, Latin and Sanskrit literatures. His scholarly and thought-provoking 40-page essay on Quantitative Metre is a valuable addition to the comparatively meagre literature on the subject in English. In many of his more recent poems, Sri Aurobindo has tried, not unsuccessfully, to give some of the classical meters, including the fatally alluring hexameter, an English habitation and name.

However, Sri Aurobindo, authentic poet and thinker that he is, knows that poetry is not metre merely but only uses it as its fit vehicle for articulation. As he once wrote to one of his correspondents, " Poetry, if it deserves the name at all,

comes always from some subtle plane through the creative vital and uses the outer mind and other external instruments for transmission only." If the inspiration is not urgent enough, or if the metrical craftsmanship is not consummate enough, we have either verse that is pleasing and faultless or poetry that just misses its name and vocation. The breeze of inspiration bloweth where and when it listeth and cannot therefore be summoned to order : but metrical mastery can be acquired and retained. Meanwhile, the poet can but wait for the unpredictable moment when inspiration will enkindle his verses into the unfading incandescence of poetry.

Sri Aurobindo's verses—whether he is but translating Kalidasa or Bhartrihari or Plato or Meleager or Chittaranjan Das, or whether he is more creatively engaged in recording his own unbending quests in different spheres of intellectual and spiritual activity—are always the products of a careful and sensitive art. They are worth reading and pondering over for their own sake, and not only as the significant by-products of the stupendous endeavours that have given the world Olympian treatises like *The Life Divine*. However it derives its inspiration and whoever be its author, a stanza like this is a veritable thing of beauty and deserves to be cherished in and for itself :

> O love, what more shall I, shall Radha speak,
> Since mortal words are weak?
> In life, in death,
> In being and in breath
> No other lord but thee can Radha seek.

That this stanza has been inspired by the original Bengali of Chundidas does not make it any the less charming as English poetry.

Sri Aurobindo holds the healthy, but rather unorthodox, view that a translation need not be quite literal and dully

flat. As he wrote to Mr. Dilip Kumar Roy, "a translator is not necessarily bound to the original he chooses; he can make his own poem out of it, if he likes, and that is what is generally done." Literal translations may have their own dubious value as cribs for students over whom hangs the spectre of an imminent examination; but translations like Chapman's *Homer* and Fitzgerald's *Omar Khayyam* are poems in their own right and implicitly honour their great originals. This, too, is what Sri Aurobindo has tried to do in his many free renderings from the original Greek, Bengali and Sanskrit literatures. Indeed, some of these so-called translations are so good and so feast the ear and chasten the mind that they are more like transfigurations in terms of colour, sound and inwrought imagery. For instance, what can be more richly conceived or more finely expressed than lines like these, all taken from Sri Aurobindo's renderings of the late C. R. Das's *Sagar-Sangit* (*Songs of the Sea*) :

> O thou unhoped-for elusive wonder of the skies,
> Stand still one moment! I will lead thee, and bind
> With music to the chambers of my mind . . .
>
> Behold, the perfect-gloried dawn has come
> Far-floating from eternity her home . . .
>
> Thy huge rebuke shook all my nature, all
> The narrow coasts of thought sank crumbling in.
> Collapsed that play-room and that lamp was quenched.
> I stood in Ocean's thunders, washed and drenched . . . .

The arts of echo and refrain, of assonance and dissonance, of variation in movement through the adroit placing of polysyllables to give added weight and momentum to the verse, all these are mobilised, controlled and converted into an abiding expression of the bottomless depth and mystery of the sea.

Many of Sri Aurobindo's other translations, including his beautiful rendering of Kalidasa's play, *Vikramorvasie*, do also in like manner partake of the character of original compositions, and should so be treasured.

III

As regards Sri Aurobindo's professedly original poetry, the earlier pieces are more immediately effective and hence easier to enjoy than many of the later, and more philosophically sustained, poems. The earlier pieces, belonging as they do to Sri Aurobindo's period of adolescence, sometimes achieve a Keatsian sensuousness and sweetness in their imagery and music :

> Love, a moment drop thy hands ;
> Night within my soul expands.
> Veil thy beauties milk-rose-fair
> In that dark and showering hair.
> Coral kisses ravish not
> When the soul is tinged with thought ;
> Burning looks are then forbid .

Presently, there is a deeper note and a more characteristic fusion of English idiom with Hindu processes of thought ; mere wonder gives place to daring speculation, speculation to a dialectic of doubt, and doubt to an incipient faith ; the doubts are stilled now, the crust of European culture lies about in fragments, and Sri Aurobindo has safely come through. Poems like *Who, A Vision of Science, The Vedantin's Prayer, Parabrahman* and *God*, all clinchingly affirm the Everlasting Yea. *Who* contains the first and (last) question of all, and its answer as well :

> In the blue of the sky in the green of the forest,
> Whose is the hand that has painted the glow ?
> When the winds were asleep in the womb of the ether,

Who was it roused them and bade them to blow . . . . . .
In the sweep of the worlds, in the surge of the ages,
Ineffable, mighty, majestic and pure,
Beyond the last pinnacle seized by the thinker
He is throned in His seats that for ever endure.

The anapæstic measure gives this poem of eleven stanzas an almost Swinburnian rapidity of movement. On the other hand, the architectonics of the following small verse paragraph transmute into beautiful poetry even the tremendous energy that informs it:

Then from our hills the ancient answer pealed,
"For Thou, O Splendour, art myself concealed,
And the grey cell contains me not, the star
I outmeasure and am older than the elements are.
Whether on earth or far beyond the sun,
I, stumbling, clouded, am the Eternal One."

The Everlasting Yea is thus affirmed in divers tunes by the adept singer; it is the finale to the Arctic Seer's revelation:

For thou art He, O King. Only the night
Is on the soul
By thy own will. Remove it and recover
The serene whole
Thou art indeed, then raise up man the lover
To God the goal;

and it is also the purposeful core of *A Child's Imagination*:

Strange, remote and splendid
Childhood's fancy pure
Thrills to thoughts we cannot fathom
Quick felicities obscure . .

These are coming on thee
In thy secret thought.
God remembers in thy bosom
All the wonders that He wrought.

IV

To the pre-Pondicherry period also belong the longer narrative poems, *Urvasie, Love and Death,* and *Baji Prabhou,* not to mention *Vidula,* a free poetic paraphrase of four chapters from the Udyog-parva of the *Mahabharata. Baji Prabhou* is a tale of Maratha chivalry, and is told with becoming vigour and dignity. *Urvasie* is a metrical romance in four cantos ; in it the story of Pururavas and Urvasie—familiar to all those who have read Kalidasa's play—is narrated, in flexible blank verse, with a strange new beauty and charm. This long poem of about 1500 lines is interspersed with many admirable passages that evoke colour and sound with a sure artistry ; and not seldom the words acquire a nervous potency of suggestion romantic to the marrow:

> She, o'erborne,
> Panting, with inarticulate murmers lay,
> Like a slim tree half-seen through driving hail,
> Her naked arms clasping his neck, her cheek
> And golden throat averted, and wide trouble
> In her large eyes bewildered with their bliss.
> Amid her wind-blown hair their faces met.

Love and Death, somewhat shorter than *Urvasie,* sweeps on its course with the same intensity of emotion and similar richness of music. The story of Orpheus and Eurydice is almost transformed into a magic tale of love and death and immortality, typically Hindu in its setting, sentiments and language. Blank verse all but assumes wings in a tumultuous passage like:

> . . . . . towards him
> Innumerable waters loomed, and heaven
> Threatened. Horizon on horizon moved
> Dreadfully swift ; then with a prone wide sound
> All Ocean hollowing drew him swiftly in,
> Curving with monstrous menace over him.

He down the gulf where the loud waves collapsed
Descending, saw with floating hair arise
The daughters of the sea in pale green light,
A million mystic breasts suddenly bare,
And came beneath the flood and stunned beheld
A mute stupendous march of waters race
To reach some viewless pit beneath the world.

The same mastery over blank verse, the most elusively tantalizing of verse forms, is also exhibited in Sri Aurobindo's poetic play, *Perseus the Deliverer*. This heroic hero of ancient myth is portrayed by Sri Aurobindo as a veritable hero indeed, but a hero that signifies "the first promptings of the deeper and higher psychic and spiritual being which it is his ultimate destiny to become." The conflict in the play is in the nature of a Hegelian dialectic ; man shall progress indeed, but only by bravely riding on the crests and cusps of the checks and counter-checks that punctuate his life :

For through the shocks of difficulty and death
Man shall attain his godhead.

The Heraclitan maxim is underlined and expanded in the last lines of the play :

CASSIOPEA : How can the immortal gods and Nature change ?
PERSEUS : All alters in a world that is the same.
Man most must change who is a soul of Time ;
His gods too change and live in larger light.
CEPHESUS : Then man too may arise to greater heights,
His being draw nearer to the gods.
PERSEUS : Perhaps.
But the blind nether forces still have power
And the ascent is slow and long is Time.
Yet shall Truth grow and harmony increase :
The day shall come when men feel close and one.
Meanwhile one forward step is something gained,
Since little by little earth must open to heaven
Till her dim soul awakes into Light.

We can discover in the above passage the germs of the thought that was later to grow in volume and substance and fill the ample halls and corridors of *The Life Divine*; and yet, for all its message, *Perseus the Deliverer* is essentially a play of action, full of the rush and tumult of a cosmic conflict and is therefore breathlessly interesting as sheer drama. Besides, the play is full of overtones and undertones to which it is not at all possible to do justice here. However, one cannot help drawing the reader's attention to the following lines, spoken by Perseus, with reference to the priest Polydaon, which rather seem to describe with a peculiar force, some of the seeming superman-dictators of the day :

> This man for a few hours became the vessel
> Of an occult and formidable Force
> And through his form it did fierce terrible things
> Unhuman : but his small and gloomy mind
> And impure dark heart could not contain the Force.
> It turned in him to madness and demoniac
> Huge longings. Then the Power withdrew from him
> Leaving the broken incapable instrument
> And all its might was spilt from the body. Better
> To be a common man mid common men
> And live an unaspiring mortal life
> Than call into oneself a Titan strength
> Too dire and mighty for its human frame,
> That only afflicts the oppressed astonished world,
> Then breaks its user.

That surely is one of the peaks of divination in the body of Sri Aurobindo's poetry.

In one of his illuminating series of articles on *The Future Poetry*, Sri Aurobindo declared : " To embellish life with beauty is only the most outward function of art and poetry ; to make life more intimately beautiful and noble and great and full of meaning is its higher office ; but its highest comes when the poet becomes the seer and reveals to man his eternal self

and the godheads of its manifestation." He also pointed out that the poets of the future would probably try to make poetic utterance approximate to the seemingly beginningless *mantra*. This too is what M. Abbe Bremond meant when he said that poetry is a mystic incantation allied to prayer.

In his latest poems, *Ahana, Shiva, The Bird of Fire, Jivanmukta, Trance of Waiting* and the rest, Sri Aurobindo, having safely come to port after going through the singular perturbations of life, has tried in the full plenitude of his vision to reveal to man "his eternal self and the godheads of its manifestation." The ecstasy that he would now translate into words is truly ineffable and unwordable and could only be suggested through symbolism and the downright triumph of style—of an apparently effortless fusion of the dynamics of movement and the magic of sound that gives one the sense (to quote his own words) "of a rhythm which does not begin or end with the line, but has for ever been sounding in the eternal planes and began even in Time ages ago and which returns into the infinite to go sounding on for ages after." Neither the unexpected turns in the rhythm, nor the furious drive of verbal wizardry in a poem like *The Rose of God* or *Thought the Paraclete*, nor yet the immense load of spiritual connotation certain words are made to carry, are quite a bar to our reading and appreciating these pieces as poetry first and poetry last, poetry true to its quintessential vocation. Coleridge rightly remarked that poetry should but be partially understood. And yet, however partial our intellectual comprehension may be, our very soul can at auspicious moments respond and seize by direct apprehension the tremendous import of even a stanza like this :

> Only the illimitable Permanent
> Is here. A Peace stupendous, featureless, still
> Replaces all, — What once was I, in It

A silent unnamed emptiness content
Either to fade in the Unknowable
Or thrill with the luminous seas of the Infinite.

VI

While the two volumes of his *Collected Poems and Plays* embody a reality of poetic achievement that immediately places Sri Aurobindo in the very front of twentieth-century English poets, his prose writings—so many of them, so varied in subject-matter and so colossal in bulk—give us the right to call him one of the supreme masters of modern English prose. *The Life Divine*, a great work of over sixteen hundred pages, is when superficially considered an abstruse treatise, bristling with technical terms and recondite differentiations. The discussions give abundant proof of a virile mental forge at work ; no mere logician developed a thesis or elaborated an argument better than Sri Aurobindo does in *The Life Divine*. For the student of English literature, however, *The Life Divine* is not a metaphysical treatise but a work of literature ; for truly is this vast Himalayan treatise a prose symphony, whose strains are as rich and individual as those of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.

Similarly, Sri Aurobindo's *Essays on the Gita*, two volumes of about one thousand pages in all, is both a philosophical commentary and a beautiful work of prose. In intention the book is exegetical ; Sri Aurobindo paraphrases the *Gita* verse by verse ; he sifts, arranges, illustrates and expands Lord Krishna's uttered and unuttered thoughts. Seemingly repetitive, the *Essays* are seen in the end to be somehow endowed with a marvellous compactness and unity of its own. What has happened is this : while doubtless deriving his primary inspiration from the Song Celestial, Sri Aurobindo has created out of it his own individual music that enchants and exhila-

rates the reader and gradually effects in him a heightened awareness and a keener sensibility.

Sri Aurobindo's other major prose works—*The Future Poetry, The Psychology of Social Development, The Ideal of Human Unity, The Synthesis of Yoga, A Defence of Indian Culture,* and *The Secret of the Veda*—are unfortunately not easily accessible ; since their publication in the *Arya* between 1914 and 1921, they have not been republished in book form. But they too display the same powers of closeness of reasoning, spiritual illumination and imaginative richness and luminosity of style, that we have come to associate with Sri Aurobindo's most characteristic prose writings.

The minor prose works—the thousands of letters that he has written to his disciples, the epigrams and the aphorisms, the reprints of contributions to the *Karmayogin* and the *Arya,* —reveal also the same perspicacity in thought and mastery of phrase ; but *The Mother,* the great little book, reveals Sri Aurobindo's verbal suppleness at its best. In particular, the sixth section that evokes with intuitive certainty and imaginative precision the manifold "powers" and "personalities" of the Mother is surely among the very finest of his achievements as a literary artist. As one reads his description of Maheshwari or Mahakali, Mahalakshmi or Mahasaraswati, one wonders whether it is all a recordation of demonstrable fact or only the subtle elaboration of a poet's fancy ; in any case, one knows that these are passages that a Sir Thomas Browne or a Landor or a Walter Pater might have felt proud to have written ; and *The Mother* is full of such beautiful and memorable things.

CHAPTER X

SAROJINI AND HARINDRANATH

I

It is natural that Sarojini Devi and Harindranath Chattopadhyaya should be taken together ; they are sister and brother, poets both, and both children of Dr. Agorenath Chattopadhyaya of Hyderabad, whose spirit the daughter was later to salute thus:

> O mystic jester, golden-hearted Child !
> Selfless, serene, untroubled, unbeguiled
> By trivial snares of grief and greed or rage !

The children were taught English at an early age and learned when quite young to speak and write it with astonishing ease. Sarojini meantime passed the Matriculation Examination of the Madras University at the incredible age of twelve and, a few years later, proceeded to England with a special state scholarship. She had thus reason to feel grateful to the Nizam of Hyderabad to whom, several years later, she presented a few felicitous verses beginning with :

> Deign, Prince, my tribute to receive,
> This lyric offering to your name,
> Who round your jewelled sceptre bind
> The lilies of a poet's fame.

In England she went through a course of education at London and at Cambridge and, what was more valuable still, made important contacts with some of the leading literary men of the time, including Arthur Symons and Edmund Gosse. She had taken to England a packet of English verses and she had since added to their store with assiduity ; but not merely their expression, but their very inspiration, was so painstakingly English and hence foreign to her genius that Gosse wisely

advised her "to write no more about robins and skylarks . . . . . but to describe the flowers, the fruits, the trees, to set her poems firmly among the mountains, the gardens, the temples, to introduce to us the vivid populations of her own voluptuous and unfamiliar province ; in other words, to be a genuine Indian poet of the Deccan, not a clever machine-made imitator of the English classics." The young poetess quickly consigned to the fire her immature imitative verses and started once again ; she turned inwards, she turned homeward, and soon eligible themes crowded round her thick like the pro verbial autumnal leaves in Vallambrosa ; and she gave them full-throated utterance in the many songs and lyrics she composed.

Returning to India, Sarojini Chattopadhyaya, in spite of caste prejudices, became the wife of Dr. Naidu ; she now surrendered herself, not only to the fervour of lyric expression, but also to the profounder adventures of love and motherhood. She was in course of time the mother of two boys and two girls, to whom she addressed a few delightful and tender verses.

Her career as a poet began with the publication in 1905, at her twenty-sixth year, of *The Golden Threshold* ; it was followed by two more volumes, *The Bird of Time* (1912) and *The Broken Wing* (1917). In the meantime, Sarojini Devi had drifted, almost imperceptibly, from the flowery fields of poesy to the roll and thunder of politics ; the poetess would now lay down her lyre, and be alive (to quote from her Foreword to her last volume) "to her splendid destiny as the guardian and interpreter of the Triune Vision of national life—the Vision of Love, the Vision of Faith, and the Vision of Patriotism." She had, as early as 1906, found her voice as a public speaker ; and she had on that occasion received from Gopal Krishna Gokhale a pencilled note saying : "Your speech was more than an intellectual treat of the highest order.

It was a perfect piece of art. We all felt for the moment to be lifted to a higher plane."

Nor inappropriately did Mahatma Gandhi once call Sarojini Devi the Mira Bai of our times. Like Mira, Sarojini Devi too broke through the hardened walls of meaningless convention and bravely stood her ground, while around her raged the storms of misrepresentation and caste prejudice; like Mira again, who dedicated her life to the service of the Lord of Brindavan, Sarojini Devi also has consecrated her life, with a stern singleness of purpose, to the service of her Motherland.

The child—hardly more than a child!—of whom Mr. Arthur Symons wrote that she "had already lived through all a woman's life" was now a young woman indeed, but a woman who (to quote Madame Sophia Wadia) "incarnated the national pain within herself" and screamed out the agonies of the Mother in the throes of her rebirth. Not of birds or dells or dingles, not of homely joys and fertile tears, but of the Nation and its "radiant promise of renascent morn" would she now hymn her anthems of love. Thus daily would she affirm her adorations, her hopes, her vows:

> Are we not thine, O Belov'd, to inherit
> The manifold pride and power of thy spirit?
> Ne'er shall we fail thee, forsake thee or falter,
> Whose hearts are thy home and thy shield and thine altar.
> Lo! we would thrill the high stars with thy story,
> And set thee again in the forefront of glory.

If poetry alone could achieve the freedom of a country, India should long ago have been borne to the haven of redemption on the galloping anapaests of these stout-hearted lines. Sarojini Devi has since had her own share of double, double, toil and trouble, but still would she challenge Fate with—

> O Fate, in vain you hanker to control
> My frail, serene, indomitable soul.

II

When Sarojini Devi's first book, *The Golden Threshold*, was published in England, the critics received it enthusiastically. The book seemed to prove many things; that women *could* write poetry; that the soul of the East could be made to inhabit forms familiar to the West; that new poetry, for all its traditional expression, could nevertheless radiate a freshness and an individuality of its own; that one could drink deep in the wells of an alien culture and yet remain "to the fullest extent autochthonous."

There is no doubt about it; the stuff of Sarojini Devi's poems is of the soil of India. When she sings of the Coramandel Fishers gathering their nets from the shore and setting their *catamarans* free; when she sings a *Harvest Hymn* in praise of Surya, Varuna, Prithvi and Brahma; when she sings of Indian Weavers and Bangle-sellers and Palanquin-bearers; when she sings of "rush-fringed rivers and river-fed streams", and of:

> Fireflies weaving aerial dances
> In fragile rhythms of flickering gold;

when she artfully reproduces the lilt and the rhythm and the complicated movements of the Indian Dancers; when she immortalizes in song the "daughter of a wandering race", the Indian Gipsy; when she renders in moving verse the very heart-aches of the Hindu widow on Vasant Panchami day; or when she evokes typical Indian scenes like an ox-cart stumbling upon the rocks or a shepherd collecting his flock under the Pipal-trees or a young Banjira lifting up her voice.

> In an ancient ballad of love and battle
> Set to the beat of a mystic tune,
> And the faint stars gleam in the eastern sky
> To herald a rising moon—

why, we are certain that Sarojini Devi *is* autochthonous, that she *does* spring from "the soil of India."

But, after all, it is needless so late in the day to labour the point : Sarojini Devi is a superlatively gifted Indian poetess who has chosen, as the Pole Conrad chose, English as her medium of expression ; that really is all that need be said. As an English poetess, her easy mastery over English verse forms is obvious ; but this fatal ease has once or twice betrayed her into a rhetorical sing-song unladen with thought.

And yet without her metrical mastery she could hardly have achieved the finished perfection of either *To a Buddha seated on a Lotus* or *The Flute-Player of Brindaban.* In a stanza like the following the mechanics of verse but offer scope for true poetic revelation :

> To Indra's golden-flowering groves
> Where streams immortal flow,
> Or to sad Yama's silent Courts
> Engulfed in lampless woe,
> Where'er thy subtle flute I hear
> Beloved I must go !

Even more gem-like in its effulgent beauty of expression is *To a Buddha seated on a Lotus* in which poetry transcends mere philosophical speculation and sweeps on to the triumphant asseveration :

> And all our mortal moments are
> A session of the Infinite.

Sarojini Devi, like her own Bird of Time, covered a wide range in the pieces she composed during a period of about twenty years of creative activity ; hers were:

> Songs of the glory and gladness of life,
> Of poignant sorrow and passionate strife,
> And the lilting joy of the spring ;
> Of hope that sows for the years unborn,

And faith that dreams of a tarrying morn,
The fragrant peace of the twilight's breath,
And the mystic silence that men call death.

She particularly excelled in describing familiar things ; a June sunset, the full moon, nightfall in the city, temple bells,—Sarojini Devi threw on them all the colouring of her imagination, at once so sensitive and so feminine ; and exquisite poems or rich, jewelled phrases resulted. She also excelled in contacting the sheer immensities and imponderables of the universe and reducing them to significant and all-subduing phrases like :

Life is a lovely stalactite of dreams

For life is like a burning veil
That keeps our yearning souls apart

Thine ageless beauty born of Brahma's breath

A caste-mark on the azure brows of heaven,
The golden moon burns, sacred, solemn, bright.

Sarojini Devi's failures in song are the result of her occasionally coercing her muse to play hand-maiden to a topical or popular theme. When, however, her inspiration is authentic, as it is in most of her poems, be the theme 'common' or unusual, her poetry has invariably a translucent bird-like quality, and is simple, sensuous and impassioned. It may be that to speculate on what Sarojini Devi might have achieved as a poet if she had not turned a politician is merely an idle pastime : but the human mind is rebellious and would toy with regrets, though they are altogether futile. But whatever may be her unfulfilled possibilities as a poet, her actual achievement is formidable enough, and we can address this inspired singer of songs, this National President of the All-India Centre of the P. E. N., in her own so apposite words :

Your name within a nation's prayer,
Your music on a nation's tongue.

III

Harindranath Chattopadhyaya is Sarojini Devi's younger brother : and like hers, his own verse is distinguished by a never-failing fluency in expression and an almost equal metrical proficiency. It is nearly twenty-five years since Harindranath dazzled the Indian literary world with his first book of poems, *The Feast of Youth*, the book that elicited from the Sage of Pondicherry the generous encomium : "A rich and finely lavish command of language, a firm possession of his metrical instrument, an almost blinding gleam and glitter of the wealth of imagination and fancy, a stream of unfailingly poetic thought and image and a high though as yet uncertain pitch of expression, are the powers with which the young poet starts.....Here perhaps are the beginnings of a supreme utterance of the Indian soul in the rhythms of the English tongue."

True to its title, the book offers indeed a veritable "feast of youth"—youth's fervour and excitement, youth's self-laceration and self-confidence, youth's thrilling assertions and idealisms. There are poems compact of beauty and thought and one lights upon stray lines that linger for ever in one's memory. *Message* elaborates an image into the fullness of a revelation:

> In my slumber and my waking
> I can hear his sobbing flute
> Through the springtime and the autumn
> Shaping every flower and fruit ;
> And his gleaming laughter colours
> Orange hills and purple streams.
> He is throbbing in the crystal,
> Magic centre of my dreams.....
> He is moving every moment
> To the world He loves so much.

In stray lines like "like changing fires on sunset seas" or "a

glimmering peacock in my flowering flesh" or "'every note is crushed to silent sorrow in the song-bird's throat" or "the Spring hath come and gone with all her coloured hours"—in these lines one can surely watch the eager and enraptured poet, his eyes in a fine frenzy rolling, his hands turning out of the poetic forge phrases of a delicate and haunting beauty.

Since then several more volumes have appeared; but the huge promissory note that his first volume was is yet to be redeemed. *Five Plays, Coloured Garden, The Magic Tree, Strange Journey, Fifteen Drypoints* (with Mukul Dey) and *The Dark Well, The Perfume of Earth, Grey Clouds and White Showers, Ancient Wings,* all have left his admirers progressively more and more disappointed. It is not that these do not exhibit an original and vivacious poetic talent; that is admitted at once; but why has Harindranath cruelly belied the hopes of his admirers, why has he failed to outgrow mere talent and refused to light on the summit of positive achievement?

In the considerable, and still growing, body of his verse we come across ever so many poetical lines, but few good poems; promising opening stanzas lose themselves in the shallows of inanity and bathos; lines of a metallic and magical suggestiveness jostle with mere bad prose. One has the feeling that somehow the sweet bells are jangled out of tune and cannot now give out long, wholesome peals. And yet which Indo-Anglian poet, even at his best, has given us things better than the opening stanza of *Sleeping Beauty*:

> Do not defy the hidden power,
> Nor trifle with the voiceless deep;
> Within the cloud and stone and flower
> The Ancient Beauty is asleep;

or a more finely inspired or more carefully executed poem than this:

O pain, I love the lonely wine-red gleams
Within your deep and ever-wakeful eyes :
Old Arab in the dark tent of my dream
Under the burning skies.
Excess of ecstasy, immortal pain,
Comrade of love, companion of desire,
Lone Bedouin riding through life's desert plain
A camel of red fire.
Most splendid traveller of eternity
In whose first footfall the wide world began,
A holy Mecca in the heart of me
Awaits your caravan.

In such poems Harindranath would seem to think, like Dostoevsky, that pain is an indispensable probation which facilitates man's passage across the river of Ignorance to the distant shores of the Bliss of God. Man has gathered about himself such a vast heap of impurity that only the sacrificial bonfire of it all will annihilate it and help the human soul to reach the Godhead.

IV

Even in some of his best poems, Harindranath often betrays his excessive fondness for mere decorative vocabulary, and resorts to padding instead of conveying passion ; the effect of this prolixity is not seldom reinforced by the use of hackneyed rhymes like "fire, desire" or "god, clod" and also, to a certain extent, by the note of exotic meretriciousness that one hears off and on in the body of Harindranath's poetry. But when he achieves restraint and true *sraddha,* he is undoubtedly a fine poet, one who can give us stanzas like the following :

What do I seek beyond the golden edges of the earth?
Here is the Image clothed in light and mystery and fire.

In conscious hours our restless human hands can bring
to birth
All that the Spirit may desire.
The glories of beyond are here, the destiny of skies
Is being fulfilled on earth ; the fate of every silver star
Is hidden in a seed. A sudden vision in my eyes
Plucks all the radiance from afar.

Even in such otherwise excellent stanzas the "fire, desire", "skies, eyes" rhymes (which figure also in the poem quoted above) occur and make the reader take up (perhaps unreasonably) a wholly defensive attitude towards Harindranath's poetry.

And yet Harindranath is a fascinating poetic personality, though not a supreme poet ; casually and carelessly, as it were, he turns out poem after poem and some of them do turn out to be exceedingly good ones ; they seem to acquire, as if by miracle, clarity and force and ripeness and richness, and one loves to dwell on such a description of Spring as :

The Spring-hues deepen into human bliss,
The heart of God and man in scent are blended,
The sky meets earth and heaven in one transparent
kiss ;

or the poem entitled *Strange*, as modern in its rhythmic movement as to-day and as profound in its implicit wisdom as Eternity :

It is the strangest thing to be
Eternity.
And gaze
On small unnumbered days
Go by
To be the silence at the end,
And then descend
Alone—
Into a world of moan,
And cry.

It is the strangest thing to live
A fugitive
On this
Wild earth, and love and kiss
And plan ....
I, the immortal voiceless one,
To have begun
These coloured blossoms on the grave
Called man.

Why should an authentic poet who can utter strains like these yet fail to rise to his full stature? Harindranath, almost drunk with the power of the instrument that so early he had mastered, seems to have been content during the past twenty-five years merely to wield the rhythmic instrument anyhow, constantly, tirelessly, almost indiscriminately and carelessly. In his Foreword to *Fifteen Drypoints* he casually remarks: "I worked at the verses for a few hours spread over two days, and the result is what our readers now see." If the writing of poetry were a matter of mere speed and facility, such a species of complacency might be permissible. But such considerations do not weigh in the criticism of poetry. Has the poet something to say? Is it worth while rendering it in terms of poetry? Does the poet succeed in rendering his thoughts, his intuitions, his unique experiences in words that are coloured by the imagination, in rhythms that are appropriate and satisfying? These criteria alone are valid.

Harindranath Chattopadhyaya has sounded truly much of the gamut of human experience; moments of vision come to him, and cling to him; oh yes, he has something to say, it is worth saying, and he has said it now and again in the purest accents and richest music; but these auspicious, creative moments play truant now, and he is obliged to eke out his hours with inferior verses rarely, but rarely, illumined by flashes from the hidden glory within.

In his recent volume, *The Dark Well*, as also in the verses contained in *Fifteen Drypoints*, the reader comes across stray lines fully worthy of the true Harindranath :

> All heaven is cloud-cancelled, rain-withdrawn,
> Cruel Rain-Giver !
>
> But there, alone, unnoticed and apart,
> A beggar woman with her begging bowl !
>
> Bend, O sky-drunk spirit, bend
> At the shrine of light and shade..
>
> Wrapped in vaporous moods of sleep
> Lies the silence, brooding low.....
>
> Millions of singers have come and gone
> And yet I dare to sing ;
> It is not the singer that matters at all,
> The song is the thing.

Why not?--Harindranath may yet confound his critics and grow into " a supreme singer of the vision of God in Nature and Life."

CHAPTER XI

GOAN POETRY

I

Goa is an enchanting nook in the sub-continent that is India—or so it seems to the casual visitor ; poetry seems to lurk in the air, the very waves seem to keep to the rhythms of poetic strains. And yet the Goan poet is an unhappy creature, caught in the coils of his own unique destiny. He talks Konkani at home, Marathi abroad ; he talks Portuguese, he talks English. He learns Latin at school and perhaps French as well. In result he is multi-lingual. He has a poet's perceptions and cravings and self-lacerations ; but destiny has placed him (as it has placed, generally speaking, the modern Indian

poet) between a world that is dead and a world that is as yet powerless to be born; and he is further handicapped by the very versatility of his tongue.

It is all the more astonishing, therefore, that Goa in recent times should have produced so many distinguished poets who have made distinctive contributions to Portuguese and English literatures. Goa is, after all, a diminutive area, scarcely bigger than a Taluka in British India; but the achievements of Goan poets like Paulino Dias, Floriano Barreto and Nascimento Mendonca (who all wrote in Portuguese) and of Joseph Furtado, Armando Menezes and Manuel C. Rodrigues (who all write in English) deserve mention in a detailed history of contemporary Indian literature.

We dare not prophesy whether Indo-Anglian or Indo-Portuguese poetry has any real future: much will depend upon the political future of the country. For our purpose it is enough to note that, notwithstanding the many difficulties incident to the profession of poetry in India, several Indo-Anglians have nobly managed to articulate their fugitive fancies and intuitions and to turn them into memorable song. In the scroll of authentic Indo-Anglian poets many names will occur, but the two most certain names are Joseph Furtado and Armando Menezes. Furtado's publications include *A Goan Fiddler*, *O Desterrado* and *Songs in Exile* and Professor Menezes's important publications up-to-date are *The Emigrant*, *The Fund: A Mock-Epic*, *Chords and Dischords* and *Chaos and Dancing Star*.

II

Many Goans are obliged, by pressure of circumstances, to leave their secluded nook behind them and seek a living elsewhere: as one of them, Mr. Lucio Rodrigues, recently

remarked, "the greater and more important part of the history of Goans during the past century has been a history of emigration."

It is therefore natural for the cultured and sensitive Goan to lisp, consciously or unawares, the still sad music of homesickness, to invest his native village with the aura of an Innisfree. These poems of exile, whether written by Furtado or by Menezes or by Manuel C. Rodrigues, ring utterly sincere and must find an echo in our hearts, who are all exiles in greater or lesser measure. There is none with soul so dead but is profoundly stirred by memories of his home. It is a character of Dostoevsky's who remarks that a man who leaves his village leaves also his soul behind him. No wonder the exile pathetically seeks his lost soul, screaming out songs the while. Thus Furtado :

A fiddler am I of seventy-three,
I go fiddling up and down
Both countryside and town

No children nor kith nor kin have I,
Not even a home of my own—
I roam in the world alone.

Like a Herrick or a Davies, Furtado would pipe the same song over and over again, the same and yet so different :

And I cannot rise, I cannot pray,
For the feast of flowers is drawing near
And my heart is far away.

Furtado, now lovingly, now ragingly, remembers every detail of his home, of the hills and valleys, of the crosses and the shrines, of the cashew trees and bulbuls grey, of the mango trees and the Brahmin girls ; no, no, he should never have left his home :

Like a thief I slunk away.
"Are you leaving us?"

Asked the palm-trees, bending low.
"He's deceiving us!"
Cried the birds, "We too will go,"—
And they followed me.
I heeded not but hung my head:
My heart was dead in me;
The world I loved was dead,
The rest was naught to me
And like a thief I fled.....

Of such poetry one may reasonably think that it comes (in the Keatsian phrase) as naturally as leaves to a tree; and Furtado's almost always produces this impression of effortless art. *The Maiden's Prayer* is typical of Furtado's seeming artlessness that but carefully screens his peculiar art:

Now o'er one year hath past, O Love,
Since thou didst pledge to be my spouse,
And kiss and swear by saints above—
We kissed and swore to keep the vows.
Now night and day to saints I pray
To bless our vows for e'er and aye.

Each night in dreams I see thy face,
If deep in slumber I be laid;
I run, all eager to embrace,
But wake, to find myself betrayed.
Ah, tenfold then augments my pain—
Oh let me see thee once again!

Furtado's range may be limited, but within his chosen limits his plainsong simplicities are clearly and purely articulated; he sings because he cannot help singing; and we read his songs because we cannot help reading them either.

III

Armando Menezes is a more sophisticated poet than Furtado; but he too is a poet of exile and his *Commendia Goana* is among the best things he has so far done. The first of the

sonnets describes the scene of departure ; the second wistfully recapitulates lost pleasures, weaves fancies about them, yearns for them :

> How often, wearied with ungotten gold,
> Have I, O Mother, dreamed, and dreaming, sighed
> For the pure gold of thy sunsets and the tide
> Of golden ricefields when the wind is bold !

Is it an exiled Goan dreaming of his native strand ? It is; but it is something more as well : it is the quintessence of the poetry of exile, and (to quote Furtado once more) it implicates

> The pang of all the partings gone,
> And partings yet to be.

In the third sonnet, the "emigrant" is back again ; he is a sadder, wiser man ; he is "ambition's fool, toil-tossed. life-beaten wreck." The ecstasy of the re-union galvanizes him for a minute and he is transfigured as he

> Sees, as if waking from an anguished dream,
> The thin, white ribbon of the palm-girt shore ;
> Gray fortresses, white churches, hills of jade ;
> Mandovy rushing with his yellow stream ;
> And then, like Venus from the billows hoar,
> Lo ! Pangim rises—queen of masquerade !

Pangim is Goa's capital, with a due harmony of parts, pretty, gay and human. Old Goa, a little away from Pangim, is majestic in its very ruins and the poet is unescapably drawn towards it. *Old Goa* is his song-offering to "those ruins gray." The poet's fancy takes wings, Time revolves backwards, and Old Goa re-lives for a glorious instant ; soon the enchantment fades away, and the poet wakes to realize that he had but "walked among the dead."

Prof. Menezes's two earlier pamphlets of verse, *The Fund* and *The Emigrant*, were primarily the products of a severe

intellectualism that felt out of tune with the outside world. Young and impatient, the poet cannot suffer fools gladly. Complacency and cupidity, vulgarity and sloth sting him to the quick and he spouts a stream of satire that sparkles and wounds at once. *The Emigrant* is charged with Prufrock-like poses of spiritual negation : in it the poet sees the world through a convex mirror. Perhaps Prof. Menezes wrote it while teaching Browning's *Men and Women* ; its style is anyhow reminiscent of Browning :

> Now you agree ? Ay, think it is a pity
> There is no honesty in all this city ?
> But how to shun the lawyer, doctor, bori,
> Or beggar with his tragi-comic story ?
> Rank liars all ! More impudent impostors
> Than fortune-tellers or the evening posters !
> Talk of newspapers cramming you with news
> Which are sometimes more rotten than their views ;
> And you who write, you waste your time and pads
> While Mister Editor collects his "ads" ....

It is all excellent fun and it is pointed satire ; it is the exercise of youth's prerogative when it feels it can annihilate worlds with an epigram. It is brilliant and enjoyable—but it is also spiritually unsatisfying.

The Fund, a delicious mock-epic in twelve cantos, though written with a laudable motive, seems to have wounded rather than pacified. As Mr. Pewter remarks in A. P. Herbert's book, the world cannot stand cleverness, especially cleverness that scintillates. There are passages in *The Fund* that are fascinatingly clever and presumably they went home. The controversy that inspired its composition is now happily forgotten but we can still read the poem and just enjoy its vivid portrait-gallery and the many mock-epic similes and descriptions that embellish the narrative. The following mock-epic simile, for instance, is a sustained piece of buffoonery:

And thus the talk went round, and whispers grew
To clamours that assailed the careless blue :
As when two urchins on a city street
From harmless words advance to hands and feet,
And plaudits from the circumstantial throng
Inflame their rage and hearten them along,
Till saloon car, Victoria and the tram
Are all confounded in one terrific jam.

The Fund, like Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*, wished to laugh " party lust " out of court. It is probably the only mock-epic in Indo-Anglian literature. The Muse of Poetry need not always be immaculately solemn and serious ; she might, now and then, participate in the quips and cranks of life, drowning life's little ironies in a sea of healthy laughter. Mock-epics in their own way are real and earnest, and have the laws of their particular genre : and Menezes's exhibit is as good as any that the Indo-Anglians are likely ever to give us.

IV

Admirable as are *The Emigrant* and *The Fund*, it is, however, in his *Chords and Discords* and *Chaos and Dancing Star* that Prof. Menezes has risen to his full stature as a poet. These two volumes bring together about one hundred pieces, displaying a pleasing variety in theme and treatment, in temper and technique. Prof. Menezes is a student of Latin poetry and no wonder he has a sensitive ear and has, too, an acute sense of form. He is not carried away by the grotesque allurements of free verse and he is not blinded by the fashionable contortions of ultra-modernism. His themes are as old as the hills and the sea, but age withers them not, and in Menezes's hands the themes acquire a fresh beauty and make a pleasurable assault on our emotions. The tears in things, the facts of death and decay, of inevitable change, of unescapable disinte-

gration, these moved Lucretius and Moschus and Gray and Shelley to memorable song; and the same themes constitute the enduring stuff of many of Menezes's sonnets and elegies. What theme can be more worn-out than the death of a child, and yet what can be more moving and "aching-intimate" than these four lines:

> Pure dewdrop! whom the chilly wind of death
> Shook from the gloomy branches of our life,
> Grudging the spring his new-awakened breath,
> Unconscious yet of sorrow and of strife ....

One reads the lines and one's pulses respond; no need here to wrestle with Audenesque obscurities or Lawrentian complicated states of mind.

Menezes is steeped in English poetry, and echoes from the masters raise ripples of reminiscent enjoyment in ever-widening sequence. *The Sweeper's Song* recalls Thomas Hood's *The Song of the Shirt*: but Menezes's is no bare imitation, it is a moving poem in itself:

> Sweep, sweep, sweep—
> And I cast in the gutter man's fever and flutter,
> And I sweep into my bin man's sanctity and sin—
> Sweep, sweep, sweep—
> And my dust is the dust that is gathered unto sleep.

There is no trick of utterance here, no artificial pose; it is but the pathos of the sweeper's vocation made poetically manifest. Again, the conceit in the sonnet entitled *Gifts* seems to have been suggested by Shelley's "One word is too often profaned"; however, the fact of the echo but enriches the emotional content of Menezes's poem:

> I dare not give the mintage of my mind
> Soiled with the market dust of every day
> And tarnished with the breath of mortal song;

But will you take my love of humankind,
The purity of prayers when I pray,
And silences beyond the dream of song?

Similarly, the magnificent pageantry of *The Mighty Lover* contains echoes from Rupert Brooke's famous poem. To say all this is not to deride the poetry of Menezes. Most poetry is necessarily derivative. There is, in fact, as Thomas Hardy pointed out, no *new poetry;* all that the new poet can hope to do is to come with a new note. The poets are for ever exploiting the same old themes; but if they pipe aright, their songs are for ever new.

Armando Menezes is rooted in tradition, and that is the measure of his strength. Especially in his recent poems, he has shown himself an unblemished craftsman in verse. None but an accomplished craftsman could have achieved the artistic triumphs of *Ode to Beauty, Ode to Laughter, To Silence, The Phoenix* and *Hampi.* The raw-stuff of exultation or awe or effervescent regret is moulded into things of beauty. We are willing to chime in chorus with him either cataloguing the good things of the world or welcoming "auroral laughter" or musing in the midst of the ruins of Vijayanagar or feeling enraptured by the saffron after-glow of a November sunset at Dharwar. The rhythms gradually enter the fabric of our memories, and we then repeat lines like—

A fire-red evening runs between the rims . .

A hush has fallen, a sweeping bird,
And caught our lives for evermore ....

Dark imps of pain, angels of grace above,
Brokers of understanding and of love ....

And so Menezes sings, achieving beautiful lines, imprisoning worlds of aching pain or universes of ecstatic joy. He is content with themes even as "stale" as

the heart's brave gold ;
Love, leaping from the rock, eternal birth ;
Heaven's grace ; and furrowed patience of the fields.

Occasionally we hear a "modern" note. *The Train* is reminiscent of Stephen Spender's *The Express* ; *To a Fallen One* is grounded on a towering sympathy that is (one hopes) significantly modern. But even in these poems the touch is never harsh, and one hardly notices that they connote any deviation from tradition.

In his latest and best pieces, Armando Menezes has tried to achieve the twin harmonies necessary to the highest poetry, *viz.* the union of word with the idea and the harmony of the Poet's inner and outer experiences : Art is form being resolved out of matter, harmony being resolved out of chaos. Prof. Menezes, like his own poet, may be "sitting upon the ruined heap of his self-blasted years" ; he may be sensitive to "broken melodies" and to "Life's rude billows" and "barren hopes and coward fears." These, however, do not embitter him and turn his life-purposes awry. He is sustained by Love and by Faith ; he holds colloquy with Death unabashed ; he quietly affirms :

Because I bowed me level with the sod,
And kneeled before the loveliness of you,
My very senses cry out, There is God !

He gazes up to the sky, "henceforth mine own and thy dominion" ; and, undaunted by defeats, he feels that he is the heir of immortality. Prof. Menezes's "message" is thus one of hope, and his happiest mood one of prayerful ecstasy.

V

A much younger poet, Manual C. Rodrigues, has published two books of verse : *Songs in Exile* and *Homeward*. Stray lines, at times a whole stanza, catch the reader's attention :

And ye musicians of ethereal birth
Who thrill the heartstrings of the Earth!
Strike all your golden chords and shake
The world to laughter, that my love may wake
To sing the word I love .....

Home to the immortal joys of friends
To the land of beauty and love,
Where the heart is as wide as the ocean-tide
And deep as the blue above .....

Of course, Rodrigues is as yet only a poet of promise and he stumbles and falters in his verse far too often. But he feels like a poet, and he should go far. George V. Coelho, "Tehmi", F. M. Fernandes, A. Aguiar, and several others are also contributing occasional verses to various periodicals. It will, however, be the task of a future chronicler to comment on their work.

CHAPTER XII

MYSTIC AND DEVOTIONAL POETRY

I

Mr. K. D. Sethna, whose first book of verse, *Artist Love*, was published under the pseudonym "Madallo" about fifteen years ago, has lately published another collection of lyrics entitled *The Secret Splendour* (1941), described on the jacket as containing "poems seeking a new intensity of vision and emotion, a mystic inwardness that catches alive the deepest rhythms of the spirit".

The difficulty with such mystic poetry is that it tends to be obscure. The Spirit cannot be envisaged or experienced or described in strictly material terms; words have to be used as symbols; and often these symbols, while they may have their valid connotations for the poet himself, merely baffle the com-

mon reader. Like Blake's Urizen, Urthona, Luvah and Tharmas, the symbols of mystic poetry generally scare away the average devotees of poetry. Trying to give expression to the unwordable, to give shape to the ineffable and the wholly unreal, the Laureate of the Spirit is compelled to resort to unusual images and similitudes. If, however, the symbolism is perfectly realized in terms of poetry—as, for instance, in Thompson's *The Hound of Heaven* and Sri Aurobindo's *Rose of God*—we can apprehend the significance at once, even if we cannot explain word by word the whole poem.

Mr. Sethna too can achieve this transfiguration of mystical craving or mystical experience into the true sublime of poetry. Here is a little poem, *Grace*, as earnest and clear and beautiful as any in his book :

Take all my shining hours from me,
But hang upon my quiet soul's
Pale brow your dream-kiss like a gem.
Let life fall stricken to its knee,
If unto lone-faced poverty
You give your blessing's diadem.
Make of these proud eyes beggar-bowls,
But only drop your smile in them.

Appeal is even more direct in its imagery and insinuates its meaning with fervour and tenderness :

My feet are sore, Beloved,
With agelong quest for Thee ;
Wilt Thou not choose for dwelling
This lonesome heart of me ?
Is it too poor a mansion ?
But surely it is poor
Because Thou never bringest
Thy beauty through its door !

The two remaining stanzas of the poem are also expressed with similar intensity and clarity.

But there are other poems where the erotic imagery seems to be forced or out of place and where the vision is imperfectly fused with poetic imagery. We are not, however, to judge a poet by his failures, but rather by his triumphs; and Sethna's triumphs are there for all to read, to admire, and to ponder over. *This Errant Life*, among the very best things that Sethna has done, has received a high measure of praise at the hands of Sri Aurobindo; and no doubt there is an indefinable blend of the human and the divine, of Earth and Heaven, in its haunting rhythms:

> This errant life is dear although it dies ....
> If Thou desirest my weak self to outgrow
> Its mortal longings, lean down from above,
> Temper the unborn light no thought can trace,
> Suffuse my mood with a familiar glow.
> For 'tis with mouth of clay I supplicate:
> Speak to me heart to heart words intimate,
> And all thy formless glory turn to love
> And mould Thy love into a human face.

Sri Aurobindo, to whom Sethna is merely "Amal" or "Amalkiran", has justly praised "the glowing impassioned severity of phrase" of the last line quoted above; and, indeed, the entire poem is suffused with a glow that illumines our very souls. Mr. Sethna may not appeal to a wide public but he will have discriminating admirers enough. His brother, H. D. Sethna, and his sister, Minnie Sethna, are also poets of considerable promise.

II

Like Mr. Sethna, there are several others—Dilip Kumar Roy, Nolini Gupta, Amrita, Anilbaran Roy, Nirodbaran and Punjalal—who also owe their main inspiration to Sri Aurobindo. Anilbaran is one of the three or four reliable interpreters of

Sri Aurobindo's philosophy and Yoga; he is primarily not a poet at all, but his *Songs from the Soul* (1939) contains some very moving prose poems and nearly a score of metrical poems besides. Many of the prose poems are addressed to the Divine Mother and although they are in prose deserve to be described as "songs from the soul".

A fair specimen of Anilbaran's rhythmic prose as also his devotional intensity may be given :

"I am emptying my heart and soul, Mother, so that Thou mayest fill me with Thy own self. Come to me in Thy fullness, come as light, come as power, come as joy.

Descend into me as light, dispel all darkness from me, fill me with the knowledge of truth; give me the insight by which I can always discriminate between truth and falsehood ....". "Mahakali", "Conquest of Desires", "Rest and Silence" and "Divine Presence" are some of the other well-sustained prose poems in the collection.

Anilbaran's metrical pieces—albeit the same thought and inspiration are behind them—are yet less satisfactory as poems. *Eternal Smile* imitates Sri Aurobindo's *Trance;* and while it does not attain the rounded perfection of the original, its second stanza at least is worth quoting :

My mind is ensnared by gilded show,
Smoke still the offering of fire,
Surprised is the heart by joy and woe,
Racked the flesh by tyrannous desire.

Of all these metrical pieces, *Mahakali* is, perhaps, the most poetically conceived and the most vividly expressed :

Thine is the fiery will that mocks
Faint-hearted compromise;
Ruthless thou sharest all that blocks
Our path to Paradise.

The thunders whirl at Thy command,
O flaming, beautiful Mother!
Thou smitest with one mighty hand,
And savest with the other.
Pervasive of Thy tameless ire
Is all all-puissant love;
It leads us through the test of fire
To immortal gates above.

Anilbaran's prose works include *Mother India, The Message of the Gita, India's Mission in the World* and *Sri Aurobindo and the New Age.* He is a clear-headed and widely read man and he wields an effective English prose style.

III

Nolini Kanta Gupta, the secretary of the Sri Aurobindo Asram and the "right-hand man of Sri Aurobindo", is in the main an essayist and an authoritative expounder of his Guru's teachings. Some of his collections of essays, *The Coming Race, The Yoga of Sri Aurobindo* and *The Malady of the Century* (1943), reveal at once his scholarship and his wisdom as also his urbanity and his mastery of the English language. His subjects range from "Modernism" and "Divine Humanism" to "Hamlet" and "Tagore", from "The Nietzschean Antichrist" and "The Creative Soul" to "Rationalism" and "Communism", from "European Culture" and "Art and Katharsis" to "Indian Art" and Thoughts on the "Unthinkable". Mr. Nolini Kanta Gupta is revealed by these essays as a man of austere and uncompromising wisdom. He is apparently versed in many languages and his interests, too, are commendably varied. He commands a dry, clear, hard and trenchant prose style and his earnestness and scholarship can be noticed on almost every page of his books.

Besides his prose writings, he has also published about fifty poems under the title *To the Heights*. His *Psalms* are powerfully articulated and have obviously risen from the depths of his heart; although they are made up of irregular lines, the "psalms" strike the proper note of prayer and ecstasy. The following four lines may be cited as a typical specimen:

> All my heart melts into a fountain of gratitude
> And tears rush to the eyes—
> Such sweet tears, angel-stars that come from afar
> With healing Peace and Bliss.

Here is another, no less typical, specimen from *Sursum Corda*:

> There is a breath that moves the mountains,
> There is a touch that makes the dead arise,
> There is a voice that is the doom of yesterday,
> And the radiant herald of Tomorrow.

It is, however, the thought-content rather than the expression, the strength rather than the melody, of these poems that strikes one as distinguished and meritorious. *The Gesture of Grace, The March into the Night, White and Red*, all embody an abiding richness of thought. *White and Red*, especially, is informed by a furious drive of compelling thought which crystallizes into many a memorable phrase; in it the dynamics of spirituality find indeed a notable expression in the recognizable accents of poetry.

Nolini's forte is nevertheless neither the prose essay nor the metrical poem but rather the thoughtful epigram. In his slender book, *Towards the Light*, he has given us a collection of these jewelled epigrams; many of these are so good that they compare not unfavourably with Sri Aurobindo's *Thoughts and Glimpses*. One or two of Nolini Kanta Gupta's "thoughts and glimpses" may be given here:

"Let the taste of Immortality fill my mouth .... all mortalities will turn insipid".

> "Truth is Beauty's substance—it is Beauty self-gathered.
> Beauty is Delight perfectly articulate.
> Love is Beauty enjoying itself.
> Knowledge is the light that Beauty emanates.
> Power is the fascination that Beauty exerts".

"The secret of joy is self-giving. If any part of you is without joy, it means that it has not given itself, it wants to keep it for itself".

IV

Dilip Kumar Roy, son of the famous Dwijendralal Roy, is one of the colourful personalities in the Yogasram at Pondicherry. His Bengali devotional poetry is said to be of a "flame-like purity". Like many another young man, Dilip lost his "faith" as a result of his European education; he experienced for a time the nightmare of Unbelief; but Pondicherry effected a spiritual cure and he is able once again, and again and again, to affirm the Everlasting Yea.

Dilip is a musical artiste no less than a devotional poet; he sings songs and he writes lyrics because he cannot help singing or writing; he is veritably the Ariel of the Sri Aurobindo Asram. *A Song of Mira, The Dancer's Rhythm, Beyond Questioning, Kanya Kumari, Shadow-mood, The Little Singer* and *Krishna to Arjun* are some of the pieces that are immediately effective and charm and feast the ear as a mere matter of course. Not less successful are *Soul Surrendering* and the colloquy between an Ancestor and his Scion. In the latter poem, the scion is represented as revering his ancester; and yet he cannot help claiming the freedom to build on his own!

Another recent poem, *Art Aspiring*, is loftily conceived and sweeps magnificently on to its beautiful climax in the lines:

In thy ether I shall fly,
Dower with wings my clay-born art,
O deep starry secrecy
Twinkling in my heart.

The poems addressed to Sri Aurobindo and the specifically mystical poems—*The New Advent,* for instance—are particularly convincing as recordations of belief and moving as poetic utterances.

Dilip's most ambitious work so far is his long narrative poem on the issue between Prahlada and his demon-father, Hiranyakashipu. Written in competent blank verse, this poem is part narrative and part dialogue ; in the first section, Prahlada and the Demon are the protagonists ; presently, Vishnu assumes the shape of Narasimha and destroys the Demon. The rest of the poem, by far the greater part, is devoted to the elaboration of the philosophy of self-surrender to the Supreme.

It is no easy thing to maintain the reader's interest over a poem—on the face of it, a philosophical poem—of about seven hundred lines ; but Dilip has performed this feat. The two dialogues in the poem—the shorter one between Father and Son and the longer, more important one between the Divine and the Devotee—are contrived with an easy naturalness ; and, although now and then Prahlada strikes us as rather long-winded, the general impression is one of propriety and adequacy.

Dilip's blank verse is sufficiently flexible and gives us passages like :

Siren Maya
Accosts us in her loveliest garbs and guises
To test our sailor souls' sea-worthiness ....
Lord,
Could we, flawed creatures, yearn to stainlessness,
Dark waifs aspire for thy white haven of sleep,

With voice of clay sing to the immortal stars
Were thy divinity not ours by right ?

Dilip has fumbled his way to the secret and his best blank verse passages have the authentic chime. He is continually improving the power of his expression and great things might be expected from him in the future.

V

Another Pondicherry poet is the Gujarati, Punjalal, whose *Lotus Petals* came out early in 1943. Punjalal's is essentially a devotional muse, and the twenty-four pieces in *Lotus Petals* are all dedicated to the Mother of the Yogasram at Pondicherry. Punjalal is no fastidious metrist, but his deep piety and utter sincerity express themselves with a disarming simplicity and naturalness in these devotional lyrics. *Child's Claims* is a song of joyful self-surrender :

My life to Thee I wholly consecrate
For Thy celestial plan of work on earth ;
If Thou shouldst need, I will not hesitate
A million times again to come to birth.

This attitude, this *Sadhana* of utter self-consecration to the Divine Mother—or to Her human-divine prototype—is the *marjara,* the baby-cat, method of surrendering in complete trustfulness to the mother. It is underlined in poem after poem, and Punjalal invariably strikes the proper note. He has attempted different stanza forms and now and then he uses a French word with effect ; but the poems deserve high commendation, not for the memorability of their diction or the unerring movements of their rhythm, but rather for their deep and almost contagious devotion. How simple, how great is the faith that utters strains like :

The less I seek, the more I find
Thy captivating Grace :

It comes and clasps my wayward mind
And greets me face to face.

And it is a profound happiness—happiness in the consciousness that one's whole life has been offered as a sacrifice to the Mother—that seeks expression in these beautiful stanzas :

No sorrow and no care assail my mood
That has grown intimately merged in Thine ;
The True, the Beautiful, the Ever-good
Has blessed me with a comradeship divine.

My little stream has come to Thee at last
Traversing tyrant lengths of Time and Space,
And found in Thee its dreaming's ocean vast,
And now it gives its heart to Thy embrace.

Punjalal's verses are the by-products of his Yoga of *atma-samarpana ;* they are inspiring things to read; and they show that their author is a devotee among devotees.

Another *Sadhaka* of the Sri Aurobindo Asram, Nirodbaran, is a physician by training ; but he too writes devotional poetry frequently. *The Cry of Earth* and *The Presence* are two of the more satisfactory among his poetic attempts ; *The Master,* addressed to Sri Aurobindo, is equally good. Life is a pitiful business ;

Our dreams are born of Time's ephemeral breath,
Our hopes, pursued by shadow-wings of death ;
Pale like a waning moon, they leave behind
A trail across the azure of the mind.

Nirod therefore hymns the glory of the Master who has consented to wear a human face to be able to " lead us back to our home of felicity."

VI

Of other mystic, religious or devotional poets we have here no space to speak in detail. Anandacharya, Vivekananda,

J. Krishnamurti, and several others have attempted, often with considerable success, to turn their thoughts and inspirations into either verse or poetic prose. Krishnamurti's *The Immortal Friend* and Anandacharya's *Usarika* and *Saki* may all be read with profit. Anandacharya is a true poet; but his verse rhythms are intriguing, unconventional and most tantalizing.

CHAPTER XIII

POETS OF TRADITION

I

(Mr. A. F. Kabardar is considered to be one of the most distinguished of present-day Gujarati poets; but he has also given us in *The Silken Tassel* a collection of thirty of his original poems in English.)

Kabardar is a traditionalist. His themes are the traditional themes of life and love, of man and nature. Many of the poems in *The Silken Tassel* are the expressions of particular moods. He surrenders himself as readily to a mood of seeming Hedonism as to one of austerity :

> Fair is the weather, light is the boat,
> Life must have its merry sweet note . .
>
> Life is virtue, life is duty,
> Life is but one painful beauty.

Elsewhere Kabardar revels in a mood melancholy or yields to a feeling of disillusionment; and he pipes out his songs with the same ease and art.

In other poems, Kabardar vivifies particular scenes with admirable art. A passage like the following from *Sita Rama* remains in the reader's memory for a long time :

And the busy moments gather
All the fruits of toiling skies,
While the full-blown flowers are gleaming
In the noon-tide's golden dreaming
Of the hopes that ever grow ;
Hark ! the words there, loud and streaming
In the long street flow :
"Sita Rama ! Sita Rama !
Sita Rama, ho-!"

Again, *Radhika's Perplexity* evokes a memorable scene with an artless though convincing simplicity. Radhika carries her pots to the village well "when dawn has lifted her veil" ; her lover comes behind her "slowly and slyly" :

I turn my face, but he looks in my eyes,....
I walk away with a gentle push.
As the sun is high in the sky,
I hear my name through some magical flute,
And I turn behind to spy,
My curds fall down and he looks in my face,
And laughs and passes by.

Mr. Kabardar's place is, no doubt, in Gujarati literature; but he is also, in his own right, one of the distinctive figures in Indo-Anglian poetry.

II

Mr. T. Basker published, in 1932, a slim volume of twenty-four poems entitled, *Passing Clouds*. All, or almost all, the poems are a delight to read. Basker is neither profound in his thoughts nor unexpected or original in his rhythms ; but, then, neither is he flat or obscure or crude or faltering. His neat turns of phrase and easy rhythms make an immediate appeal :

She was a daughter of the South,
With haunting eyes and lovely mouth ;
She held me in a rosy mesh,
The poetry of her flesh ....

Occasionally, Basker grows a trifle solemn and philosophical :

> Ah ! love, these woes, these joys for which we yearn,
> Are they not petty, infinitely small,
> Within this mighty scheme that holds us all ?

This tone of serious introspection does not, however, quite become Basker's care-free muse ; he is at his best in a poem like *Dusk,* in which his mood of wistful melancholy coalesces with the familiar images to make a pretty and an almost exquisite poem :

> The jasmines blossom still, and dusk
> Is rose and gold.
> But you don't cull the half-blown buds
> As of old.
>
> The sunset lingers In the west,
> Red as blood ;
> But death has culled you from our midst :
> A half-blown bud.

Mr. Basker's poems are for all ; especially are they welcome to young people who can readily respond to his characteristically youthful moods and musings.

III

Mr. S. R. Dongerkery published his first volume of poems, *The Ivory Tower,* in October 1943. Before the publication of this book, Mr. Dongerkery was known to a considerable public in many capacities—as a Solicitor of the Bombay High Court ; as the author of two or three meritorious and useful legal treatises ; and above all, since 1930, as the efficient Registrar of the University of Bombay.

But very few among Mr. Dongerkery's own acquaintances could have expected that he would blossom one day, overnight as it were, into an authentic and accomplished English poet. Indeed, Mr. Dongerkery himself had perhaps little self-know-

ledge in the matter. For he seems to have taken the long, winding and slippery road to Parnassus almost by accident. A visit to "Jog" Falls about four years ago seems to have, so to say, precipitated this self-discovery. He wrote on that occasion—he could not help writing—with disarming ease and fluency :

> The "Raja" holds unchallenged sway ;
> The "Roarer" thunders all the way ;
> The "Rocket" speeds athwart the rock ;
> The "Lady" in her silvery frock
> Stands by and gazes ....

Dongerkery had lisped in numbers, and the numbers had come freely and purposively ; he knew that he was a poet now, that the vocation was not something to flee from,—on the contrary, it were best to succumb to the insistent urge for poetic self-expression !

One by one the poems appeared over the intriguing initials "S. R. D." in papers like the *Social Welfare*, the *Pushpa*, the *Indian Review*, and the *Bombay Chronicle Weekly* ; one poem at any rate—*The Shadow-Play*—appeared in the *Modern Review* over his full name. A Registrar of a University, and still a poet—but why not ? Who are we to generalize about poets and poetry ? Humbert Wolfe was a Civil Service man —and a poet ; Ross was a Malaria specialist—and a poet ; Julian Huxley was a Zoologist—and a poet ; Binyon was a librarian—and a poet ; well, then, let us grant that Dongerkery can be an efficient Registrar of a University and be also a poet by right and virtue of his indubitable achievements !

VI

The Ivory Tower is a collection of nearly sixty lyrics. In the title poem—it is, indeed, a jewel of a title—Dongerkery succinctly and beautifully brings out both the feeling of isolation

and the consciousness of puissance that the poet—the true poet—experiences in his Ivory Tower. Although an Ivory Tower is often supposed to be the refuge of skulkers and misfits, an " Ivory Tower " life need not necessarily mean cowardly " escapism " ; reticence is not indifference, and silence is not always a proof of insensitiveness. A poet retires to an Ivory Tower, not with a feeling of defeat and despair, but with the will to live and the will to create. The sense of regret, the feeling of isolation, the viperous pang of unfulfilled desire,—these are short-lived ; the poet's vitality asserts itself after a brief sojourn to the Ivory Tower—his muse " now plumes her feathers and lets grow her wings "—and the poet sings in the full consciousness of his recovered strength :

> Though thus my Muse may live alone
> Within an ivory tower,
> Her flowering thoughts by breezes blown
> Shall wield their fragrant power ;
>
> And from her soul a rainbow hurled
> Shall bridge the gulf that lies
> Betwixt her prison and the world
> That throbs beyond the skies.

It is clear from these lines that the Ivory Tower of Dongerkery's conception is very different from the Lady of Shallott's lone tower on the way to Camelot ; rather, its apparent self-limitation does also imply—it is, indeed, a necessary prelude to—its capacity for infinite self-expansion and world-comprehension. While Dongerkery's poem is no doubt a vivid expression of the poet's divine discontent, it is no less a memorable affirmation of the poet's monumental puissance and uncabinned sovereignty.

In several of the other poems in the collection—notably in *To the Lyric, Changed Values, Inspiration, The Poet* and *Why Poets Sing*—Dongerkery muses on different aspects of the

poetic faculty, sometimes wistfully, sometimes half-playfully, but always to good effect :

> The Poet sees things upside down ....
>
> To him the world's a wonder-book
> Of fairy tales in pictures ....

And the last poem in the collection, *The Ivory Tower—Another View,* is a final reaffirmation of the poet's great mission and puissance. The Ivory Tower that the poet inhabits is no Castle of Indolence or Bower of Bliss ; it stands " upon Truth's solid rock " —

> A thin-walled ivory tower,
> Built light but strong by fairy hands
> With thought's creative power ....

The Tower is thus our great Insurance Policy ; other things may fail us, but the Tower will not fail us ; and—

> . . . though the Earth be torn to shreds
> By human lust and greed,
> The poet with his fancy's threads
> Re-weaves love's golden creed.....
>
> New visions born of mystic power
> Will range themselves around
> Until within the ivory tower
> A shining world be found.

This world, at any rate, will not share our human limitations of decay and death ; it will whirl ceaselessly, and abide for ever !

V

The poems in *The Ivory Tower* are grouped under three heads—Love, Beauty, Truth ; but several of the poems listed under Truth may equally appropriately figure under one of the other two headings. Love, Beauty, Truth, Man, God and Nature, morning, noon and evening, night, the stars and the

moon, joy, pain and resignation, defeat, frustration and triumph, the beauty of smiles and tears, the love of man for woman, the utter truth of all that have been and are, these, only these alone, are the current coin of Dongerkery's poetry !

Of course, there is nothing "new" in such poetry—unless poetry, by just being poetry, is for ever the same and yet for ever new. Dongerkery is no modernist revelling in sack-cloth and cipher, in complicated states of mind and a Juggernaut phraseology. He is very much of a traditional poet, he is clear-headed and serious, he is easy and lucid. A poem like *The Toll of Love*, with its plain-song simplicities and charming, disarming conceits, might have been written by a Caroline, even by an Elizabethan poet :

I went on plundering Nature's store,
And made the moon, the stars, the sun
Their treasures at her feet to pour,
And yet her heart I had not won !

But when my bleeding heart I poured
Before her eyes without a groan,
A speechless victory I scored
And she could hold no more her own !

Love, again, is another exquisite poem, and the extra rhyme at the end does reinforce the meaning of the last line :

I weave the pattern of romance
With feeling, colour, song and dance,
And draw upon rich Nature's store
For gifts I bring to Beauty's door,
With her to dwell for evermore.

And so Dongerkery sings—sings of life and love, of the romance that lurks behind the most common sights and sounds, of baby's eyes and their intimations of "other worlds", of clouds and sunshine, of the rose-bud and the lotus, of the Taj and the Garden of Brindavan, of the Buddha and the Trimurti, of Gandhiji's fast and the sights and sounds of rural India.

Dongerkery is especially successful as a poet of Nature's varying moods. In lines like the following he achieves a sensuousness that is effective at once :

> The Sun at midday halts, with passion burning,
> And hugs the sleeping sea in his embrace.

" Evening ", for instance, is a fatally alluring theme ; it is also a most elusive one. A Collins, an Eliot, writes once in a way in the accents of immortality about " Evening " ; but Dongerkery too seems to have wormed himself into the heart of the mystery and, in his *Evening*, he has certainly produced a convincing picture. The homely sight of the aged folk—

> The aged folk, their wrinkled faces sunning,
> Sit chatting idly near the cottage door —

is as familiar as it is unforgettable. And the last few lines bring out the elusive spirit of evening without any overdoing of effect :

> Life's ardour cools, with shades of eve approaching,
> And man, world-wearied, turns away his gaze
> From outward forms of things .....

VI

Although Dongerkery is in main content to sweep the lyre of Happiness, he too—and who has not ?—has come across pain and evil, ugliness and vulgarity ; but he would not allow them to sour the tenour or soil the texture of his poetry. *An Unextinguished Spark* is, for example, an elegy on the death of a child ; as an elegy, it is a moving poem in six poignant stanzas. Just a few phrases and images—" a bud frost-nipped " ... " a promise made, withdrawn " ... " a fading star—not dawn " ...

> First letter of a half-formed word,
> Attuned to snapping strings.

A ray of light, enveloped, lost
In dark storm-clouds of death,
A little boat seen skyward tossed,
A stifled fragrant breath.
A pebble on the shore of Time,
Washed back into the sea —

and these images and excruciating phrases evoke a very full picture of the poet's feeling of intense grief and desolation. But even this elegy closes on a note of serene philosophical resignation :

The spark of Life shall never die . .

Pray, let no tear be shed, for tears
May quench the spark and kill
The soul whose fire, with shining spheres,
Keeps bright and burning still.

It will be seen from these extracts that Dongerkery's is essentially a chaste and chastened muse. Some readers may not perhaps stomach his inveterate philosophizing ; but, as a matter of fact, it is rarely obtrusive. It is rather to Dongerkery's credit that he has Faith, that like his own Poet he is

Unshadowed by the sneaking doubt
That haunts life's darkened alley ;

he has both faith and vision, he knows that terrestrial life is not all ; and he is intrigued by the impenetrable mystery of the soul—

A flickering flame that lights the whole
With its uncertain ray.

The impact of life and Nature on the poet, however tempestuous or violent by itself, is thus ever conveyed in terms of resolved peace and tranquil joy. Dongerkery is content to hitch his waggon to the Pole Star of Tradition and finds in the eternal verities and in perennial human values ample subject-matter for his limpid and home-spun melodies. It

is, therefore, most refreshing to read the poems in *The Ivory Tower* after experiencing violent headaches while wrestling with modernists like Basil Bunting, Louis Zukofsy, Dylan Thomas and Ezra Pound.

There is, however, one noticeable limitation in much of Dongerkery's poetry—it does not transport us, lift us altogether off our feet, overwhelm us with the sheer power of its rhythmic utterance. But this is a limitation that his poetry shares with most Indo-Anglian and even most present-day English poetry; and this should not blind us to the fact that many of Dongerkery's poems are really fine and distinctive in thought and style, and that quite a few achieve a high and haunting beauty that we cannot be sufficiently thankful for. And, perhaps, in the near future, Dongerkery may be able to do even better in the realms of rhyme and give us, not only very good poems (for this he has done already and done frequently). but also poems achieving an utter sublimity and finality in expression.

VII

Mr. Adi K. Sett is the author of a book of short stories entitled *Chameleons* and a monograph on Shah Jahan, but he has also published some very good poems. *They Shall Not Die,* a war-inspired poem published a few months ago, is characteristic of his style:

> Let this dark hour be swift
> And the Dawn near,
> Give us the strength to build the Future
> On the anguish, the blood, the toil, the tears
> Of those who are but memories.
> They shall not die.

Sett's best poems reveal the sensuousness, sincerity and passion of the true poet. *Memory, Tailini, Song of Love* and *My*

Beloved is Dead have the ring of good poetry. His muse generally prefers reticence to garrulity, and hence his output is far from copious. But he remains an interesting figure on the present-day Indo-Anglian literary scene and it is to be hoped that his stature will grow in the years to come.

CHAPTER XIV

THREE WOMEN POETS

I

Srimati Bharati Sarabhai had already published a number of poems in periodicals like *The London Mercury, The Indian P. E. N., Indian Writing* (London), *Art and Culture* and *The Modern Review* before she brought out two years ago her poetic play, *The Well of the People.* If the earlier poems revealed her exquisite sensibility, the play revealed besides her sense of Indian culture, her keen grasp of Mother India's present predicament, her imaginative richness, and her growing mastery over the instrument of English verse.

Alike in her play and in her poems, Srimati Bharati Sarabhai attempts to portray the tears in things, the unutterable pathos of Pain, the feeling of isolation that creeps into the lives of most human beings, the beauty that dwells alongside of Pain in this vale of tears. *They turned her Back* and *Bloodless bloodred Rays* are both finely conceived and are spoken with a trembling sensitiveness. *To the Sun* begins very well :

> This early dawn you were a new
> Full Moon, orange arisen.
> My heart was stabbed—
> I fought with beauty—I knew
> it was too soon
> for the rumoured moon—
> Still I cried it was not You !

Another poem, *Left Out* ...., is a little poetical commentary on the fact of man's ineradicable isolation in a world of hurry and strife. There are moments when this feeling of isolation stirs within him very uncomfortably :

> At that time you have no meaning, none.
> Only space and time, darkness and night ....
> Know you, O man, that there is a time
> Where you have no place,
> Are not merely crowded out.

While the above two poems, both of which originally appeared in *The Indian P. E. N.*, are remarkable more for their intellectual and emotional content than for their rhythmical expression, *The Raiments of the Rainbow*, which appeared seven years ago in *The London Mercury*, is genuine and moving poetry. It is nobly conceived and is dexterous in its rhythmic movement ; and throughout its sixty-five lines, there is hardly any exaggeration or false note. From its splendid opening :

> You have always seen me come
> In the raiments of the rainbow,
> A rainbow resplendent,
> On the thirsting earth a pendant,
> In limpid play with adamant ;

to the quivering, pathetic close :

> Would you know me if I were to come
> Without these raiments of the rainbow ?
> Maddening to my quiet
> Is my fate,
> The knowledge that you may not acknowledge
> The girl behind the raiment
> Of the rainbow ;

from the first line to the last the poem is a splendorous specimen of the " new " poetry and it therefore fully deserves Prof.

E. E. Speight's opinion that "here is work refreshing in its independence of English tradition in phrasing and rhythm".

II

The Well of the People is a poetic pageant rather than a play; but it immediately places Bharati in the front-rank of Indo-Anglian poetesses. Like Aru and Toru Dutt, like Sarojini Naidu, Bharati too is heir to the eternal feminine and her rhythms, although they come with a new note, are without question *poetic* rhythms. In one sense, indeed, *The Well of the People* is a more ambitious, a more important, work than any that either Toru or Sarojini ever did; the play, the pageant,—the static drama unfolded in *The Well of the People*,—is an attempt to seize and portray the inmost core of the present "condition" of the country. It is almost a testament wrung from the long-suffering children of Mother India.

The story of *The Well of the People* can be briefly told. A Brahmin widow has been gathering coppers with ant-like persistence for years and years and years—the wages of a dedicated career of devotion at the altar of the Spinning Wheel. She has accumulated seventy rupees at last; she could go now to distant Haridwar, or at least to holi Kashi. Would not her neighbours in the village take her to Haridwar? they would not; for all she has "is not enough", and so—

> When Haridwar receded, leaving her
> Dry on the shore, she floated all her vows
> Like earthen lamps to nearer Benares.

Again she begs her villagers in vain; she is checkmated by fate once more, she is dazed by her defeat, she just blinks—the crazy old woman!

Suddenly—who knows how?—the thought occurs to her that she might utilize her savings for building a "temple well".

She stretches forth her thin shrivelled hand at one more phantom desire. With her seventy rupees—and would not others put up another seventy rupees?—she would build a temple for the *Harijans* in her dear old village .... But the pitcher is broken at the threshold of the well to be : " The old woman falls forward on the ground."

Round this story—a *true* story in its main details—Bharati has woven a strange fabric of symbolism and poetry, memory and melody, and the poem as a whole is uncomfortably evocative of the sweat on the Mother's brow, the load of anguish on her head, the pain of frustration in her battered heart. The old widow is no doubt a seeming jest to many of her purblind villagers ; but hasn't she won a great victory in the very hour of her defeat, hasn't she died only to be reborn into immortality? She had felt the tongues of her people—the people of the country—and found them furrowed with thirst ; she had touched their hearts and found them furrowed with the thirst for Faith, found them throbbing with diminishing alertness and force. Her " temple well " would give water to the people and it would bring Ganga herself to the people's hearts ; and the dead widow is thus aptly apostrophized by the Chorus :

> Even now your senses lave,
> Fall and wash, splashing along
> Golden walls. Benares lies
> Within. You will live, live
> To see the people's well
> Spell in rose golden walls
> Pouring dumb before your eyes.

III

The Well of the People is more than a poetic recordation of the above story. The tormented unrest and disharmony

of our times is conceived by Bharati in different planes of reality ; but the poem itself is a unity and no artificial hotch-potch, and it is, for the most part, piercingly articulate. The characters, the situations, the many-hued pageantry at Haridwar, the excruciating scene in the village, all are fused into a vast symbol, as old as Kailas and Ganga and ocean depths and as modern as railway-tracks and coal-driven buses and preventive inoculations. Perhaps, we should have liked the poem more if it were less heavily dyed with " purpose " ; perhaps, too, the meritorious choruses might have been more consistently endowed with poetic edge and fire. But let us not, ask too much ; Bharati has given us an excellent verse play, a drama that is played in a multi-dimensional universe, a poem that help us to effect—if only for a little while—our welcome release from the stifling limitations of terrestrial life.

Bharati Sarabhai was an asset to Indian letters even before she published *The Well of the People ;* by giving us this play, this austere and purposive work of art, she has added a whole cubit to her poetic stature and, incidentally, she has added a fresh and inspiring chapter to the story of Indo-Anglian literature. Bharati is still young in years, but her poetry shows hardly any signs of immaturity in thought or style ; within a period of four or five years, her art has made very considerable progress, and she has definitely " arrived ". And in Bharati, perhaps, the Mother, Bharata Mata, will find her heaven-sent minstrel, not only to hymn the lyrics of her star-crossed frustrations, but also the epics of her achievements and glories.

IV

Unlike Bharati Sarabhai, who is consciously a modernist and even somewhat of a futurist poetess, Sabita Devi is a con-

tented traditionalist in her themes, in her attitudes, and in her technique. Srimati Sabita Devi, the cinema star, needs, of course, no introduction to the Indian public ; she has won for herself an abiding place in the affections of a vast multitude of 'fans' and cinema-goers. As an Indo-Anglian poetess, however, she is very little known except to a small circle that happened to buy her *Phantasies* when it was published in March 1943.

In the little piece, *Phantasies*, Sabita lets her fancy roam —for you know, as Keats knew, "pleasure never is at home."— and sees :

> Vivid phantasies, fleeting shadows kindled to existence,
> Transient hour of glorious pageantry,
> Vignettes through a silver frame.

Radha "poised in tender reverie" .... Mumtaz "'neath her jewelled veil" .... Seeta "fair and gallant as eternal womanhood"—invoking such romantic and inspiring visions, living in their alluring worlds, Sabita is as a child:

> lost amid my dreaming phantasies,
> Vivid shadows with the breath of seeming life,
> Transient lamps to cheer the traveller on his mundane way,
> Light some lonely eyes to laughter
> Ere they fade into the nothingness of Time.

This is fairly typical of Sabita's poetry. She is not out to shock or tantalize or preach to the reader ; she rarely strikes up an attitude of prophecy ; she is content to be just a poet, watching the strange panorama of earthly life, now animatedly now languorously, but always with becoming womanliness and grace. A woman and an actress, Sabita weaves whole dream-worlds with her exquisite phantasies ; she has an unfailing, undeceived, and unfaltering eye for the beauty of Nature and of Life, of the beauty that subsists even in tears ; and she makes

her poems—dear pretty things!—out of her responses and experiences.

Sabita is apparently most at home in sweet Nature's company. "Dawn" fascinates her :

> Aurora's blushes shimmer through her veil
> Of golden hair,
> The east is lost in ecstasy within
> Her arms so fair ....

Sabita has marked every line and curve on the physiognomy of Dawn, they have won her whole heart with their magic of paleness and music and romance, and she is very happy indeed to observe

> The light of morn,
> And earth and sky and universe salute
> The blushing dawn.

As in *Phantasies*, in *Fairyland* too Sabita describes her dream-world—another vision patterned by the tilted kaleidoscope of her poetic temperament—and, after spending an hour or two with the "dainty dancers" of this near-far Fairyland, we awake at last "through the veil of fading moon-kissed shades" as

> The eastern sky stirs languidly to light,
> Dispelling as a latent, lilting dream
> The fairy phantoms of the magic night.

The sense of the loveliness of Dawn is rendered again in the opening lines of *Perhaps* :

> Or pearly dawn as bright as angel eyes
> Breathes benediction o'er the eastern blue ;

but the poem is rather a wistful hymn of clinging hope. The years ahead must bring in their wake the tears of defeat and the disillusionment of age ; but the tears and the disillusionment will lose their sting if only—as perhaps they will—her

dreams re-visit her in later years and even journey home with her as she crosses "Life's transient sea"!

V

The touch is light is these poems—there are no fashionable contortions in the language—and one is happy to read poems like *Nature's Music, The Joys of Life, Pride, Heart's Desire, The Play,* and *Death's Beauty,* all of which achieve their respective revelations without the adventitious aids of Audeneque and Eliotesque rhythms and Cummings-like jugglery or obscurity. Sabita can strike a note of sadness as she can give out a pealing anthem of joy; but she is always careful to preserve a sense of proportion, to preserve, in other words, her essential womanliness and grace. *Death's Beauty* is a luminous revelation; there are no lurid colours in its mellowed radiance; yes, yes, says Sabita, there is beauty in death, had we eyes to see it; there is beauty in the withered flower, in the dying sunset's hour, in the fading of a dream, in the passing of the year; and, above all,

> There is soft, beloved beauty on a dying Saviour's face,
> Transcendent love and beauty that enfolds the human race.

Perhaps, the finest of her poems is *The Dying Swan's Farewell,* "an impression of Anna Pavlova's Swan Dance"; it is an impressionistic picture endowed with the lilt and grace and melancholy of the dying Swan's bitter-sweet dance; and long after one has finished reading the poem, the echoes of the Swan's "Goodbye" linger in the chambers of one's subconscious self: and one is very grateful to Sabita for this abiding picture of the dying swan and of the peerless Pavlova herself.

Some of the poems in *Phantasies—Prelude to Victory, The Fourteenth of July* and *In This Our Time*—are

the distillations of Sabita's reactions to the present world crisis. *In This Our Time,* especially, is an eloquently delivered poem rather reminding the reader of Kipling's *Recessional.* This one poem is enough to show that Sabita is not a mere happy-go-lucky cinema star, inhabiting always the ever-delectable horizons of dreams and phantasies, of moonlit nights and orange skies and phosphorescent dawns; she is also keenly alive to the pathos of the human situation to-day, and from the depths of her heart she raises this fervent prayer of hope,—hope that refuses to believe that the darkness and the pain of the moment will prevail for ever :

> We lift our eyes unto the hills to Thee
> God of the brave, the true, the free.

VI

Kamala Dongerkery contributed two poems—*Too Late* and *Dual Role*— to her husband's collection of poems, *The Ivory Tower.* These two poems struck a note of challenging whimsicality, and one realized at once that one was in the presence of a true poet in the making. Since then Kamala Dongerkery has fulfilled our expectations by publishing a series of very satisfying poems which secure for her a place among the front rank of Indo-Anglian women poets. Hers is a sensitive and tantalizing muse, and in her poems colour and sound fuse together and achieve sensuous and melodious rhythms. A mere conceit is elaborated with exquisite taste in *The Mountain Brides*—and the result is poetry; a simple idea is worked out in terms of simile and metaphor in *The Spring of Solace*—and again the result is poetry; *Thoughts, Showers, Mystic or Lover* and *Arati* are likewise poetically articulate and extend life's significances. The last-named poem is, perhaps, her finest achievement; idea and emotion and form cohere in it, and we have in result an almost perfect poem :

I wave before Thy sacred shrine
Three lambent, quivering lights,
Enkindled by my soul's dim fire
'Mid heavy-clouded nights.

There is the golden flame and there is the pale blue flame and there is also the flame of red desire ; but—

My soul will burn with lustre bright
When all these flames combine.

The idea, the emotion, and the rhythm return upon themselves as it were, and we have here indubitable poetry.

CHAPTER XV

MORE PROFESSORS

I

The late Prof. B. N. Saletore (1897-1923) seems to have been a gifted Indo-Anglian poet, who died all too soon before the rich promise of his early verses could be quite fulfilled. A young man's love for words, a young man's intense idealisms, a young Indian's pride in his country's cultural past, his dissatisfaction with the present, and his hope for the future, —these are the stuff out of which Saletore's characteristic poems are made. A youthful poet is generally capable of a pleasing versatility in theme and tone and technique ; the fact is, he is experimenting all the time, trying to discover his special bent, his deepest cravings, his unique modes of utterance. Saletore too is thus experimenting with divers themes, metres, moods, modes.

Nevertheless, Saletore's inspiration is generally and distinctly indigenous ; Hindu traditions in thought and feeling, Hindu Mythology, Hindu superstitions, these give his poems a palpably Oriental richness and equanimity. Here is his poem addressed to a Panchama girl :

Sometimes I fear your gaze
With soft deep pupils bright :
As though some unknown Goddess
O'erpowered my heart with might
Or Gauri draped in yellow,
Or Kali clad in night.

Such a poem is wholly Indian in theme, imagery and cast of thought. Saletore wrote also many poems about Nature in her varying moods and aspects. Twilight, moonlight, buffaloes, trees, birds and beasts, the sky and the common clay, all inspire Saletore's muse. He almost invariably makes his Nature poems a blend of description, reverie and even moralizing. After describing the buffaloes, Saletore asks them a whole multitude of questions :

What visions fraught with gladness charm your sleep?..
What interlunar languor dark as it is deep?

Other poems—*Space-Blue*, for instance—are finer in conception and in the general texture of their expression.

It is obvious that Saletore had the true poet's vision and gift for striking expression ; and he had a contemporary consciousness and was nevertheless steeped in tradition. Had he lived longer and pursued the profession of poetry, there is little doubt Saletore would have made a permanent contribution to Indo-Anglian poetry.

II

The late Prof. Uma Maheswer had several volumes of verse to his credit when he died, under tragic circumstances, in March 1942. *Among the Silences, The Feast of the Crystal Heart, Awakened Asia, The Lay of the Lotus* and *Southern Idylls* : these five books constituted the work of about a decade of Uma Maheswer's poetic activity. Like Saletore and G. K.

Chettur, Uma Maheswer also deserves to be included among the " inheritors of unfulfilled renown ".

In Uma Maheswer's two earliest volumes, absolute and inveterate melancholy is the prevalent note. The cloud lifts spasmodically in the later volumes ; at times the poet sees " a flickering gleam at least filtering its soothing silver into my dazed eyes ". He seeks refuge in the awe-inspiring majesty and security of Silence and chants the Epic of Silence, " sad for all time and stately ". *Awakened Asia*—published over the pseudonym " Levant Rose " in 1930—is described as a vision —a vision of the renascent India to be:

> The golden years return to the radiant East,
> And far and near the plenteous harvests rise,
> And happy homes and brave heroic hearts
> Now fill the land ....

In his more recent poems, there is less of melancholy and more of joy—the joy that the poet seems to have experienced as a result of his intimacy with South Indian scenery. It is not unlikely that Uma Maheswer arrived at the threshold of Peace—the peace he had sought ever so long—before his untimely death.

Although Uma Maheswer was an authentic poet in his moods and his musings, in his sentiments and his fancies, yet he rarely succeeded in producing good English poems. His lyrics are almost as a rule un-rhymed ; and, notwithstanding Collins's *Ode to Evening* and similar miracles, unrhymed lyrics have very little chance of being naturalized in English verse. Prose-poetry and *verse libre* justify themselves under special circumstances while unrhymed but otherwise regular stanzas somehow do not deliver the goods. This is principally the reason why Uma Maheswer's lyrics fail to move, much less to rouse, the reader. Besides, his feeling for English sounds

was never very reliable and his mastery over the technique of verse remained incomplete till the end.

Uma Maheswer was also the author of three verse plays, *Buddha, Sita in her Sorrows,* and *Millennial Dawn.* In the first, Uma Maheswer attempts " to depict the spiritual evolution of the Buddha by choosing certain critical situations in his eventful life ". *Sita in her Sorrows* is a dramatic version of *Uttara Ramayana,* culminating in Mother Earth receiving back her daughter into her womb. The third play is described as " a Play of International Peace ", with its *dramatis personae* composed of Father Time, Mother Humanity, the Peace Seekers, Arts and Graces, Red Moloch, etc., etc.

The themes of Uma Maheswer's plays immediately evoke a response from the reader ; but the themes are not imaginatively enough handled by the dramatist. The great moments arrive, but are not recorded in memorable speech. A singular flatness is the prevailing note, if " note " it can at all be called. No doubt, a theme like the Buddha's spiritual history might have defeated the powers of even a Goethe ; hence, although we have stated the fact, we do not wish to appear uncharitable to the memory of Uma Maheswer. He was an unswerving idealist and he dedicated himself to the service of the Muses ; and he will always have a place—albeit a minor place—in Indo-Anglian literature.

III

Between 1928 and 1938, Prof. V. N. Bhushan published seven slim volumes of English verse : *Silhouettes, Moonbeams, Flute Tunes, Star Fires, Enchantments, Horizons* and *Footfalls.* Of late he has adventured into literary criticism and produced in quick succession a number of students' editions of English Classics equipped with critical introductions and notes.

As a poet, Bhushan's work is tantalizingly unequal. Poetic experiences crowd around him and he is possessed of a fount of poetic energy. And yet the finished poems that he gives us are few and far between. He has, generally speaking, a feeling for the sound values of words ; but he lacks reticence and sometimes allows adjectives and alliterations to do duty for poetry. He has not—he does not seem to have—quite realized that poetry is not the experience merely, but the experience reduced to form and significance ; not ideas, but the pleasurable communication of ideas, constitutes poetry. A good poem should give us, not merely the raw-stuff of an experience, but a feeling of exhilaration and fulfilment. As Mr. Charles Williams has pointed out, the poets give us "the sensuous apprehension of our satisfied capacities for some experience or other".

The trouble with Bhushan is that he will not take pains fully to master his medium. As a result, many of his poems refuse to cohere into harmonious pictures. Often, when he writes unrhymed verse, we have the uncomfortable feeling that he avoids rhyme more because of laziness than because of any artistic necessity.

In his very first book, *Silhouettes*, Bhushan is more successful in the rhythmic prose of *A Bouquet* than in regular verses. His later volumes have given us a few very good poems and a large number of poetic lines. *The Pilgrim*, one of Bhushan's earlier pieces, has both form and felicity of expression :

> Onward, Eternal Pilgrim, Onward !
> Through sunless days and starless nights
> Across the arch of years
> And over the bridge of life
> In pursuit of the Purple Light ....

Routine is equally good, although it is difficult to understand

why this poem should be more or less artificially cut up into thirty-three lines.

Some of Bhushan's single lines are compact of beauty and hence one loves to repeat aloud lines like:

> Orphan clouds in lunar synthesis ...
> The hush and swell of the Camel-bells of quest ...
> A wonder sense of sweet womanliness ...
> Thro' sweeping savannahs and whistling wilds ...
> A chandelier on the lilied altar ...

It is therefore satisfactory to note that Bhushan's lyrics have been on the whole well received in India as also in England. Mr. V. de Sola Pinto rightly declares that "Mr. Bhushan is a lyrical poet with real vision and originality and gives English poetic forms a new charm and freshness by adapting them to the expression of Indian imagination and mystical thought". And an Indian critic has no business to be more queasy about English verse than are English critics themselves!

IV

Prof. Humayun Kabir, nationalist and Professor at the Calcutta University, belongs to the ever growing band of Bengalis to whom poetry is but second nature, as necessary as water and air. A Bengali Muslim, Humayun Kabir spent his formative years, as did Manmohan and Chettur also, at Oxford. Since his return to India, Kabir has been "professing" Philosophy, first at the Andhra University and now at Calcutta.

Humayun Kabir's first volume of poems (*Poems*, 1932) consisted mostly of English renderings, either in prose or in "halting verse", of his own Bengali poems. Kabir disarm-

ingly confesses that some of his poems "bear only too clearly the marks of early adolescence"; but there is nowhere any palpable exaggeration. Nor does any desperate straining after effect mar the unity of any of his poems.

Kabir as a poet may not be divinely inspired, but he is at any rate sincere and his emotional earnestness is no pose The following picture of "Frustration" is built up with care; detail is added to detail till the finished picture emerges at last:

> My heart is heavy with pain,
> And the world is empty for lack of you .
> The rain-soaked wind is charged with restlessness.
> And the murmurs of the trees are full of moans.
> Shadows deepen on the sunless sky.
> Magic tears glimmer in my heart.

While Kabir's energy of utterance is quite equal to picturing "Frustration" or evoking a "Spectre", his muse is undoubtedly more at home in the presence of Beauty. The Taj Mahal moves him (as it has moved most Indo-Anglian poets of yesterday and to-day) to write a fine poem; *Birth of Venus*, again, attempts to describe the eternal feminine; the loving particulars in the poem enrich the picture without in the least vulgarizing it.

The versatility for which youth is to be specially cherished is generously evident in Kabir's poems. Wonder, rapture, melancholy, despair, doubt, ecstasy, all visit Kabir's universe, either by turns or in groups; and he faithfully reflects the changing moods in the body of his poetry. At one moment Kabir writes, with the self-consciousness of adolescence, a poem entitled *Doubts*, as the result of a recoil from Pain and injustice.

> Upon this heaped-up evil we yet want to base
> The heaven of our dreams. Though weary night and
> day

Its hope sustains our dreams.

But six months later Kabir—the same Kabir—writes these felicitous lines, charged with an almost mystical ecstasy :

You looked at me with your dark mysterious eyes
In whose depths I gazed in amazement mute
And saw spaces beyond, regions unexplored
And glimmering worlds, unfamiliar, strange . . . .
For a moment I felt I was at one
With deep passion's impersonal elemental air
In a million hearts throughout the world.

The moment passes, felicity fades away ; but it is something surely to have caught a glimpse of it—if only for a second—and passed on the revelation to others.

V

Prof. Baldoon Dhingra of Lahore won the Clark Essay Prize while he was at Cambridge with his essay on "Genius and Artistic Enjoyment"; he has published besides five pamphlets of English verse, viz. *Beauty's Sanctuary, Voiceless Lyrics, Symphony of Peace, Mountains* and *Comes Ever the Dawn,* and, very recently, a collection of eight philosophical essays with the title, *Writ in Sand.*

One of Dhingra's earliest books of verse elicited from the *Times Literary Supplement* this eulogy : "These verses are the work of a spirit as sensitive to the moods and moments of Nature as to the thoughts that rise to the surface of the pool of meditation". Dhingra has mastered his medium better than many Indo-Anglian practitioners have done, and hence some of his poems achieve the fusion of grace, form and felicity of expression. Here is the concluding stanza of that fine poem, *Factories are Eyesores* :

Now are they eyesores, as you say,
At noontide, with those smoking tops :

Man works beneath, until he drops
Out of the world of wheels one day,
Factories are eyesores as you say.

The Hawk is galvanized by an idea—that the lark's song triumphs over death itself :

From his soared heaven of light, with heart elate,
He cries God's challenge to the winds of fate,
While from blue heaven, and life's unconquered song
Death learns, for all the bitter doom he bears.
He is not quite so strong.

In his more recent poems, Dhingra is something of a prophet without ceasing to be a poet. *Mountains* contains a symbolic summary of human history up-to-date, together with a plan for the future. There were giants—mountains, if you will—in the past ; but " in the pride of heart " they scorned " the ampler purpose of the whole " :

So Earth's first children failed ; and not till man
crowned Life with Knowledge was there found ....
a soul to pierce
the cloud-wrack of the universe
with the white peak of Immortality.

Nor need this be necessarily an idle dream ; for, " we have a share in something beyond our thought .... and, after the stars go out, comes ever the Dawn ".

VI

Yet another professor who is also a poet is Mr. D. C. Datta, Head of the English Department at the Maharaja's College, Jaipur. He seems to have been writing English verse for a long time, but it was only in 1941 that he released for publication his English verses and verse translations. *Christmas 1935 and Other Verses, Exegi Monumentum and Lyrics, Chandidas : Translations, Vidyapati : Renderings,* and *Megha-*

duta in English Verse have appeared in quick succession during the past four years.

Whether as a translator or as an original poet, Prof. Datta displays a commendable mastery of English verse forms. He is apparently intimate with many languages and he has thus developed a healthy cosmopolitanism in outlook and utterance. He is specially valuable as a reliable interpreter of Chandidas and Vidyapati through the medium of limpid English verse.

In his original verses, Datta displays considerable fluency and metrical ingenuity; but he rarely rises to sheer lyrical heights. *Exegi Monumentum* is a long elegiac poem, written in memory of Datta's father—" a remarkable Indian father ... a pioneer in the English lyric forms, just as Horace was a pioneer in the skilful use of Greek forms ". Datta handles the " Arnoldean metre " with dexterity and ease. The poem, however, is too long and the emotion tends to flag over long stretches of reminiscence and apostrophe.

The shorter poems, written almost as a rule in tripping four-line stanzas, show Datta's versification to better advantage. Now and then, he gives us a piece that is satisfying both as verse and as poetry. *Sundered* is a fine little poem :

> It was a leave-taking so strange,
> I remember it so well,
> With breaking heart she came to me,
> And at my feet she fell.

And so on, three more stanzas; likewise, *The Lover's Ghost* and *What Angel Gave you Birth* are among the striking poems in Datta's collections of verse.

Some of Datta's verses—*Mr. Dandy and Miss Andy* and *Mr. Hidebound's Address to His Comrades,* for instance—are in a rollickingly humorous vein. The four-line stanza is an obedient instrument in Datta's hands and he deftly puts it to many an interesting and purposive use!

VII

The late Prof. T. B. Krishnaswami was an indefatigable writer of prose and verse; he wrote essays, stories, children's books, poems, biographical sketches. His *Swallow-Flights* (1933)—a collection of essays in prose and verse "in a light vein and of brief compass"—contains some of his best work, in prose as well as in verse. At his very best, Krishnaswami's prose can rise to great heights, recalling the triumphs of the seventeenth and the early nineteenth century masters of impassioned prose; but the feat is but rarely achieved and even then only by fits and starts.

As a writer of poetry, Krishnaswami's touch is uncertain, although one comes across a really delightful poem now and then. *Aspirations* is a trifle but it has form, meaning, movement and colour :

> I caught a star and kissed it. Lo!
> Its scorching flame did scorch my lips
> And singe my hair. It did; but oh,
> What ecstasy! For while time slips,
> Its joy ineffable shall be
> A reminder of Eternity!

But such marriage of sound and sense is rather rare, especially in the pieces that fulsomely commemorate living or dead notabilities like Kaiser Wilhelm II, the Raja of Ramnad, L. D. Swamikannu and Dr. T. M. Nair. In other poems, promising openings are marred by a failure of the poetic fire. *Shanti* begins well :

> A sea-shell on the sandy beach
> High and dry beyond the reach
> Of restless waves that toss and sway
> Churn the foam and scatter spray.

But the conclusion, rhyme and alliteration alike, sounds blatantly crude and totally out of tune with the rest of the poem :

Lustrous, lovely life, can be
Filled with peace, with *shanti, shanti.*

While thus Krishnaswami almost invariably fails to make poetic wholes of any considerable length, he does throw out, off and on, poetic fragments that acquire at times the brevity and crystalline clarity of a *Haiku.*

CHAPTER XVI

THE " NEW " POETS

I

Mr. Shahid Suhrawardy is a cosmopolitan poet, a " new " poet, and truly a poet. He is a member of the distinguished Suhrawardy family who have made their mark in the public life of Bengal. A brilliant Oxonian, Suhrawardy has knocked about the world a good deal ; he has taught English and produced plays in Moscow ; he is a remarkable linguist and connoisseur of Art. When he returned to India a few years ago after an absence of about two decades, he was appointed the Bageshwari Professor of Foreign Art in the Calcutta University. His collection of critical essays, *Prefaces : Essays on Art Subjects,* has won the admiration of people who count. Since then he has left the University and is at present a member of the Bengal Public Services Commission.

Suhrawardy has also published a collection of his English lyrics with the rather unusual title, *Essays in Verse,* the term " essay " being used in the French sense. In a letter to his friend, Dilip Kumar Roy, he thus modestly explains the genesis of his poems : " The source of many of them is my literary culture and not a deep spiritual experience ; perhaps, sometimes ... a wistfulness ... a half-opened hope ... a visual enchantment ... but nothing more." Be that as it may, the

forty poems included in *Essays in Verse* constitute no mean achievement and it is a pleasure—although the pleasure is sometimes tinged with melancholy—to read them half-aloud to oneself, to come under the spell of their seductive rhythms, to exchange pulse-beats with their sophisticated *and* sensitive creator.

II

Essays in Verse is a collection of "early" as well as "new" poems, thus embracing the work of over twenty years. It may also be presumed that several other poems of Suhrawardy's, read and admired by a select band of discriminating friends, yet remain unpublished. Among the "new" poems is the sequence, *An Old Man's Songs*, distinctly Prufrockian in manner and even in rhythm; but the poems grip the reader at once and they contain several lines luxuriating with fancy and glowing with colour. The "Old Man" can merely recapitulate the past, with regret and with a reminiscent spasm of pain or with a deceptive, reviving tenderness. "Out of the wreckage of his years" he can only place "memories" at the feet of Youth and Love; passion and love and hope are no more, only memories remain! Presently the Old Man bristles with conceits and unexpected images:

> Beware, my love, beware,
> Lest in your riotous hair
> There might not be a dream of mine that sighs —
> Though you don't note the hunger in my eyes ...
>
> Bowed down I pick the litter of your charms:
> Alms of a word,
> Blessings of a glance,
> Gestures thrown out with squandering ease.
> The riverine cadence of your laughter, Friend,
> Might mean an old man's end ...

Certainly, we grow old; and Old Father William cannot —at any rate, Father William should not—do the things that self-confident full-blooded twenty-two can do with impunity. Why not, then, accept the inevitable? Why not, indeed, make a virtue of what appears to be thus unescapable? But it is no use asking these questions; men are fated to break their heads vainly against the rock of Time; they must—being men—deplore the mortality of youth and its wonderful privileges. Suhrawardy too cannot accept the fact of age without casting lingering and even shivering looks behind; and Suhrawardy *is* a poet, although, as Sri Aurobindo points out, "his success is less than his capacity".

At Tennis may be described as an appendix or epilogue to the "Old Man's" songs—it is the last in the series. Our Prufrock has realized that the "love which had no beginning" has reached its end at last; there is a tom-tom in his brain and he is shaken to his depths; he makes one desperate attempt more to bridge the gaping and taunting abyss:

> I stretch torn hands to reach your piteous hands;
> I seek through tattered space your ample eyes.

But *she* recks not; she has her round of pleasures, her excitements, her gallants, her odol and her powders, and her

> Lips painted to the crimson of a wound
> After sentimental flutters.

Our Prufrock is apparently but the most recent of this lady's victims, and neither the first nor the last!

Suhrawardy's "new" poetry is in a sense also decadent poetry; but, after all, a decadent civilization can only be mirrored by such poetry. Prufrock is no figment of Mr. Eliot's brain nor is the Old Man an idle creature of Suhrawardy's fancy; rather are they, like Meredith's Willoughby, "all of us", in greater or lesser measure. And Suhrawardy's recent

poems do effectively reproduce the pathetic moan, the raging fever and the uncertain palpitations of the ageing man who knows at last that he can no more take part in the riot of inconsequent youth.

In the long poem, *The Indian Tragedy*, Suhrawardy cleverly imitates Eliot's rhythms, his clowning, his multi-lingual experiments, his linked allusiveness ; poetry rubs shoulders with bathos ; English and French alternate ; and, indeed, the poet openly, if also facetiously, announces his affiliation to the modernists.

> With hands thrust deep in my abysmal pockets
> And watch the dwindling eyesight sink in madden'd sockets,
> As you would say
> From inch to inch.
> (You never had a sense of metaphor,
> Not having sat at Eliot's feet
> Nor having clasped the hand of Edith Sitwell,
> Nor ever walked the bent aesthetic street
> That leads to all the keenness of Hell.)

It is the moaning of the Old Man still, moaning his frustrations and his hurts and his shadowy failures. Although *The Indian Tragedy* is obscure here and there, it does succeed in vivifying the Old Man's mood of disillusion and cynicism. The Old Man—

> The restless bent Old Man
> (Tortured speck in the brain)
> Aimlessly trudging the mountain glades,
> Paradoxical and vain —

is a prey to pythonish thoughts ; he cannot live, he can only think ; he must move among the dead rats and mutter high-sounding architectural cliches ; but at fitful intervals he also breaks into beautiful poetry, although the poetry is almost immediately smothered by a spurt of clowning. *The Indian*

Tragedy is an impression, not a sermon ; and while it contains some very good lines and is an artistic portrayal of present-day vulgarity and sham, it is not a pleasant poem to read.

III

Suhrawardy's minor poems, on the other hand, achieve by the very strength of their reticence a strange and unforgettable beauty. *You will not Miss Me,* for instance, is austere in its simplicity and yet the cumulative effect of the familiar monosyllables and seemingly commonplace images is all but overwhelming ;

You will not 'miss me
When I am dead,
Like a careless flower
Dropped from your head.

But some stormy day
By some firelight hour,
I'll stir in your soul
Like an opening flower.

You will smile and think,
And let fall your book,
And bend o'er the fire
With a far-off look.

Its quiet pathos has almost the ring of a Wordsworthian *Lucy* poem (or is the languor and the pathos really Yeatsian ?) ; and *You will not Miss Me* is one of Suhrawardy's " early " poems !

Hardly less successful are other " early " poems like *In Russia, Hold out My Heart* and *Chinoiserie ; Oxford Pasticcio* is a longer poem, the lines themselves are meandering, and the poem suggestively evokes something of the strange enchantment of Oxford ; it is gay and sad, serious and frivolous at

once ; it anyhow movingly and temperamentally describes an interesting mood.

The "new" poems are both "new" in their rhythms and poetry in their excellent articulation. *The Asoka Tree, Poems from the China Sea, I sat at Your Hearth, Prayer,* and *Moon in the Sky* are some of the beautiful pieces that Suhrawardy has given us. The "new" note disturbs us, no doubt, now and then,—as, for instance, in the shattering anti-climax in *To my Dog*. In *Prayer,* however, Suhrawardy succeeds in painting a piercingly vivid picture of the desolation that encompasses the lover who has loved and lost :

O Lord, shower thy grace
On him who in travail and in pain
Bends low his pale sorrow-painted face
On the image of her, with wistful memory
Of the last-drunk bitter bowl
Of her caresses' treachery
O Lord, have mercy on his soul.

It must be added, in conclusion, that Suhrawardy himself does not attach much importance to his poems : "The more I live the more I am convinced in my inner being that words are merely used in order to suggest a great and deep reticence. So that all the foolish adjectives of some of my poems appear to me to be sins that screech to my quietness like parrots". These remarks do honour to Mr. Suhrawardy's humility and his wisdom, but by no means take away from his best poems their marble smoothness, strength and beauty.

IV

Mr. Manjeri S. Isvaran had the misfortune to have his first book of poems, *Saffron and Gold* (1932), reviewed with unnecessary acerbity and an almost total lack of sympathy by the *Hindu Literary Supplement* of Madras. Other reviews of

the book were more judicious and more complimentary, but the *Hindu* review—it had been the first and the longest—rankled still ; Isvaran had every reason to feel hurt, to become even a victim of melancholy. When a poet publishes his poems, his poems (to quote Prof. Menezes) in their turn publish *him*. Writing poetry is telling secrets, it is almost opening a wound ; and the reader (and especially the reviewer and the critic), on his part, should respect the revelation, he should touch the wound, if he must, only with love.

And what was the head and front of Isvaran's crime ? He, an Indian—an Indian who had not visited England—had dared to publish a volume of English verse. If a book of Indo-Anglian verse is flat, or immature, or even downright bad, we have a right to say so ; but we can say so without assuming a lofty air and indulging in Jeffreyan diatribes and attitudinizations. If we can study English, teach it and " profess " it for twelve hours a week, and examine candidates on their " proficiency " in English Language and Literature ; if we can write personal letters in English, annotate English Classics, and deliver Extension Lectures in English ; if we can even write plays and novels and biographies in English ; if we can do all these things without a qualm of conscience, one fails to understand why we should frown only upon the Indo-Anglian poets. As Sri Aurobindo has well pointed out, " these mental barriers will begin to disappear " as people become (as they are fast becoming) more and more polyglot.

If Indo-Anglian poets write badly (so do the vast majority of contemporary English and American versifiers also), let us by all means say so ; but let us not associate Indo-Anglian poetry with a sort of " original sin ". The Indo-Anglian poets have as much right to live and to be heard as have other species of Indo-Anglians, be they novelists, journalists, review-

ers, or professors. It may be added in passing that most of the reviewers and critics in England and America are as a rule more generous in their understanding and more fulsome in their appreciation of the work of the Indo-Anglians than are many of our own super-paragons and pontiffs.

V

If the review above referred to had been intended to shock Mr. Isvaran into silence, it did not succeed in the least, for he has since given us some more books of verse,—*Altar of Flowers, Catguts, Brief Orisons.* He is, besides, the author of a critical study of Mr. K. S. Venkataramani as Writer and Thinker and of a book of short stories, *Naked Shingles.* He also edited for about a year an excellent monthly magazine, *The Short Story.*

While it is clear that the *Hindu* review could not hush up Mr. Isvaran, it nevertheless did leave scars, and we find him returning to his grievance again and again. This is to be regretted, although this has given us one or two passages where very resentment acquires the touch of poetry. And even apart from this ineradicable tendency to counter-attack, Isvaran's recent poems are the products of melancholy, frustration, and bitterness. We do not hear now such strains as these, all of which are from the earliest volume :

> Once on a night
> My ~~soul~~ Soul took flight
> From out the dark prison of bony bars,
> Spirall'd heav'nward and stray'd amid the stars
>
> The sea is calm, the shingl'd shore is lash'd
> By wavelets tipp'd with phosphorescent foam
>
> Crimson hibiscus and rose
> And jessamine white as the snows ....

Come, Beloved, come, and sit by the side of me
Here where the sands are soft and slope toward the sea,
A warm west wind wakes wimpling wavelets on the strand ...

In his more recent poems, Isvaran's touch is surer and his metrical mastery is more unfailing ; he attempts *vers libre* with striking success ; and he is modernist without being unintelligible or merely violent. He achieves sometimes the brevity and suggestiveness of the best Imagist poetry, as for instance in:

Where the lucent skyline
Fringes the sea,
Expanding sapphirine
Unwrinklingly,
A cloud, gossamered gold,
Glimmers awhile
Dreamwise ..... do I behold
The Mermaid Isle ?

In *A Life's Love,* the emotional history of a lover is narrated in a sequence of six lyrics in which the very rhythms and imagery are attuned to the vicissitudes in the lover's life. Likewise, many other lyrics—*Faith, Courage, Dewdrop, Teardrop, Taj Mahal,* for example—surprise and satisfy the responsive reader by their clarity of vision, their mastery of phrase and their general artistry.

In *Catguts* and *Brief Orisons,* however, another Isvaran also speaks out his thoughts—a satirical, ironical, Prufrock-like Isvaran, who is both clown and seer, poet and ventriloquist. This Isvaran knows his Eliot and his Auden and his Ezra Pound, and no wonder he gives us lines like the following:

Let us not tarry, you and I,
to touch and kindle feelings where they are dead ;

where men and women measure their years in yawns.
clothed in cobwebs of boredom spun of their bloated
flesh and sins,
carrying dead races, dead nations, dead worlds,
and the carcasses of dead constellations in their
breasts....

Wife ! why this desperate struggle to keep up a synthetic youth,
having past the milestone of mellow menopause ?
Dye for the graying hair and dentures for the mouth,
and braces and buckles to bolster up the pendulous
breasts ?

Reflections of a Septuagenarian, *Asterisked*, *The New Woman*, *The Complete Bachelor*, *Afterpiece* and *Frustration* are some other effective pieces in the new style. *On Sale* is an indecorous tragedy in seven lines, told with merciless brevity and brutality ; *Superatom* has the Aldous Huxley touch, the Huxley of *Leda;* and there are several other poems that are written in a similar satirical vein.

Although all these poems make interesting reading, although they all both amuse and wound, and although perhaps in his present mood Isvaran cannot help letting himself go in this fashion, the present writer nevertheless feels more at home in the poems cast in the traditional moulds ; he feels that Isvaran's very resentments and reserves of strength can be given nobler utterance and revealed more fittingly in traditional rhythms like these :

O Friends of fair weather,
When loomed distress,
You left me to die : death I smiled away
I'm proud in my loneliness.

O World, you tried to freeze
Me with chill woe,

But there was warmth in my heart : e'er will be ;
I'm majestic in my sorrow.

O Invisible Great !
I bow to Thee,
Blasphemers mock : ay, they have mocked always ;
I'm high in my humility.

VI

Mr. P. R. Kaikini is another of the "new" poets who has evolved an utterance of his own, at once very sensitive to the many evils in our midst and outspoken in condemnation of them. Free verse as is practised by poets like Isvaran and Kaikini, at any rate in their best efforts, has in a measure justified itself. As Prof. E. E. Speight remarks : "It is consonant with the subtle braininess of so many sections of the Indian intelligentsia that this new poetry should find able exponents in India, for it gives greater scope to individuality without demanding any approach to traditional English technique ..... The compensation for an Indian poet's inability to attain to genuine poetic melody in a foreign medium is this freedom which allows the individual rhythm, controlled by foreign words, to interpret experience".

Indeed, for the Indo-Anglian, who has neither the inclination nor the opportunity to gain an intimate knowledge of English sound values and verse forms, there are only two courses open—either to write prose-poems or to resort to *vers libre*. Kaikini's first two books, *Flower Offerings* and *Songs of a Wanderer*, consisted of prose-poems in the *Gitanjali* manner and some attained a high degree of emotional tension and verbal suppleness. The type can be best illustrated by these two pieces :

They took me to a place bright with morning night.
But I found it dark like empty dreams, without you.

They took me to an unlit cave in the heart of a wild forest. I found it flooded with light from the quenchless flame of your being.....

Yesterday, when my young heart went to bed, it was full of joy, life, love and hope.

But this morning, when I awoke from strange dreams, I found my heart was bound up with the restless shadows of a struggle within and the vaster darkness of a strife without, blinded in a storm of blood and water.

Presently, the mood changes, and with the mood the medium as well ; henceforth would Kaikini sing of " blood and war ", not of " joy and dynamic life "; and he would wield the rough-hewn instrument of *vers libre,* not the lolling and lounging rhythms of prose-poetry. We have accordingly these four volumes : *This Civilization, Shanghai, The Recruit,* and *The Snake in the Moon.*

Kaikini's recent poems no doubt reflect a mind sensitive to the many tremors and quakes and marsh vapours in the contemporary world. In Mr. Michael Roberts's words, this poetry " looks out at the world of science, politics, and every-day affairs, and it expresses a passionate sense of right and wrong ". Kaikini's themes are no more the felicities of Nature, the languorous thrills of romantic love, or the dreamy fervour of religious ecstasy. His muse dwells rather on the Quetta Earthquake of 1935, the sobs and groans of the Shanghai of 1937, the war that " tore open the cloudy September skies " in 1939, and the dismal human predicament of 1942. Even a subject like " Evening " is treated with downright realism :

> Round the bend a young maid powders her face as she walks;
> At the end of the street four bluff men push an old worn-out Ford.

This mood of disenchantment and disillusion is also pithily expressed in the last lines of *Decline and Fall* :

> Time was when wonder shone supreme in our eyes ...
> But alas ! to-day shattered and broken we fall.

In his recent poem, *Snake in the Moon* (1942), Kaikini attempts an elaborate picture of present-day disintegration and chaos, exploiting with a measure of success several of Mr. Eliot's artifices. Kaikini vivifies Hell—the Hell of the war-ridden world :

> Rivers of blood clotting and germ-infested
> germ-infested and clotting clotting
> Rivers and rivers of blood blood
> warm beating human blood rotting rotting.

Kaikini's cup of disillusion is full to the brim, and he begins and concludes his *Snake in the Moon* with the lines :

> This the existence I would cherish
> To be happy like the unthinking rainbow
> Or a greedy crow on the wing for scraps of alien garbage
> The self-effacement of chiaroscuro.

VII

Mr. Krishan Shungloo's *the Night is heavy* was published in March 1943. The transition from Kaikini's *Snake in the Moon* to Shungloo's *the Night is heavy* is very apt and suggestive. Shungloo too is a modernist—more of a modernist, in fact, that is either Kaikini or Isvaran or Suhrawardy. The prefatory note tells us that the thirty-nine poems in *the Night is heavy* were all written when the author was a student at Oxford. The "irregular pace of the verse" has been deliberately chosen since it is "best suited to the violence of our times and the interpretation of my moods". The poems are,

further, " essentially subjective. They tell of my struggle with life and its realities, and as such they wholly belong to me."

These thirty-nine poems are numbered carefully, but are not named ; they do entirely without capital letters and punctuation marks ; and, of course, they are written in unrhymed irregular verse. But one soon gets accustomed to these external peculiarities ; one is able to read the poems as poems, and one then realizes that Shungloo *is* a poet—a poet who is profoundly disturbed all the time about something or other. Shungloo is indeed like an unhappy man who has lost his soul and is desperately eager to get it back—but cannot. It is a bad mad mood, it is a self-destroying mood—but it is also a mood that can give rise to some poignant poetry :

in courting life
i have wedded despair . .

i too have rotted in flesh and spirit
crucified my love on a harlot's bed
crossed the seas athirst for knowledge
of the written word to steer my ship
and dreamt the moneyed equation
and on waking kissed the hour-glass
and gazed at the crystal .

we are the god's jest
the cryptic joke
we doubt and have no answer.

Shungloo's muse drapes herself even thus with seven-fold melancholy ; civilization is a curse, the war is a crime, and we men are the " god's jest "; there is no hope, none, for us—

fraulen i mean
men and women wearing the mask of life
the dead souls of our civilization

CHAPTER XVII

MISCELLANEOUS POETRY

I

Sir Mahomed Iqbal was not an Indo-Anglian poet, but his outstanding contributions to Urdu and Persian poetry made him one of the major formative influences on modern Indian poetry. He was a professor, a patriot, a publicist, a satirist, and a philosopher. Some of his patriotic poems have become a part of the national heritage and are sung from one end of the country to another.

Many of Sir Mahomed's poems have been rendered into English by Prof. R. A. Nicholson and some by Sir Zalfiqar Ali Khan; and even in their English dress they retain much of their concentrated fury of expression and sustained eloquence. He was truly "the Voice of the poet of To-morrow" and his prophetic strains have moved many a younger Indian poet to courageous self-expression.

Sir Mahomed believed in the future of his country and he believed too in the future of the world :

> Silence the noise of the nations,
> Imparadise our ears with thy music,
> Arise and tune the harp of brotherhood,
> Give us back the cup of the wine of love.

This abiding faith in the future of India and of the world has been a source of positive inspiration to many a younger poet, both Hindu and Muslim.

II

Among Muslim writers of English, of English verse especially, particular mention must be made of Nawab Sir Nizamat Jung Bahadur. Born in 1871, educated in India and at

Cambridge, Sir Nizamat has occupied very important positions in the Hyderabad state.

His *Casual Reflections* and *Morning Thoughts* use the medium of English prose, at times prose of a singular force and suggestiveness, for the communication of his inmost thoughts on the many problems, big and small, that confront men and women to-day. These prose pieces may almost be called miniature essays, in the course of which Sir Nizamat is caught unawares murmuring to himself, in the words of the old song, "says I to myself, says I".

Sir Nizamat's verses and sonnets have been collected and published with the titles, *Sonnets and Other Poems, Love's Withered Leaves*, and *Islamic Poems*. In the earlier volumes we come across a number of love poems and Nature descriptions, the following extracts being fair samples of these :

> When I approach thee, love, I lay aside
> All that is mortal in me. With a heart
> Absolved and pure, and cleansed in every part
> Of every thought that I might wish to hide
> From God, I come .....

> A gleam of light sailed o'er the water's breast
> From out the fading distance towards the shore
> Crowning with gold each swelling wave that bore
> This gloom of shadows deepening in the West.
> Now here, now there, from shivered crest to crest,
> It leaped, it flew—and then was seen no more.

Even in his "Islamic" poems Sir Nizamat reveals a similar poetic sensibility and ease in versification. The poems, however, are not "Islamic" in the narrow religious or theological sense. Poetry must be inspired somehow, and it happens that several of Sir Nizamat's poems are inspired by Islam, its sacred places, its Great Calliphs, its spiritual Empire. It

is not necessary to be a Muslim to be able to appreciate the thought or language of these lines :

> Not in those realms where rivers flow,
> Of milk and honeyed wine,
> Or where with mystic light aglow,
> The eyes of Houris shine ;
> Not there, O soaring spirit ! lies
> Thy home of bliss, thy paradise.

Sir Nizamat has been described by his friend, Mr. A. Yusuf Ali, as a man "who finds peace in Poetry, wealth in the stores of History and Imagination, consolation in the message of religion and serene beauty in the personality and mysticism of the Preacher of Islam". As the recordation in verse of such a worthy gentleman's musings and prayerful meditations, *Islamic Poems* and its two predecessors deserve to be read with attention and respect.

III

We have no space to discuss in detail a number of other Indo-Anglian poets ; we have, therefore, to content ourselves with merely mentioning some of them by name.

Principal V. Saranathan of Trichinopoly published over twenty-five years ago a slim book of verse, *First Sheaves*, containing an interesting playlet on Indrajit. More recently Saranathan has published a series of political sonnets, inspired by subjects like Neville Chamberlain, Czechoslovakia, the Nazi persecution of the Jews, and the Civil War in Spain. His verses neither transfigure thought into poetry nor transport the reader to a delectable realm of their own ; but some of these latter-day sonnets are sufficiently thought-controlled and expressed forcibly enough to merit the name of poetry which is PROSE

Mr. B. Vasudeva Rao is the author of *Of Here and Hereafter, and other Poems*. He is a serious poet discoursing with

due solemnity on either the problem of evil or the rhythm of life or the "Mysterious Alphabet" of Life or the Ladder of Knowledge or the ethical implications of the fall of Napoleon Bonaparte; other poems are dedicated to the memory of a Shelley, a Wordsworth, a Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, a Chatterton or the poet's own grandmother. Vasudeo Rao's is too earnest a muse to move the reader or even to entertain him. His ideas are proper enough and right enough—only they very rarely glow with the incandescence of poetry.

Mr. Jehangir Jivanji Vakil is a genuine poet who feels acutely and sings memorably; some of his songs have the fragility, fragrance and lucid outline of the best *haikus* and *tankas*—as, for instance, in this miniature poem :

O long black hair of love,
In your dark shades a dove,
My heart circles in rings,
Beating white wings.

Revelation, Transience and *Flame of Beauty* are other poems in Vakil's most characteristic style.

Another Parsi poet, Byram Talookdar, has given us a book of twenty-six lyrics entitled, *Pianissimo;* the poems are an incredible compound of W. H. Davies, A. E. Housman, and Edmund Blunden. The themes are the primary human emotions and Nature's inexhaustible fascinations; but Talookdar handles these traditional themes in his own way and the result is often sheer delight.

Mr. M. Gilbert's *Lyrics and Sonnets* is an immature work. His emotional attitudes display a considerable variety and he is apparently willing to take pains. But as yet his rhymes are uncertain and his rhythms are lacking in suppleness. His longer poems deserve our commendation for their conception rather than for their execution. But he shows himself now and

then fully equal to the restraint and dignity of the sonnet form and he is sure to do well as a poet in the future.

Mr. T. P. Kailasam is a leading man of letters in Kannada and is often described as the father of modern Kannada drama. His English poems are also very distinctive. *Kaikeyee* is a convincing delineation of the "hapless queen" and "ill-fated child of fame". *The Lake* is a "Ballad for Bairns" and achieves a breezy articulation from the first stanza to the last. Kailasam is undoubtedly an audacious and original litterateur, but somehow he has so far failed to rise to the full height of his great possibilities.

Mr. Susi P. David's collection of sonnets, *The Garland*, is a meritorious book. The sonnets are generally suffused with the author's unshaken faith in God. Love, Patriotism, Nature, all are seen with the chastening eye of Faith and rendered in quiet, insinuating, serene notes. Susi David's fifty sonnets are no mean achievement for one who is handling a foreign language.

Mr. R. V. Shah of Ahmedabad, in his *Pourings of a Struggling Soul*, has brought together eighty of his prose-poems dealing with the "first and last" questions that Man for ever wrestles with. Mr. Shah is quite obviously a deeply religious man and his musings and meditations have therefore an authentic ring.

IV

We have now completed our bird's-eye view of Indo-Anglian poetry. Partial though the survey has been, it should be enough to show that, considering the circumstances of its production, Indo-Anglian poetry lacks neither variety nor integrity nor intrinsic worth. The authentic—quite genuinely authentic —poets are doubtless a mere fraction of the large number of actual practitioners of English verse.

But, then, this is as true of the vernaculars as well as also of the literatures of European countries. Every year about three thousand new novels and about five hundred new books of verse used to be published in England immediately before the present war ; and how many of these will *live* a century hence ?

Hence it is not necessary to run down the Indo-Anglians ; as in every category of human beings, here too we shall have a few very good specimens, many more tolerable specimens, the rest being eligible merely for oblivion. The best Indo-Anglian poets have given us something which neither English poetry nor any of our regional literatures can give ; in other words, they have effected a true marriage of Indian processes of poetic experience with English formulae of verse expression.

And—to conclude—if what has already been achieved by a Toru Dutt, a Sarojini Naidu, an Aurobindo Ghose, a Nagesh Wishwanath Pai and a Manmohan Ghose is earnest of the future, we need not entertain gloomy thoughts about the Indo-Anglian poetry of to-morrow or of the day after.

CHAPTER XVIII

DRAMA

I

The Indo-Anglians have done little that is distinctive or remarkable in the field of drama. We have already referred in the chapter on Tagore to his plays,—*Chitra, The Post Office*, and the rest,—which are in a category apart ; they have been acted, at times with an astonishing measure of success ; in the main, however, they are vast symbols and have to be experienced and interpreted in the theatre of one's own soul rather than in theatres of brick and mortar or reinforced concrete.

(In the appropriate places we have also referred to Sri Aurobindo's tour de force, *Perseus the Deliverer*, Madhusudhan Dutt's *Is this called Civilization?*, Harindranath Chattopadhyaya's *Five Plays*, Uma Maheswer's *Buddha, Sita in her Sorrows*, and *Millennial Dawn*, and Saranathan's *Indrajit*. Most of these plays are dramatic in form no doubt, but were not apparently intended to be acted; they are, in intention (if not always in execution), poetic pieces pure and simple. This is true also of Isvaran's *Hira Bai: or, the Romance of Aurangzib*, a playlet in blank verse, Mr. B. N. Saletore's one-act play *Savitri* and Mr. Dhan Gopal Mukerji's musical play, *Layla-Majnu*.)

Bhushan's playlets—*Anklet Bells*, *Samyukta*, *Ear Rings* and *Mortal Coils*—are all interesting things to read, though rather somewhat flawed in construction; how far they can be successfully presented on the stage is more than the present writer can say.

Mr. A. S. Panchapakesa Ayyar has published a number of plays, *Sita's Choice*, *The Slave of Ideas*, *Trial of Science for the Murder of Humanity*, and *A Mother's Sacrifice*, all plays with a purpose and written in brisk English prose. Likewise Armando Menezes's *Caste*, Nocolau J. de Menezes's *The Son of Man*, and R. K. Narayan's *The Watchman of the Lake* are vivid compositions, whatever may be their possibilities on the actual stage.

There must be numberless other plays and playlets, written with a view to being only read, and hence unluckily buried in second-hand book-stalls or in the columns of old (and perhaps defunct) newspapers and magazines.

II

The paucity of good Indo-Anglian dramas, their poor actable qualities, their weakness in construction and their

general failure to reproduce the turns and rhythms of actual speech, all these are palpable enough ; and the reasons for this state of affairs are not far to seek either. Indo-Anglian dramatists have very few chances of having their plays presented on the stage ; they have to depend, therefore, on a scattered audience of readers. But the readers, on their part, prefer not unnaturally to read novels and stories rather than plays which, being deprived of the aids of stage scenery and acting, appear very tame in the duller and quieter atmosphere of the study.

Moreover, Indo-Anglian dramatists are in a position to tackle only a severely restricted number of themes portraying contemporary Indian life. Very few Indians speak English habitually ; many of the people who speak it habitually do so very badly indeed ; almost as a rule, these people mix English and the vernacular (or vernaculars) in varying degrees. Thus a rural Indian scene does not generally have an authentic ring in English ; neither does an urban scene which attempts to portray the lives of labourers or the emotional complications in an average Indian home.

No doubt, a peasant girl, a factory hand, an unsophisticated middle-class wife, her tyrannical mother-in-law, these too can be made to talk English ; as a matter of fact, some dramatists have made them talk English ; but it does not sound natural ; and it cannot sufficiently be emphasized that verisimilitude is of the essence of social or realistic dramas.

Thus the aspiring Indo-Anglian dramatist has really only two courses open to him : either to attempt serious drama on classical or historical or legendary or even modern themes, using for the purpose the most poetically effective speech ; or to attempt realistic or social drama, confining his range to that section or those sections of modern Indian society where

English, for some reason or other, is spoken regularly as a matter of course.

For instance, in many fashionable clubs in cities like Bombay, Delhi, Madras, Calcutta, Bangalore, and other big centres, men and women try to speak English habitually. In these cities, social gatherings also assume a cosmopolitan colour and perforce English becomes the fashionable and convenient means of communication between the Bengali and the Maharashtrian, the Malayalee and the Tamilian, the Gujarati and the Kannadiga.

Again, in Metropolitan Colleges and University centres, in popular city hostels and hotels, and even in some ultra modern homes where parents and children affect English for fashion's sake (but the fashion is said to be on the wane, really), the Indo-Anglian dramatist can find ample material for realistic or satirical or social drama. Such dramas will have verisimilitude and can stand representation on the actual stage ; other dramas, in which anybody or everybody is made to talk in English, may be interesting or amusing as stories but may not stand much chance of being stage successes.

III

There is, then the problem of dialogue, a problem that faces alike the Indo-Anglian dramatist and novelist. An Indo-Anglian's themes are, for the most part, necessarily Indian ; and the characters have to be also generally Indians ; and many of the Indians who talk English indulge in various types of Indianisms and Babuisms or (more rarely) talk just like books. How, then, can the dramatist make out of such unpromising material nervously effective or beautiful or brilliant conversation ?

The novelist at least can make up in the descriptive part for his unavoidable failures in the conversational part of his

books; but with the dramatist alas! all is conversation and nothing else, since stage-directions, however elaborate they may be made to be in a Shavian way, are props and no more. If the Indo-Anglian dramatist confines himself to the sophisticated sections of present-day Indian society, where English is spoken as a regular thing, he can certainly try to reproduce the curious turns, the memorable howlers, the laughable mannerisms, and the ridiculous affectations that distinguish our too-too-Europeanized folk in their ordinary conversation. Otherwise it would be better to avoid colloquialisms, archaisms, slang and so forth. When typically Indian characters—men and women who are sprung from the very soil of India and who have not ceased to be intimate with it—when such characters are made to say "Gosh!" or "dear, dear" or "dammit" or something equally absurd, we do not have versimilitude by any means, but only a perversion of the same!

It would, therefore, appear to be a healthy rule that men of the soil, when they are introduced in an English play, should be made to speak simple, unadorned, unbookish, conversational English, from which all vulgarisms and archaisms and slang are carefully and ruthlessly eschewed.

Considering the above inherent difficulties of the dramatic form, it is not in the least surprising that the Indo-Anglians have so far given us very few really good exhibits in this *genre*.

CHAPTER XIX

SOME DRAMATISTS

I

Among the most satisfactory plays by Indians in English are the many comedies and farces of Mr. V. V. Srinivasa

Iyengar, an ex-Judge of the Madras High Court of Judicature and sometime the editor of the Madras monthly journal, the *Everyman's Review*. His plays have been collected in two volumes entitled *Dramatic Divertissements*, and most of them have actually been performed with success. Indeed, plays like *Blessed in a Wife*, *Vichu's Wife*, and *The Surgeon-General's Prescription* have lost none of their sparkle even to-day and can be both read with pleasure and staged with success.

Many of Srinivasa Iyengar's "dramatic divertissements" are merely interesting situations where vivacious and entertaining talk is possible; the limitations of a "make-shift stage with very little scenery" where most of the plays were produced seem to have ruled out multiplicity of scene and incident and made the plays mostly a "talking" affair.

But, then, how breezy is the talk, how full of sparkle and innuendo, how natural, how eminently enjoyable! How ingeniously the jargon of the physicians and surgeons is bandied about in *The Surgeon-General's Prescription!* And, in the end, this is the prescription: "Your daughter Miss Kamala is suffering from an affection in her heart for Mr. Manamohan. The enlargement of her heart is due to her love. The dislocation was brought about in trying to force her to marry a decrepit old widower. The inflammation followed as a consequence. You must be very careful in the treatment. You should give her a change at once from the Zamindar to Mr. Manamohan. Marry them in a week. She will be all right. I trust you as a professional man to carry out faithfully my prescription. A. Hammersmith, *Surgeon-General*".

How cunningly, again, does the playwright reproduce the whole complex of multi-coloured life in the Metropolitan Club at Madras! "Let me assure the reader", says the dramatist, "that I have had no prototypes in mind and that the characters in the play are only typical and not prototypical". No

use! People would worry their heads a lot, wondering which of the exhibited caps would fit them to a nicety. The Metropolitan Club at Madras is not only the Cosmopolitan Club at Madras but any Social Club anywhere. We have a caste system in these "social" clubs—even there; but it is a very different caste system from the one to which we are accustomed in the outer world. Let Vasudevan explain:

> "The Brahmans are those that sit still in the reading-room upstairs. The Kshatriyas of the club fight at the cards table. The Vaisyas drive a profitable trade at snookers. And those who serve and return and return and serve on the Tennis Court are the Sudras".

Barrister Ratnam queries: "But who are the Panchamas?" Vasudevan has the answer pat: "You and I who belong to no caste and the occasionals who only pay their subscriptions and dropping in once in a way, peep about like Pariahs, and are glad to get away". And epigrams fly about in wild disarray and worldly wisdom assumes unusual garbs: the cheque-book is "the quintessence of convenience, the incarnation of modern credit and the very foundation of present-day social fabric"; "Woman's place is home! If home is womanless man is homeless" (Judge Atmaram Iyer, like Milton's elephant, jokes with difficulty, but it is a joke all the same); "the veranda boy must always be in the veranda"; and so on. After reading this play, *Wait for the Stroke*, we can readily sympathize with the author when he says: "I am conscious that the play is not longer than it is. But it is not because the Metropolitan Club of Sadras has no phases and features to furnish further material. It is not longer, only because those who wanted it wanted it no longer".

The Tragic Denouement, another entertaining little play, attempts to represent "the happenings of a morning in an Indian Lawyer's domestic office". It is without question a

caricature—but even a caricature glimpses the truth all right, only it may not be the whole truth! The situation that the dramatist has seized upon is intrinsically and tragi-comically funny. The brilliant lawyer piling lie upon lie just in order to make an impression upon his visitor, quite possibly a rich would-be client,—and discovering, all too suddenly, that it is only the Income-Tax Inspector come to gather information about the extent of this brilliant lawyer's practice!

While Srinivasa Iyengar can portray such situations with dexterous ease and contagious gaiety, he is not equally successful in historical drama (*At any Cost*) or in essentially serious drama (*The Bricks Between*). The former does not create the illusion of historic truth and the latter does not transcend the stage of intellectual analysis and soar into the realms of the higher realism where the lie becomes the truth and the impossible is seen to be probable indeed.

Srinivasa Iyengar achieved a considerable measure of success as an Indo-Anglian dramatist because he worked, by resolved limitation, within his own small bit of ivory. In most of his plays, he only attempted the delineation of characters entirely within his range, men and women who belonged to his class; he was therefore able to portray them dramatically and convincingly. Moreover, he did not attempt poetic drama or (except once) serious drama. He was content to move with delightful ease among the sophisticated impossibles and ineffectuals of a particular cross-section of society and he just amused himself and others by exposing the little follies and foibles pertaining to the chosen class and chosen types. He knew his metier, he knew his chosen bit of ivory (hardly two inches wide), and hence he succeeded where many others, with their heavier equipment and higher ambition, only ignominiously failed. We may conclude in the words of the late Mr. Justice V. M. Coutts-Trotter :

"They (Srinivasa Iyengar's plays) will commend themselves by their humour, their facile style and their quick-moving dialogue ... These plays give us charming little sketches of social life in India, drawn with the delicate touch of a humour, which while it unsparingly exposes the foibles of society to our smiles, never ceases to be gentle and kindly".

II

During the past decade or so, plays in English are being produced now and then by enterprising Indian writers and some of these plays are quite creditable. As yet, however, we have no masterpieces in this genre—we have only meritorious exhibits. But if more and more Indo-Anglians—instead of invariably wooing the muse of poetry—turn to the sister muse of drama, we are sure to have before long a crop of excellent Indo-Anglian comedies and tragedies and farces and what not. Meanwhile let us cherish what we already have.

In 1933, Mr. T. P. Kailasam, who has been referred to already in an earlier chapter, published two playlets, entitled respectively *The Burden* and *Fulfilment*. Both are inspired by our national epics; but they make a poignant appeal to us nevertheless. *The Burden* handles the theme that Bhasa has developed in his *Pratima Nataka* or Statue Play; but Kailasam's play has a strange power and beauty of its own. Bharata, returning from his grandfather's house, is made to realize, step by step, the remorseless truth—that Dasaratha, his father, is dead. Like Oedipus, Bharata learns the truth last, even Satrughna realizing it a minute or two earlier; and Kailasam has shown in the play that he can make prose a fit vehicle for the expression of tragic emotion. It is but a scene from the immortal *Ramayana*—but it is also a moving tragedy.

Fulfilment is a longer, more ambitious play. Ekalavya, Drona's unique pupil in archery, is making preparations for joining the Kauravas on the eve of Kurukshetra. Krishna tries to dissuade Ekalavya from making common cause with the enemies of the Pandavas, but Drona's pupil is determined to fight by the side of his master. The colloquy between Ekalavya and Krishna turns into a debate on "first and last" things, man's duty, good and evil, courage and cowardice ; Krishna is compelled at last to stab Ekalavya (much as Rama stabs Vali) in the back. Further, he is compelled to assure dying Ekalavya that his mother will not grieve as a consequence of his death. And Krishna, in order to carry out his promise, is forced to commit one more murder—he kills Ekalavya's mother also. If she dies before learning the truth about her son, surely she will have no occasion to grieve over his death !

A terrible play, almost recalling in its sheer terror that one act modern play, Lord Dunsany's *Night at an Inn*. But Kailasam scores again ; Krishna remains divine-human in spite of the denouement ; his words to Ekalavya have prepared us for the double tragedy and the great fulfilment for, as Sri Aurobindo says,

> The God of Wrath, the God of Love are one,
> Not least He loves when most He smites.

Kailasam himself does not exactly subscribe to this mystic truth ; he is content to state the facts as he sees them ; and perhaps, like Goethe, Kailasam does not care to tell us what precisely he means in his writings. It is the reader's and spectator's job to make what they will of Kailasam's plays !

III

Some other Indo-Anglian plays too may be mentioned here. Mohammed A. R. Khan's *Zamir : or Conscience Personified* is an interesting play that faithfully portrays one facet

of modern Indian life; Diwan Bahadur K. S. Ramaswami Sastri's *Droupadi* is a drama in five acts depicting the spiritual issues underlying the great *Mahabharata* story; Prof. D. M. Borgaonkar's *Image Breakers* is a problem play dealing with the institution of marriage; and the present writer's *Suniti and her Spouse* and *The Battle of the Optionals* are both farces of three scenes each.

Mr. Suryadutt J. Bhatt's *The Trial Celestial* is an interesting play enough, but it is overweighted with "purpose"; and it appears unlikely that, for all the sprightliness of its dialogue, the play will succeed on the stage. In his aggressive Foreword to the play, Mr. V. B. Karnik maintains that the play "subjects the values on which the whole ideological structure of orthodox nationalism is founded to a devastating criticism .... The author has here used, for the purpose of dramatic depiction, a god stripped of all his attributes that in the eyes of his devotee go to make up his godliness, in order to disillusion 'the old man in quest of his God', struggling through life on the strength of a misplaced faith. The technique can prove effective, if not in dethroning God, at least in making him incapable of interfering with men's affairs".

Be that as it may, Bhatt's Almighty ("stripped of all his attributes") is affable and genial; Voltaire has his moments of forensic indignation; the Astral Spirit blows alternately hot and cold; and the Old Man in search of his God is alas! unconvincing from the beginning to the end.

The Trial Celestial is cleverly contrived and is a very readable play; but its thought is on a par with that of an undergraduate prize debator moving the proposition: "Religion is a disease of the mind". At a time when even the Soviet millions organize mass prayers for victory, it is beyond the capacity of an Indo-Anglian dramatist to challenge and shatter

"the first premise of the religious mode of thought—viz. the existence of a supernatural agency".

Mr. Bhatt, when all is said, has the makings of a good dramatist in him; he is able to write breezy little speeches and he is gifted with a luxurious fancy. With a less intractable theme, he should certainly be able to produce quite an entertaining and satisfying play.

IV

Mr. S. Fyzee-Rahamin's *Daughter of Ind* has had the distinction of being performed at public theatres in England as well as India and it has been enthusiastically received by the press. The printed version also has now been made available and it can be (as it deserves to be) critically studied.

Perhaps, Fyzee-Rahamin attempts in his play to do far too much; he has a somewhat extra-dramatic prologue—suggested presumably by the practice of Sanskrit dramatists as also by the "Chroniclers" in Drinkwater's *Abraham Lincoln*—consisting of four characters, including the Narrator; the prologue, the epilogue and the apparently excrescent scene between the first and second scenes of Act II, all have been introduced to comment on the action, to suggest future possibilities, and to underline the moral of the play.

Again, in the course of the regular play itself, there are elements that are not realistic; mysterious voices are heard, apparently issuing from the *Kamini*, the *Chembelli*, and the *Rose*; *Rose*, for instance, speaks thus to Malti, the heroine:

> "I am the spirit of Mohini, the enchantress. My swarthy and deep colour is always shedding an enviable lustre, and I invite all by my rich and delicate quality, and they fall to my charm without resistance, to be torn by thorns as Kings were torn to pieces when they desired

> me. I overcome all with my beauty and overpower them by my essence. I am the soul of all flowers".

The plot, too, has its improbable aspects; the idealistic Englishman and the adorable little untouchable girl, Malti, both seem to be abstractions; on the other hand, the Colonel, the Bhatji, the Saokar and the valet seem to be mere caricatures or travesties.

What has happened is this: Fyzee-Rahamin has put into the crucible of his art both symbolism and satire, both romance and irony, both politics and poetry; Malti we feel is too good and too wise to be true; we feel that so many discordant elements could not possibly fuse into a coherent dramatic picture.

And yet *Daughter of Ind* somehow "bounces" us, as Mr. E. M. Forster might put it; we begin by scoffing and end by discovering in Malti, not merely the age-long virtues of a typical "Daughter of Ind", but indeed (in Mr. Maurice Hewlett's words) "the inexhaustible bounty of women". The Narrator rightly says in the end:

> "Malti—she knew the meaning of love, and held life as an instrument to gain its end! She gave her greater self with its inner spiritual glory—she was the candle that burnt itself to give light to others. Malti! Your spirit now stands a symbol of deeper Consciousness, a consciousness, that supplies spiritual and mental forces that are vital for human existence and those that Humanity is searching for! Malti—Daughter of Ind".

A trifle pompous, no doubt, but how true! Mr. Fyzee-Rahamin has shown that an Indo-Anglian play is not an impossibility It is for others now to emulate and better his example.

CHAPTER XX

EARLY FICTION.

I

Very few Indians seem to have attempted fiction in English till the beginning of the present century. There was, as we have seen, considerable literary activity, especially in Bengal, during the last quarter of the nineteenth century in English and also in the vernaculars ; but original fiction was attempted mainly through the medium of the mother tongue. Sometimes English renderings of vernacular fiction appeared ; even so, the number of novels published by the Indians was not very large.

The marvellous Torulata (Toru Dutt), besides her many poems and her French novel, wrote in her teens an English novel also, *Bianca or the Young Spanish Maiden ;* it was published after her death by her father in the columns of *The Bengal Magazine.* It was certainly a remarkable performance for a mere girl to whom English was an utterly alien language. The novel, however, has not been published in book form.

Romesh Chunder Dutt was, among many other important things, a gifted novelist as well. Two of his Bengali novels were also published in English, the translations being the work of the author himself. *The Slave Girl of Agra : An Indian Historical Romance* (1909) deals with Mughal times and gives a picture of social life in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Love, hatred, intrigue, jealousy, all these are shaken into a compound in the novel.

Romesh Chunder's *The Lake of Palms : A Story of Indian Domestic Life* (1902) is an intimate and reliable picture of social life in the Bengal of about half a century ago. "*The Lake of Palms*" is the name of the village in which many of the scenes in the novel are laid ; and the village is almost the hero

of the book ; in it or out of it, its children are utterly unable to tear themselves spiritually away from it.

The Lake of Palms is crowded with a whole host of interesting characters. Bindu, Uma, and Kalee, Sarat, Sudha and Dhananjay, all are vividly and convincingly portrayed ; the crucial event, the marriage of Sarat to the young widow Sudha, is casually related to the rest of the action and is thus artistically presented.

And yet, while the atmosphere of the village pervades the book, the inset snapshots of city life are no less interesting. Here we have indeed, not only a good story but a good novel, in which action and character are reasonably bound by the logic of causality. Romesh Chunder's language also is throughout adequate and meets the demands made upon it without any perceptible strain.

II

Two very early novels were Raj Lakshmi Debi's *The Hindu Wife, or the Enchanted Fruit* (1876) and Khetrapal Chakrabarti's *Sarata and Hingana* (1895). These novels have, however, no more than an antiquarian interest for us. Hardly more important for the historian of Indo-Anglian literature is either H. Dutt's *Bijoy Chand* (1888) or Kali Krishna Lahiri's *Roshinara* (1881).

Infinitely more significant are the various English translations of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's celebrated novels which largely contributed to the literary renaissance in India during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. *The Poison Tree : A Tale of Hindu Life in Bengal* was translated and issued in 1884 ; *Kapalkundala* in 1885 ; *Durgeshnandini* in 1890 ; *Krishnakanta's Will* in 1895 ; *The Two Rings* in 1897 ; and *Rajmohan's Wife* in 1904. These novels were read widely outside Bengal, in India as well as abroad ; through them alone could

the non-Bengali reader catch a faint glimpse at least of this great Titan in letters who taught the country the potent mantra of *Bandemataram.*

Bankim Chandra's novels gave at once a standing and a status to the Indian novel, which now seemed to have left its nonage far behind and to have started already on its full career. His novels were more than mere novels to trifle idle hours with —they were the testaments of a ripe seer's wisdom, they constituted the Bible of the new patriotism. In the words of Sri Aurobindo,

> "It was the gospel of fearless strength and force which he preached under a veil and in images in *Ananda Math* and *Devi Choudhurani.* And he had an inspiring unerring vision of the moral strength which must be at the back of the outer force. He perceived that the first element of the moral strength must be *tyaga,* complete self-sacrifice for the country and complete self-devotion to the work of liberation .... Again, he perceived that the second element of the moral strength needed must be self-discipline and organization. This truth he expressed in the elaborate training of Devi Choudhurani for her work, in the strict rules of the Association of the "Anand Math" and in the pictures of perfect organization which those books contain. Lastly, he perceived that the third element of moral strength must be the infusion of religious feeling into patriotic work. The religion of patriotism—that is the master idea of Bankim's writings".

Prophecy, then, was Bankim's peculiar gift ; but his novels are also beautifully realized in terms of art. Bankim belongs to Bengali literature just as Rabindranath belongs to it ; but both of them belong at the same time to India as a whole ; and it is not therefore inappropriate that Indo-Anglian litera-

ture should claim a legitimate share in the achievements of these Titantic literary figures.

III

The late B. R. Rajam Iyer, who produced in *Kamalambal Charitram* one of the earliest and best novels in Tamil, wrote an English novel as well, *Vasudeva Sastri*, which serially appeared in *Prabuddha Bharata* in the closing years of the last century; the novel is now republished in Rajam Iyer's *Rambles in Vedanta* (1905).

Vasudeva Sastri is a study of "true greatness"—the greatness of a Vedantin. Rajam Iyer sketches his portrait with convincing vividness:

> "... a middle-aged man of fair complexion and well-proportioned limbs; his face was the most remarkable thing about him. There was a calmness and a serenity in it, a gentleness, a sweetness and a luxuriant cheerfulness like that of a full-blown lotus flower, which an ancient rishi might have envied; and in his large, beautiful eyes, there was an angelic expression of goodness, which by its silent and sweet magic could have soothed the anger of a Durvasa. The glory of these eyes, if I may say so, lay, not in occasional lightning-like flashes, but in their constant and continued revelation of the ocean of goodness, love and calmness that dwelt within .... He seemed to depend for his happiness on nothing outside and he was never known to be excited either by pleasure or by pain and much less get angry".

Perhaps, the language is a trifle over-elaborate; it is Oriental in its particularity and similitudes; but it is competent enough to bring to life a Vedantin like Vasudeva Sastri, a sweet and pious lady like Seetha Lakshmi, a termagant like Annammal, a pompous and humourless official like Narayana Iyer. Al-

though Rajam Iyer died in his prime when he was hardly twenty-six years old, he already wielded an English prose style of remarkable power and elasticity. The twenty chapters of *Vasudeva Sastri* (the book was not completed by Rajam Iyer) show both his delicate sense of humour and command over English.

Vasudeva Sastri is very interesting to read ; the characters are creatures of flesh and blood and even the current of Vedantism does not make the book dull. Now and then, Rajam Iyer adopts a Fieldingian burlesque style, but it turns out all right in the end. No doubt *Vasudeva Sastri* is a promise rather than an achievement ; before the promise could be redeemed, Rajam Iyer's own earthly course was run, and he remains, like Keats and Chatterton and Toru and Derozio, yet one more " inheritor of unfulfilled renown ".

Another early South Indian writer was Mr. A. Madhaviah ; besides his prose rendering of *Ramayana* and the metrical narrative on the tragedy of Snehalata, the unhappy girl martyr to the demon of the dowry system, he also wrote two novels, *Panju* and the more famous *Thillai Govindan*. The latter attempts to portray the evolution of a young South Indian intellectual who rebels against the cramping limitations of formal religion ; perhaps, the book is slightly autobiographical.

Yet another South Indian, T. Ramakrishna, published two romances, *Padmini* (1903) and *The Dive for Death* (1912). The first is a romance of the sixteenth century and under cover of a romantic story competently narrates the historical events leading to the great battle of Talikote, which brought to an abrupt and disastrous close the history of the never-to-be-forgotten Vijayanagar Empire. *The Dive for Death*, on the other hand, is based on certain South Indian superstitions and has on the whole an eerie atmosphere.

IV

Among other early books of fiction, mention may be made of Mr. S. B. Bannerjee's *Tales of Bengal* (1910) and *Indian Detective Stories* (1911) ; the former has been described by Prof. Bhupal Singh as "a sincere but commonplace collection of tales of rural India. Samendra, Ram Harak, and Sham Babu show that humanity is the same in rural Bengal as in rural England". The "detective stories" deal with crimes and detection, but they hardly ever acquire the scientific perfection of a Sherlock Holmes or Poirot story. Anyhow, Bannerjee's pictures of rural and urban Bengal will be of some value to the social historian.

Mrs. Ghosal (Swarna Kumari Devi) was the author of two undistinguished books, *An Unfinished Song* (1913) and *The Fatal Garland* (1915). Mr. S. K. Ghosh was a far better story-teller even when he assumed a long-winded Oriental pose. Apart from his *1001 Indian Nights or the Trials of Narayan Lal* (1904), which is readable fiction, Ghosh's *The Prince of Destiny* (1909) is an interesting novel with political implications. The "Prince of Destiny" is Barath,—an ambitious attempt at portraying a character who shall symbolize "a union of the highest ideals of the East and West". It is, for all its "purpose", a good story with a fair blend of action, characterization and scenic description.

Mr. S. M. Mitra's *Hindupore : A Peep behind the Indian Unrest* (1909) is a political novel. A certain Lord Tara proceeds to Hindupore, falls in love with the adorable Princess Kamala, and marries her. This human story is only a cover to do a bit of propaganda against the British administrator in India, the Muhammadan communalist, the Eurasian official, and the unsympathetic non-official European ; while the pro-

paganda may be said to be effective enough, the story itself is haltingly told and lacks verisimilitude.

V

From the North came in the meantime the delightful short stories of Cornelia Sorabji—*Love and Life behind the Purdah* (1901), *Sun-Babies* (1904) and *Between the Twilights* (1908). Some of these stories had appeared already in journals like *The Nineteenth Century and After* and *Macmillan's Magazine* and enjoyed a considerable vogue in England and India.

Miss Sorabji wields a facile pen and has an eye for incident and character and a commendable sense of form. Love and life *are* possible even behind the *purdah*, and Miss Sorabji is fully conscious of this fact; but such love and life assume a melancholy hue when described in a story or a novel. And tragedy or ecstasy, life behind the *purdah* is essentially "static" and is rarely a congenial theme for a novelist. But Miss Sorabji has done her best and has succeeded in writing stories that have the singular merit of at once telling good yarns and insinuating the great values and verities of life. Miss Sorabji is besides the author of a very well-written life of her sister, Susie Sorabji.

Another writer from the North is the Hon. Sardar Sir Jogendra Singh, the present Member for Education and Health in the Governor-General's Executive Council. *Nur Jahan* (1909), *Nasrin* (1915), *Kamla* (1925) and *Kamni* (1931) constitute Sir Jogendra's contribution to Indo-Anglian fiction. More recently, Sir Jogendra has published a biography of Guru Nanak and an informative and interesting book entitled, *Sikh Ceremonies*, a book that fully reveals an experienced story-teller's art.

Of Sir Jogendra's novels, *Nur Jahan*, as its title indicates, is a historical romance; *Nasrin* is a peep into "high"

life, the sensual and futile life of nawabs and taluqdars who eat and drink and inhabit the sensual Purgatory of their own creation. In his two later novels, Sir Jogendra attempts to portray "low" life also, though romance and philosophy are not given up either; and an hour or two can always be spent profitably in making the acquaintance of Sir Jogendra's nawabs and rajahs, his liars and drunkards, his hill girls and zenana beauties, his philosophers and metaphysicians.

Sir Jogendra's last novel, *Kamni*, is dedicated to his tenants "whose love was the inspiration of my youth and to serve them is the ambition of my old age". Kamni is the daughter of the village barber; she is persecuted by the admirers of her beauty; she and her father are compelled to leave their village and seek service in a city. After many interesting and often depressing adventures, Kamni obtains an asylum in the house of a Miss Greenwood; she is happy now, she learns to read and she learns many things, and she learns to love also. There is one more turn in the wheel of her fortune, and she succumbs presently to brain fever. Her lover, Ratan Nath, decides to start a school for the education of women, calmly awaiting the day when he could meet Kamni on the "other side of the grave".

Sir Jogendra is a good story-teller. His novels have a considerable admixture of philosophy and propaganda, but they do not smother the human element in the stories. Sir Jogendra is on the side of the angels; he is all for improving the condition of the peasants and relieving "the sadness, the utter tragedy of a woman's life"; he is an ardent Sikh, but he is no fanatic. One of the finest moments in his fiction is the gleam of mutual recognition that passes between a Sikh merchant and a Christian missionary. "I find in you a true Christian", says Miss Greenwood addressing the Sikh; and the latter says with a smile: "I find in you a true Sikh. All

those who work in righteousness and fight falsehood are Sikhs". It is good to have examples of such tolerance and such generosity of understanding in this land of many religions!

One more writer from the Punjab should be mentioned here: Balkrishna. In his sole novel, *The Love of Kusuma* (1910), Balkrishna attempted to delineate the minutiæ of Indian social life. As a novel, *The Love of Kusuma* must be pronounced a failure; realism and romance make an incongruous mixture in the novel; and humanity almost breaks under a heavy load of sermonizings and improbabilities. Mohun the hero meets Kusuma near the lake at Rajgirhi; and they fall in love as a matter of course. Around this theme Balkrishna constructs his fictional edifice—but it turns out to be neither a homely cottage nor a luxurious castle!

CHAPTER XXI

VENKATARAMANI, SHANKER RAM AND ANAND

I

Soon after the Great War of 1914-18, several Indian writers started attempting fiction in English. Tagore's Short Stories had come out in their English garb in 1915, to be soon followed by *Hungry Stones and Other Stories* (1916), *Mashi and Other Stories* (1918), *The Home and the World* (1919), *The Wreck* (1921), *Gora* (1923) and *Broken Ties and Other Stories* (1925).

Already immensely popular in Bengal, these stories and novels now acquired an international currency. We have discussed them, though necessarily briefly, in a previous chapter; here it is enough to point out that Tagore's novels and short stories gave an incentive to other Indians to attempt self-expression through the novel and the short story.

It may also be added that the post-War period (or rather the period between the two wars) in India saw a considerable change in the journalistic world. Old newspapers and journals well stabilized themselves and many fresh ones boldly made a bid for popularity. There was something of an actual demand for short stories in English and occasionally even for serial novels.

II

Among the Indo-Anglians who came to prominence in the first decade after the war, one of the most outstanding was Mr. K. S. Venkataramani. His first published book, *Paper Boats,* gave a few vignettes of South Indian village life, delicately and memorably sketched by an artist who is also a poet and humorist to his finger tips. Venkataramani *would* arrest change if he could ; but no,—the more's the pity !—the Indian village is changing, and changing for the worse. Thus the sketches in *Paper Boats,* although they but attempt an objective portraiture of the village temple, the typical grandmother, the Registrar of Assurances, the valiant beggar and the like, are really suffused with the author's regret that things should change, that they *would* change for the worse ; that the villager *would* migrate to the city ; that he *would* give his heart away in exchange for a mess of pottage. There are many who maintain—and not without justification either !—that *Paper Boats* is Venkataramani's best and most enjoyable book.

Close upon the heels of *Paper Boats* came *On the Sand-Dunes* (1923). It is a book of prose-poems ; the form had by then been popularized by Tagore's *Gitanjali* and its successors, but the urge for self-expression had certainly come from within. It is a string of musings and reveries and meditations, plaintively and at times aggressively moaning the general and almost irreparable hurt that modern civilization has inflicted

on sensitive souls ; it is almost a catalogue of the frustrations, ambiguities, and absurdities of our vaunted civilization, a catalogue streamlined by the agonizing music that screams out our accumulated ills. The following extracts will illustrate at once Venkataramani's attitude towards our Europeanized way of life and also the singular quality of his haunting and excruciating prose :

"What a lifeless throb has become our life ! The work that is meant to feed oneself feeds another and the sacred toil for the day becomes a chill, dreary loveless waste. Man is set on the treadmill and he goes round and round, footsore and palsied in a circle of pathetic waste.

That man, the giant of evolution, should become the slave of the very slave he himself had forged ! The ghost whom you raised to work for you has become your own master. Why ? The Nemesis of your own greed !....

"O Stars ! ever-shining that you are with the tranquil ease of the ages ! Tell me, do you labour for your twinkling light ? ... Do giant trees and long-winding creepers labour for their food ? Or the most fragrant flowers sweat for their perfume ? ... Then why should man alone on earth slave for his daily food ? ....

"The river has the sea. The flower has the bee. My life will end with me. But I am happy to be left alone on these sand-dunes cheered by the kiss of the truant wind, the chill embrace of the waves, the inscrutable lisp of the river, the strange music of the sea, and the broken light of the stars ...." •

Not all of the reveries in the book are of a high quality ; some are rather spoilt by the intrusion of a homiletic or a merely platform style ; and autobiography, poetry, and diatribe against political economy do not always fuse into art. But *On the Sand-Dunes* is typically a Venkataramani book ; the

best of him is in it, had we the imaginative sympathy to distil it out and the wisdom to treasure it.

III

Then came *Murugan the Tiller* (1927), described as "a novel of Indian rural life". *Murugan* literally took the intelligentsia of Madras by storm. Its vivid pictures of village life, its even more vivid pictures of city life, its profound studies in character, its poetry and its abundant good humour, these appealed to the "common reader" at once. Presently the book won golden opinions all over India and in the entire English-speaking world generally. Kedari and Ramu are a suggestive study in contrast; Janaki and Sita and Kokilam, heirs to the eternal feminine all of them, are yet finely differentiated; even Cadell and Markandam and Murugan ring true. The river scenes at Alavanti come at regular intervals and they are as good as choruses summing up the march of events "under the Alavanti sun and a little beyond" with an agreeable and tantalizing finality. *Murugan* is a plea for a return to the village; but it is also a very human story, a story that has won the hearts of several thousands of south Indian readers.

Murugan was followed by a sort of idealistic "tract for the times", *The Next Rung*, and a book for children, *A Day with Sambhu* (1929). In the latter, a miniature masterpiece in form and content and expression, Venkataramani achieved an astonishing simplicity in diction; and, excepting for the alien language in which it is clothed, this little book might very well be the friendly discourse of one of India's ancient rishis to a small boy in his Asram.

Kandan the Patriot, "a novel of New India in the making", and dedicated to "the Unknown Volunteer in India's fight for freedom", appeared in January 1932. Kandan was

a reincarnation of Murugan and they are both something of their creator, something of Mahatma Gandhi, something too of India's own undying spirit at its best and purest. The novel first appeared serially in the *Swarajya* ; and in book form it has had a considerable vogue in the country. It is, perhaps, the most artistic expression of the Gandhian era in Indian politics.

Kandan may be described as the poetry of idealistic politics just as *Murugan* is the poetry of idealistic economics ; they are the reverse and obverse of the same question—different only to be complimentary to each other. The battle-cries of civil disobedience, prohibition, swaraj, satyagraha, and the rest fill the vibrant air of *Kandan* and the sensitive reader can quickly respond to them all ; but all are rendered in terms of poetry and idealism. *Murugan* and *Kandan* are studded with many jewelled phrases and many seemingly excrescent passages of impassioned prose or idealistic philosophy. But they too are Venkataramani and one soon learns to understand and cherish them as well. One such significant passage from *Kandan* may be given here by way of illustration :

> "What does it matter to an impersonal divinity that choice flowers distil the honey from the dew by a mysterious process still unknown to the gods, that bees roam for miles to gather the honey drop by drop with infinite toil, and at last bring together this intricate work of worship to the Sun-God, and build the honeycomb amidst sun-lit rocks, patted by the roaming wind, blessed by the murmuring brook and kissed by the stars ; all only to be broken at the end by the heavy and plundering footsteps of man ?"

The creative urge of Venkataramani apparently exhausted itself in *Kandan* and *Murugan*, for we have not had from him during the ten years and more that have elapsed since their publication any comparable work of creative art. He has

no doubt given us a collection of short stories—*Jatadharan and other Stories* (1937)—but the bulk of it had been written in the twenties or earlier. Venkataramani has now turned his attention to Tamil journalism and is now editing with perseverance a Tamil monthly journal, *Bharata Mani.*

Admirers are often unreasonable ; they want their heroes to go through the same old gyrations again and again. Likewise Venkataramani's admirers wanted him to write novel after novel after the manner of *Murugan* and *Kandan ;* but he would not oblige his admirers, and perhaps, his present pre-occupations being elsewhere, he simply could not.

Whatever may be our regrets in this matter, Venkataramani's achievement, such as it is, is quite substantial and solid. As Sir C. Ramalinga Reddy has pointed out, Venkataramani "presents South Indian life both in its traditional, conservative and in its modern, dynamic aspects with convincing sincerity and fascinating power. His studies and interpretations are charged with sympathy, understanding and imagination and they range over a wide and various field".

It is to be remembered, however, that Venkataramani, like Tagore, is primarily a poet ; but he was driven to use the novel form as the most suitable channel for the communication of his reliable intuitions and his not-so-reliable panaceas. In *Paper Boats* and *On the Sand-Dunes,* in *A Day with Sambhu* and *Jatadharan,* in *Murugan* and *Kandan,* in all these books Venkataramani is artist and prophet both ; and when the alliance is incongruous—and it is incongruous now and then—it is the latter that turns out to be the loser. Venkataramani's major characters are intellectuals who perceive the futility of intellectualism ; they are sophisticated and Anglicized, but they pathetically wish to escape the stifling attractions of town life and return once again to the bosom of the country. Ramu, Kandan, Jatadharan, all are variations on the same theme

and they are all attempts at portraying the ideal Indian to be, the hero of to-morrow who will redeem the country and ensure its healthy progress.

Venkataramani the artist in words,—the creator of characters who exchange metaphors with delightful ease,—is also a prophet with a message to his countrymen. And it is a very simple message : "Be faithful to the land, and the land will be faithful to you". It is not a revolutionary message ; on the contrary, it is even in these degenerate days the unconscious ruling principle of several millions of mute inglorious Murugans and Kandans and Jatadharans in the seven lakhs of Indian villages. Venkataramani is their Laureate !

IV

Shanker Ram's English publications are only three : *The Children of the Kaveri* (1927), *Creatures All* (1931) and *The Love of Dust* (1938). A juvenile novel, *The Joint Family* remains unpublished ; but it has been translated by the author himself into Tamil and published recently under the name, *Parvathi*. The Tamil version is very good and hardly reveals traces of immaturity ; the characters are finely and firmly drawn, the dialogues are racy and convincing, and the plot has a rounded perfection that makes a lasting impression on the reader. It is to be hoped, therefore, that the original English version too will be published at an early date.

The Children of the Kaveri and *Creatures All* are collections of five and six short stories respectively, while *The Love of Dust* is a novel of nearly three hundred pages. Slender as is Shanker Ram's output, it is nevertheless of a very high quality, and consistently so. In his appreciative Foreword to *The Children of the Kaveri*, Prof. J. C. Rollo aptly remarks : "This simple representation of village life on the banks of the Kaveri is true and subtle. A sympathetic and vivid imagina-

tion gives life to the persons and reality to their problems. There is no pretence at mighty effects of situation or rhetoric. By entirely natural talk and the slightest touches of description the atmosphere of this cold and changeless rural life is communicated". These remarks are equally applicable to Shanker Ram's other books.

Shanker Ram's perennial theme is the Indian peasant. To him India is the unsophisticated India of the countryside, the *real* India. Shanker Ram knows the peasant so well that it seems as though he has not only provided the themes of these stories, but actually to have written them. The bareness of the language gives vividness and strength to Shanker Ram's portraits of villagers; he seems to have seized his characters by inward vision and portrayed them memorably and convincingly.

In a Preface to a collection of the Tamil versions of his stories, Shanker Ram wisely points out that a good short story should not only have a due concord of parts but should also, according to its own unique laws, *live*; it should lay the reader under a spell with the first sentence and release him only when the curtain is finally rung over the drama. Judged in the light of this ideal, Shanker Ram's attempts must be pronounced very good short stories indeed. In every one of them, there is a development and a crisis, the former being as natural as the latter is inevitable. There is no padding, no word-spinning; and there is always an admirable consistency in tone. The primary human emotions and passions—love and friendship, greed and hatred, revenge, filial piety,—are the sustaining *elan vital* of most of these stories. But humour is not absent either, though at its best Shanker Ram's humour is allied to a Franciscan universal sympathy that ennobles the very object that is apparently laughed at. Shanker Ram thus excels himself most while recording those great spiritual crises in human

lives when the dividing line between tears and laughter is very tenuous indeed. In stories like *Three Yards of Pumpkin Creeper, Is it a Crime to Ignore Another's Faith* and *When One Wound can Heal Another*, Shanker Ram's seemingly effortless art achieves its most memorable triumphs.

Shanker Ram's novel, *The Love of Dust*, is an inspiring performance. He has almost an infallible sense of form and this rightly excludes from the framework of his novel all elements of surplusage. The trouble with most writers is that they will not let one off ; they will insist on telling one everything, however clearly one may know it oneself. Shanker Ram's artistic restraint is, therefore, a rare quality to be thankful for ; his very silences are often eloquent and sometimes the inarticulateness of his characters suggests infinities in thought and feeling.

Shanker Ram knows Daridranarayana and can reveal the involutions of his thought and the very eddies of his soul. If Venkataramani is an Indo-Anglian variation of Tolstoy, Shanker Ram is a similar variation of Dostoevsky. Shanker Ram's characters raid the chambers of the reader's sub-conscious self and possess them with finality. Velan and Valli, the hero and heroine respectively of *The Love of Dust*, are creatures of the soil, open-hearted, simple and brave, and capable of love, sacrifice and forgiveness. Venkatachalam who loves his ancestral lands with a religious love and veneration is an utterly veracious and ennobling character. As for the wretched Chola, so awful, so pathetic, so very human, so almost like Dmitri Karamazov, he reminds us of the terrible portraits of the great Spanish painters or the characters in some of the stupendous Russian novels. Criminal or farmer or Kangani or boatman or tout, strip them of their professions or poses or protestations, and you find them all human, just "creatures all." Indeed, Shanker Ram would go even further

and equate men with buffaloes like Buchanna and Ramanna and with the tiger in *The Rajah's Last Hunt* that dies resignedly and heroically in a supreme attempt to bring succour to his dying mate in the throes of parturition. The ache that is ever at the heart of all living creatures is the stuff out of which Shanker Ram creates his vivid and moving stories.

V

Dr. Mulk Raj Anand hails from the extreme North-West of India, his birth-place being Peshawar. He was educated at the Punjab University and subsequently at the London and Cambridge Universities. A little under forty, Mulk Raj Anand has already several novels and other books to his credit.

Anand started with an excellent book on Curries and other Indian Dishes; he followed it up with a book on Indian Art and a series of remarkable novels, *The Coolie, The Untouchable, Two Leaves and a Bud, The Village,* and *Across the Black Waters;* his most recent publication (if none more recent still has yet come out!) is *Letters on India,* a plain-spoken account of the Indian situation to-day. Anand has besides published a number of short stories in English and various articles of general interest; and he has also been associated with the Indian Progressive Writers' Movement and is a member of the editorial board of *New Indian Literature,* the quarterly journal of the movement issued from Lucknow. Anand is thus both a copious and a versatile writer and his literary future is rich with possibilities.

As a delineator of Indian social life, Anand's sympathies are with the masses. His heart bleeds for the many underdogs in Indian social life. Hence the coolies and the untouchable are excruciatingly vivified before us as proofs of man's cruelty to man all the world over, and especially in the unredeemed India of to-day.)

(In *The Untouchable,* Anand tells the story of a young sweeper, Bakha, who starts life as a latrine-cleaner at the British Barracks.) Bakha admires the Tommies, for they treat him as a human being while the caste Hindus treat him as a mere "untouchable"; and he decks himself with the cast-off garments of the Tommies and saunters one day through the town. Bakha is now made disagreeably conscious of the fact that, European garments or no, he is still an "untouchable"; the Hindu merchant, the sanctimonious and lecherous priest, the inhumanity of the "twice-born" crowd, all sour and embitter him.

Bakha would gladly find a way out of his dismal predicament. The solution offered by the Christian missionary does not appeal to Bakha, who cannot even understand it; Gandhism too—notwithstanding the fact Mahatma Gandhi gives him the name of *harijan*—does not appeal to him in the least. Perhaps, there might be (Bakha thinks) something in the words of the modernist materialist who extolled the advantages of water-closets and an efficient drainage system, and so Bakha returns to his hovel raptly meditating on "the wonderful new machine which can remove dung without anyone having to handle it".

The hero of *The Coolie* is *Munoo,* a well-meaning lad like Bakha; Munoo works as a servant to a Babu, later as a workman in a pickle factory; the whirl of destiny shifts Munoo from one position to another, from one place to another, and he works successively as a porter, as a circus boy, as a labourer in a Bombay cotton mill, and, lastly, as a manservant of all sorts to a Mrs. Mainwaring. Munoo is exhausted in the end, and dies of tuberculosis.

The Coolie is a pageant—but it is a pageant that humiliates us; comradeship is an unknown thing in our super-sophisticated world; 'tis the poor alone that 'elp the poor. The India depicted in *The Coolie* is a dismal, superficial, terri-

fying India,—the India that the Western impact on the Orient has laboured to evolve. The life of labourers within and without our factories, the unspeakable squalor of one-roomed tenements, the spectacle of men and women sleeping on the pavements of a Bombay street, the tragedy of Hindu-Muslim differences, something of all this is vigorously portrayed by Anand. *The Coolie* is not a happy book to read ; but, then, it has only assumed the colour of its theme, and the theme is India, a segment of the real India, the India that is so sordid at one end and so human at the other !

In *The Village*, Anand takes us to a Sikh village ; and Lalu Singh, the youngest of a farmer's sons, is the hero of the novel. Like Bakha and Munoo, Lalu too is caught in a net of circumstances which seeks to entangle his spirit and destroy his body. Landlord and *savkar*, *sarkar* and superstition-ridden society, all seem to conspire against Lalu Singh ; he at once loves and hates his village ; he is perplexed and most ill at ease. He solves his personal problem by enlisting and sailing for the war.

Across the Black Waters is a continuation of *The Village ;* Lalu Singh is in Europe, participating in World War I ; Messines and Festubert figure much in the pages of the novel ; and Lalu and Kirpu and Latchman Singh are all portrayed with candour and perfect understanding.

VI

Other novelists too have ere now handled Anand's themes ; but they have generally treated the coolie and the untouchable as political and sociological problems. But Anand treats them rather as human beings, none the less human for being poor, superstitious, self-divided, indeed very human in spite of their daily misery and their thwarted purposings. Bakha and Munoo and Lalu, like Shanker Ram's Velan and Cholan, are

nakedly and convincingly drawn ; they belong to the real India, the India that for all her age-long aches could never die.

In his stories and novels, Anand tirelessly reiterates the changes that are imperceptibly altering the very fabric of Indian society and leading to a reorganization or—who can tell ?—a wholesale disaster. Families are breaking up, villages are getting depopulated, exploitation is assuming new shapes and putting on new garments, and the poverty of the Indian masses is bottomlessly deepening.

And Anand—Dr. Mulk Raj Anand, the Leftist—is angry, he is very angry ; but he is enough of an artist to save his excellent novels from the stigma of mere propaganda. And hence his characters—at any rate, his Indian characters—are almost as a rule recognizably human beings, not automata or formulae ; and his portrayal of the Indian scene is distinguished, when considered as a whole, by a fundamental and disarming veracity.

CHAPTER XXII

THREE MORE NOVELISTS

I

Karaka is a name familiar to many of us ; a journalist, a broadcaster, a commentator, a novelist, Mr. D. F. Karaka is indeed a figure of some importance in present-day India. He has lived freely and fully in India and in Britain ; and he talks and writes like the proverbial turned-on tap. He was sometime President of the Oxford Union, the first Indian to occupy the position ; and his first book, *The Pulse of Oxford*, seeks to give an unconventional account of his reactions to Oxford. It appears that Mr. Karaka had "three lamentable failures in my Bar Finals and one at the Indian Civil Ser-

vice"; it was, perhaps, just as well that it was so, for, while India has lost yet one more Barrister or Civilian, she has gained a Karaka instead, a something that is a welcome change from the general run of "England-returned" tragi-comedies of sophistication.

Karaka put into his next two books—*Oh! You English* and *I Go West*—his English experiences. The former is a loud and rather pointless indictment of Western, and especially British, civilization; one sometimes has the feeling that Don Quixote is tilting at the windmills. But it is racily written and no doubt Karaka enjoyed writing it. *I Go West* is partly reminiscential, partly a confession of faith; reading it one feels that now Karaka has one foot on Britain and another on India; Lloyd George and Simon as well as Gandhiji and Jawaharlal figure in its pages; and it is, on the whole, a serious and sober book closing with the peroration:

> "That is the vision which we dreamers see—the vision of a dark, free India, where those who are white will come as friends by courtesy and not as despots by force. All other visions are mere illusions. Only this we want to see. Only this must our children see, for they will be like us, born dark".

Returning to India, Karaka promptly entered the journalistic fray and he has been regularly contributing to the *Bombay Chronicle*. During the past few years, he has published a biography of Mahatma Gandhi entitled *Out of Dust*, two novels —*Just Flesh* and *There Lay the City*—and an account of his Chinese experiences, *Chungking Diary*. Karaka's admirers are still in doubt whether he lives only to write or writes only to be able to live—or, perhaps, to Mr. Karaka, there is no essential difference between the two propositions!

Be that as it may, Karaka is an indefatigable writer—whatever the occasion, whatever the theme—and he writes

"right on" and wields the English language with a nervous and easy freedom that is truly astonishing. It is true that, in spite of all his talents and his experience as a writer, he has not yet given us one really first-rate book. His very versatility as a quick-change artist has apparently stood in the way of his doing anything indubitably creative. A journalist—even a journalist in excelsis like a Gunther or a Karaka—necessarily lives in the present ; but the creative artist is rather required to seize by inward vision the undying, eternal, even transcendent elements in human nature and set them against the background of changing, baffling, inexorable to-day.

It is not that Karaka cannot rise to the height of stern creative endeavour ; but he is always too much in a hurry ; he turns out books—biography or autobiography or fiction or what you will—with the careless speed and ease with which he dashes off a half-column article for the *Bombay Chronicle.* No wonder that even his novels read like competent journalism —racy, witty, occasionally satirical, sometimes flippant and boisterous, and anyhow breathlessly interesting.

II

Just Flesh is a novel of English life set in the England of the uncertain nineteen thirties. Karaka's intimacy with English life has stood him here in good stead. Like his Geoffrey Durrant, Karaka has himself been President of the Oxford Union ; he has sufficient familiarity with country houses, art studios, theatres and the topography of London and its environs. Easily and naturally, therefore, Karaka has been able to evoke the atmosphere of English life and to reproduce some of its more obvious currents.

While the background of *Just Flesh* is thus adequate and credible, the characters themselves are not as convincing. As a human story, *Just Flesh* suffers on account of its author's

excessive pre-occupation with ideas. The axes he wishes to grind are palpable and they distract our attention from the human drama. The ideological clash between two generations is an intriguingly human theme and it has been successfully exploited by, among others, Turgeniev in his *Fathers and Sons* and Samuel Butler in his satirical novel, *The Way of all Flesh*. But in *Just Flesh*, the issue between Ronald Sommerville, the capitalist, and his son, John, seems to be unreal and occasionally even farcical. After all, the Conservative Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin, had a son who turned Socialist and entered the House of Commons; and Earl Baldwin and his Socialist son remained on the friendliest terms. As a class the Ronalds are not tyrants and the Johns are not idealists; they are, not only "Just Flesh", but also "Just English".

There is, no doubt, an unbridgeable distance between father and son even under the best circumstances—as is suggested, for instance, by Edmund Gosse in *Father and Son* or by C. E. Montague in *Rough Justice*. On the other hand, in *Just Flesh*, father and son merely strike melodramatic or heroic poses which they are unable to sustain for more than two consecutive minutes; their speeches are often merely hysterical, and they at last dwindle into mere formulas.

Karaka's second novel, *There Lay the City*, is located in Bombay and is as irresistible a yarn as its predecessor. And yet it is a disappointing novel. The blurb rightly points out that *There Lay the City* "is not a novel of interwoven plots. It might just as well have been a memoir or a personal diary"; but it is unsatisfactory even as a memoir or a diary. The scenes are laid in Bombay; of course, and we catch now and then whiffs of Indian smoke and seem to tread familiar ground; but the characters and incidents alike sound unreal, we find it a trying business to take Judy and her lover seriously, and

we can hardly believe in the Goan physician and Sir Udul Boice and the other queer fish Karaka has effortlessly landed.

There Lay the City has nevertheless one great merit—it vividly suggests something of the poignancy and tragedy of Hitler's War. The book is full of it; and it casts almost a deathly pallor over the whole prospect. Sir Udul Boice—"A Churchill in the office, he was a Chamberlain at home"—is driven by it to suicide; and death and mutilation and suffering are the unescapable refrains in the book. Love lifts its head palely, but it is stifled ere it could dedicate its full beauty to the sun; and we too feel like telling ourselves, "And near my heart I felt a pain, but I think it was just the lead moving again"!

Neither *Just Flesh* nor *There Lay the City* has 'form' or concord of parts; in neither has Karaka achieved a success as great as is his capacity; but they are both very readable novels. Karaka can always tell an interesting story; he can write with facility and at times even with charm; he can evoke scenes vividly and sketch the physiognomy of persons memorably; and he has a wide-awake contemporary consciousness. Many a great novelist has started his career with fewer qualifications. All that Karaka lacks is spiritual depth; he should learn to relate the immediate present with dead yesterday and un-born tomorrow; he should delve deeper into humanity, its eternal values and perpetual problems, and learn to portray these in his novels. (With more earnestness, less hurry, more reticence, less outspokenness, Mr. Karaka may yet become one of our great creative artists and not merely a clever and brilliant journalist that he is at present.)

III

In his explanatory Foreword to his novel, *Kanthapura*, Mr. Raja Rao confesses that the "telling has not been easy";

the whole story is put into the mouth of an old woman of the village who is supposed to tell it " of an evening, when as the dusk falls, and through the sudden quiet ... a grandmother might have told you, new-comer, the sad tale of her village ". The technique is thus Conradian—the grandmother here taking the place of Marlow—while the theme is the response of Kanthapura, a village in Mysore, to the challenge of Mahatma Gandhi's militant programme of satyagraha and Civil disobedience.

Raja Rao's is thus an ambitious theme and his technique is as old as the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* and as modern as Conrad and Joyce. The principal difficulty, however, is the problem of language. Raja Rao candidly faces the question:

> " One has to convey in a language that is not one's own the spirit that is one's own. One has to convey the various shades and omissions of a certain thought-movement that looks maltreated in an alien language. I use the word 'alien', yet English is not really an alien language to us. It is the language of our intellectual make-up—like Sanskrit or Persian was before,—but not of our emotional make-up. We are all instinctively bi-lingual, many of us writing in our own language and in English. We cannot write like the English. We should not. We cannot write only as Indians. We have grown to look at the large world as part of us. Our method of expression therefore has to be a dialect which will some day prove to be as distinctive and colourful as the Irish or the American. Time alone will justify it ".

Raja Rao himself is apparently quite at home in the English language and the tale that he unfolds comes to us with the murmur of familiarity and tenderness. Kanthapura is real, its inhabitants are real, and most of the episodes ring true;

Kanthapura is vivified as a significant microcosm that infers and contains within itself the potent currents and cross-currents that shake the vast sub-continent that is India.

The grand-mother—like all grandmothers—is a colourful story-teller. She narrates, she looks before and after, she sighs, she philosophizes, she waxes poetic, she wanes, and anyhow she has the ear of the audience. The story-telling, looked at close quarters, is but a disarming convention ; no grandmother could have actually told *Kanthapura*—all of it—at one stretch to a new-comer ; neither could a Marlow have told the whole of *Lord Jim* to the idlers around him nor could Lava and Kusa have recited the whole of *Ramayana* at one sitting to a court gathering. It is an old and useful convention ; and Raja Rao exploits its possibilities to the full.

As in Venkataramani's *Kandan the Patriot*, in *Kanthapura* also the hero is Bharatavarsha ; and even Rama and Bharata or Gandhi and Jawaharlal are but powers and personalities assumed by Bharatamata to make herself real and radiantly visible to the four hundred millions that live in the seven lakhs of Kanthapuras that constitute her potent and life-giving nerve-cells. It is to Raja Rao's credit that he has not made his novel mere propaganda ; it is full of Gandhian politics—but it remains a creative work of fiction, even a work of prose art.

Raja Rao's descriptions are sometimes poetical in their vividness and colourful particularity. We can here give only a single quotation:

> "Kartik has come to Kanthapura, sisters—*Kartik* has come with the glow of lights and the unpressed footsteps of the wandering gods ; white lights from clay-trays and red lights from copper-stands, and diamond-lights that glow from the bowers of entrance-leaves ; lights that glow from banana-trunks and mango twigs, yellow light behind white

leaves, and green light behind yellow leaves, and white light behind green leaves; and night curls through the shadowed streets, and hissing over bellied boulders and hurrying through dallying drains, night curls through the Brahmin Street and the Paria Street and the Potters' Street and the Weavers' Street and flapping through the mango grove, hangs clawed for one moment to the giant pipal, and then shooting across the broken fields, dies quietly into the river—and gods walk by lighted streets, blue gods and quiet gods and bright-eyed gods, and even as they walk in transparent flesh the dust gently sinks back to the earth, and many a child in Kanthapura sits late into the night to see the crown of this god and that god, and how many a god has chariots with steeds white as foam and queens so bright that the eyes shut themselves in fear lest they be blinded . . "

Joyce and Gertrude Stein, Eliot and Llewelyn Powys, all seem to have given of their best to make the music of this Song of Kartik; and, indeed, the evocation of nightfall in Kanthapura is almost as vibrant with nervous potency, though not as unpleasantly disturbing, as is the evocation of evening in Eliot's *Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock.*

IV

Karaka has a bag-full of axes to grind; Raja Rao too has his own axes, but he grinds them, as it were, only behind the curtain; but Mr. R. K. Narayan has hardly any axes to grind. As a story-teller, Narayan is at his best when he deals with the surface peculiarities of sophisticated South Indian life. The Anglicized Indian is his peculiar province. An interesting and often a pathetic creature, the Anglicized Indian restlessly hovers between two worlds, "one dead, the other powerless to be born"; in Professor Radhakrishnan's words, his voice "is an echo, his life a quotation, his soul a brain and his free

spirit a slave to things". He is a stranger in his own country, he is a self-divided and often a futilely anguished creature; he is a part of the tragedy of unredeemed India.

Narayan knows this interesting creature through and through and can portray him interestingly with just a delicate tinge of irony—the irony, like salt, introduced merely to impart savour to the delectable dish. When, however, Narayan goes out of his range, when, for instance, he attempts to plumb the elusive and ineluctable depths of tragedy or to sound the obscure significances of the seemingly humdrum lives of the sons of the soil, then is he flat and unconvincing, his touch is unsure, and the resulting picture unpleasing or puzzling.

Narayan's first novel *Swami and Friends*, is an Indianised version of Richmal Crompton's "William" yarns. Swami and his friends are credible young things, clever, serious, naughty, boisterous, in a word, wholly and admirably boyish. The slim, slight book does make the world of Indian school-boys live agreeably and vividly. It has also been published in a Tamil version and has delighted several hundreds of juvenile and adult readers.

Narayan's next novel, *The Bachelor of Arts*, is a more mature work and invokes a variegated chain of character and incident. College life in South India is sketched competently, though with a touch of caricature here and there. The European Principal, the different Professors (and especially, alas! the Professor of English), the debaters and the enthusiasts, all of them do what Narayan wants them to do and—let this be readily conceded—what they generally do in actual life.

When, however, our hero turns a Sadhu all of a sudden, one is incredulous and starts asking all sorts of questions. The bogus Sadhu *is* a fantastic bit to swallow; Narayan has ventured out of his familiar rounds and the result is not very satisfactory. But, of course, one need not make much of it—

the novel is in any case quite a creditable performance, "one of those rare books", to quote Mr. Graham Greene, "one can recommend unreservedly to every class of reader".

V

In his third novel, *The Dark Room,* Narayan attempts to portray the cross-currents in a middle-class South Indian home. The touches are few, but they are carefully executed; and the picture itself is a little triumph as a life-likeness and also as a work of art. The domineering husband, blowing hot and cold by turns; Savitri, the devoted wife; their children, two girls and a boy; the domestic servants: these are familiar enough types. Shanta Bai, an "ex-wife" turned insurance canvasser, is a piece of foreign matter projected into Savitri's familiar, unhurried universe. The husband is bewitched by Shanta Bai's languorous ease and glamorous dolour and neglects Savitri in consequence.

We have thus the usual triangular tangle, and inevitably there is an explosion in Savitri's home; but the man is impenitent. Savitri comes to a brave decision and leaves her home at night, rather like Nora in Ibsen's play, *A Doll's House.* However, unlike Nora,—but, then, Ibsen has not told us what happens to Nora afterwards!—Savitri returns to her husband, having pathetically tried in vain to stand on her own feet. She accepts the new situation with resignation and her life pursues its even course with scarce a perceptible tremor!

Savitri in the role of an Indian Nora is rather unconvincing. But the portraiture of her "Doll's House" is excellent. The description of *Navaratri* and of the visit to the Tamil picture, *Kuchela,* are full of understanding or unmalicious satire. The Western impact and the Indian reaction to it are ever so insinuatingly suggested; and it is this background that gives the story its peculiar flavour.

After *The Dark Room*, Narayan has not published any more full-length novels; but his short stories are appearing in the columns of the *Hindu* and in his own Quarterly Journal, *Indian Thought*. Two collections of these short stories—*Malgudi Days* and *Dodu and Other Stories*—have so far come out and they doubtless reveal the hand of a delicate artist.

As a short story writer, Narayan knows how to restrain himself from saying a word too much; a simple, single idea or situation is all he cares to concentrate upon—and he writes directly and clearly. There are no booby traps in Narayan's stories; they just come in a careless wave, and it is soon over, and the placid waters of life roll heedlessly again. The "Talkative Man" stories are rattlingly told; but even the "Talkative Man" knows the value of reticence.

Narayan is no angular Modernist; he does not delight in ciphers and complexes and conundrums; he just tells simple moving stories in a simple and convincing style. "Gandhi's Appeal", for instance, is a very simple story: husband and wife happen to attend a public meeting; Mahatma Gandhi makes a fervent appeal for funds for the Harijan cause; the wife surrenders her jewels, the husband gives away a fifty-rupee note. But Narayan makes a beautiful story out of this by no means uncommon occurrence; and it is neither propaganda nor special pleading; it is just a sensitively rendered human story!

Narayan has his limitations; his little bit of ivory is, perhaps, more than two inches wide; but it is a little bit all the same. He is comfortable only on the familiar levels and slopes of sophisticated life; the depths and the heights are alike not for him. Neither can he plan a novel on a big scale—at any rate he has so far not done so; the human "soul"—the favourite theme of the great Russian novelists—will not yield its secrets, its fires and its perturbations and

its darkling currents, to Narayan. But it is all beside the point; Narayan *is* a consummate artist and he is a master on his own chosen ground. Why then complain that he is not something else?

CHAPTER XXIII

MISCELLANEOUS FICTION

I

Like Narayan, Kumara Guru (C. Subramania Ayyar) also finds in the Western impact on our ancient Indian culture a fruitful field for his fictional studies which are collected in the two unusual books, *Life's Shadows* and *A Daughter's Shadow*. As Professor Radhakrishnan points out in his Foreword to the former, "these stories of India in transition are a mild protest against the Westernization of the soul of India that is now in process".

There are five stories in all in the two volumes of *Life's Shadows*—Brother; Wife; Son; Friend; Daughter. Kumara Guru has discovered an interesting technique of his own and his stories are not stories merely but an extraordinary blend of psychological study, social criticism, and special pleading. Narration, recapitulation, letters, diaries, dialogue, philosophizing, sermonizing, all are seemingly thrown helter-skelter into the mould of these stories; but they somehow, anyhow, fuse into organic and artistic wholes; in Mr. Forster's expressive word, they "bounce" the reader, and that is all that matters!

Before the advent of the British, the South Indian Brahmin lived—he had to live—a life of plain living and high thinking, scorning delights and living laborious days. English education diverted many Brahmins from their age-long habits and they ventured into the world as champion gold-diggers. Families

were broken up, personality was cleft in twain by the conflicting claims of the old civilization and the new, and minor and major domestic tragedies came to be enacted in Hindu households. Brother understood brother no more, nor wife her husband, nor son or daughter their father or mother, nor friend his bosom companion of former days.

The changes came about slowly, imperceptibly,—but they were there, looming immense in the end and refining humanity and kinship and generous understanding wholly out of existence. Brother quarrelled with brother and drifted apart; so did wife, so did son, so did daughter, so did friend. But although they were physically separated and spiritually divided, memory played its own dubious tricks off and on; brother or wife or son or daughter or friend cast from time to time his or her disturbing shadow across one's solitary path; memories bred regrets, regrets swelled to resentments; and there were bursts of recrimination or half-hearted attempts at reconciliation. But somehow the mental barrier persisted and remained insurmountable till the disturbing element was safely cremated and reduced to ashes and dissolved in the holy waters of a river! It was a terrible tragedy, all the more terrible because there seemed to be no way of checking it.

This is the situation that Kumara Guru portrays in his various stories. They are of absorbing interest; they are, indeed, part and parcel of us; and hence Mr. Hilton Brown is perfectly justified in describing these stories as "something more than short stories; they are illustrations or examples of a central and unifying philosophy. They are theses springing from deep thought and close observation. If they are in essence tragic, they are necessarily so as coming from one who recognizes an ideal, and at the same time laments its impossibility".

And yet, deep in his heart of hearts, every Brahmin, every Hindu, every Indian believes that this new civilization that has all but overwhelmed him is no good at all, that it has but led to a debasing of our spiritual values, that it has blessed neither the giver nor the receiver. As Kumara Guru says, "the old order has crumbled, but has *not* changed, yielding place to the new, and that is the real trouble with the sons and daughters of India". The putrescent additions to Indian culture must no doubt be removed, but its soul itself should not be tampered with; and this worshipping of the false gods of the occidental market place has changed this land of Rishis into a spiritual Waste Land—and we should wake up before it is too late!

Kumara Guru's interesting psychological studies constitute an important tract for the times. They are good stories and convincing human documents; they embody a philosophy of life and they unerringly hit the bull's-eye in our all too sensitive hearts; and we can never have too many of these palpitating renderings of "Life's Shadows".

II

Mr. S. Nagarajan's *Athawar House* is conceived in the manner of a *Forsyte Saga* or *Buddenbrooks* and it does give an enduring picture of a Maratha Brahmin family living in South India. The book covers a period of fifteen years and sketches the many changes that have taken place during these restless post-war years.

Gopinath, the head of the Athawar House, is lovingly delineated; he is a chip of the old block, masterful, kindly, tactful. With Gopinath are grouped the many other members of the Chudamani family. We follow the endless discussions in the family; things are freely talked out, but Gopinath has invariably his way in the end; the family shows cracks here

and there, but it persists nevertheless. The novel ends with Gopinath's death and the marriage of Sona, Gopinath's niece, to Venkataramani, Anantarama Iyer's son. The momentous un-orthodox marriage of a Maratha Brahmin girl to a Tamil Smartha Brahmin is an accomplished fact! The old order changeth; and progress in a fact. And, meanwhile, old Gopinath, symbolizing the old and the gold, lies dying; Athawar House "will have a new head; but not such another, not such another"!

Dewan Sharar's novel, *The Gong of Shiva*, is another well-planned, well executed, and wholly Indian novel. Kamini is given in marriage by her father, the rich banker Shivram Das, to Ram Nath. Kamini, however, is in love with Brij Lal. When her cruel husband meets his death at the hands of her brother, Subh, she seeks the protection of her lover, Brij Lal. Meanwhile, Subh is sentenced to a term of four years' imprisonment. His lover, Shanta, is forced to marry Kali Charan; when the latter dies, Shanta is free to marry Subh. But orthodoxy and an inexplicable barrier stand in the way. Dewan Sharar's story is told with speed and leaves a lasting impression on the reader's mind.

Mr. A. S. P. Ayyar, a District and Sessions Judge, is also a voluminous writer. He has published two historical novels—*Baladitya: a Historical Romance of Ancient India* and *Three Men of Destiny*—and many collections of short stories like *The Finger of Destiny and Other Stories*, *Indian After-Dinner Stories* and *Sense in Sex and Other Stories of Indian Women*. These collections bring conveniently together traditional Indian stories from various sources—Hindu, Jaina and Buddhistic. Their aim is, according to the compiler himself, "to provide some healthy laughter, and, at the same time, to shake off some of our deep-rooted prejudices by exhibiting them in their comic aspect".

In his historical novels, Ayyar's aim is the laudable one of popularizing the heroes of ancient India. He deplores the fact that "so few novels exist about this period of India's history, that the descendents of the ancient Hindus find it very difficult to visualize the outstanding events and personalities of old". Accordingly, Ayyar draws full-length portraits of Alexander, Chandragupta, and Chanakya in *Three Men of Destiny* and of Baladitya and Yasodharma in *Baladitya*. We have also a multitude of minor characters, most of whom are fictional; but all contribute to the story-interest of the two novels.

Ayyar is a diligent student of Indian history and is well versed in Sanskrit literature; he is, moreover, a master of plain, straight-forward, English prose. He has managed to transport himself to ancient India and has familiarized himself with the men and affairs of those distant times. Ayyar is thus ideally equipped to attempt historical novels relating to the Hindu period.

Perhaps, Ayyar's novels are too overloaded with detail; they are now and then quite a strain on the reader's patience; but both the novels are creditable achievements in a *genre* which the Indo-Anglians will do well to cultivate more frequently. Indian history and social life in India are inexhaustible topics and if our Indo-Anglians tackle them sympathetically and veraciously, they will certainly place us under their debt and make positive contributions to English literature.

III

Mr. K. Ahmed Abbas's *Tomorrow is Ours* is a sensitive story of modern India and deals with real people; Mr. Ahmed Ali's *Twilight in Delhi* is a finely drawn picture of Muslim life in twentieth-century Delhi; Mr. V. V. Chintamani's

Vedantam: *the Clash of Traditions* deals with South Indian life while the Hon. Malik Sir Firoz Khan Noon's *Scented Dust* portrays life in the Punjab; Sita Chatterjee and Santa Chaterjee have given us, severally or jointly, *The Cage of Gold*, *The Eternal* and *The Garden Creeper*, all conscientiously written and worth reading; Sir Hari Singh Gour's *His Only Love* deals with the unfortunate results of the so-called "emancipation" of Indian women; Muhammad Habib's *The Desecrated Bones and Other Stories* is a collection of three gripping stories of supernatural or historical interest; and A. Subramaniam's *Indira Devi* is an extravagant tirade against "inter-racial marriages, inter-dinners, a common religion, a common script, and everything else under the moon and sun which some day-dreamer dreams and propounds".

Dhan Gopal Mukerji is the highly talented author of a number of popular stories—*Kari the Elephant*, *Gay-Neck*, *Ghond the Hunter*, *My Brother's Face*, *The Chief of the Herd*, etc.—which are all exceedingly well-written and are favourites with school-children. *My Brother's Face* is, in some respects, the most characteristic of them, for it is partly an autobiographical testament. Dhan Gopal Mukerji is an adept at portraying Indian village life no less than the life of man and beast in the wilds and jungles of tropical India. He is veritably the Indo-Anglian Kipling—and, indeed, in some respects, more satisfying than Kipling.

Mr. S. K. Chettur, a District Magistrate in the South, has written a clever detective novel, *Bombay Murder*, which incidentally throws some light on the ultra-fashionable life lived by people in luxurious Bombay flats. He has also published a book of short stories entitled, *The Cobras of Dharmashevi*. His brother, the late G. K. Chettur, published in *The Ghost City* a collection of ten entertaining short stories. Some

of the stories are satirical commentaries on astrology, soothsaying, hypnotism and auto-suggestion; some others have a W. W. Jacobs touch and are very enjoyable indeed.

Mrs. Ramabai Trikannad's *Victory of Faith and Other Stories* is a collection of eight very promising and creditable pieces. One of the stories, *Ratna,* is nearly as long as the other seven put together; it is a simple tale of romance and idealism and service to the poor. The title-story is meant to illustrate the truth that Faith can lift mountains. Ramabai's technique is *naive* and her language is simple and effective: and her stories are "fresh, chaste and healthy".

Mr. Manjeri Isvaran's *Naked Shingles* is a collection of ten short stories; he tells his stories with a trembling sensibility that leaves an indelible impress on the reader's mind. *Naked Shingles* and *The War Memorial* are pure gold; *Jowramma* is a delicate character-study; and all the other stories are the serious attempts of a true artist to convey his impressions or to communicate his intuitions.

V

While many good Indo-Anglian novels and many more short stories have already demonstrated the feasibility of Indians writing English fiction, it is nevertheless true that the unique intricacies of social life and the untranslatable nuances of conversational speech are better rendered through the medium of one's own mother-tongue. It is therefore certain that much of the creative work in fiction in the India of the future will be only done in the vernaculars; but good English novels and short stories too will continue to appear, either as translations or as original works.

CHAPTER XXIV

ESSAYS AND ESSAYISTS

I

Since the time of Raja Rammohan Roy, the Indo-Anglians have been essayists of a sort; at any rate, many of them have been compelled to wield the instrument of English prose as a vehicle for the communication of ideas or for purposes of propaganda.

But the lighter, more or less personal type of essay, a rarity anywhere, has but occasionally been attempted by the Indo-Anglians; and the successes in this genre have been few and far between. There was an S. S. Bose who published a volume entitled *Humorous Sketches* in Allahabad nearly forty years ago; Ramakrishna Pillai's *Life in an Indian Village* had appeared even earlier; but their style is laboured and their humour thin.

We have mentioned already Nagesh Wishwanath Pai's beautifully written *Stray Sketches in Chakmakpore*. The "sketches" are seemingly abstracted from "the Note-Book of of an Idle Citizen" and (to quote from the Preface) "are chiefly intended to amuse ..... The main idea has been to give pictures of Indian life, pure and simple".

Pai is a facile writer; his humour is gentle, often unobtrusive, and insinuates its fun into the reader's heart. Sometimes humour makes a not incongruous alliance with wit and satire and there emerges as a result credible and enjoyable portraits like those of the zealous social reformer, the mother-in-law, the irritable sahib, the smart student and the street-hawker. Pai's pictures of the bullock, the crow, the cat, the Pariah dog, and his sympathetic portraits of the Hindu lady of the old school and of the fisher-folk, all are drenched in a

sheer generosity of understanding that makes these essays exquisite slices of life.

Like Pai, other Indo-Anglians also—a Behramji Malabari, a Venkataramani,—have published sketches of inveterate humanity. In the columns of faded old newspapers may be found innumerable attempts at the light essay, some good, a few very good ; but most of them really deserve the oblivion that now comfortably covers them all.

II

One of the best present-day practitioners of the art and easily the most successful of them all is S. V. V.—alias for S. V. Vijiaraghavachari— who has published a number of perennially delightful books, viz. *Soap Bubbles, More Soap Bubbles, The Holiday Trip, Much Daughtered,* and *Chaff and Grain.* Of him Mr. Hilton Brown remarked in the course of an address before the East India Association : "There is a man in Madras called S. V. Vijiaraghavachari—who is writing the most delicious stuff—light as a feather, satirically humorous, not untender, most intimately revealing of Hindu life ; splendid spiteful stuff which can bear direct comparison *mutatis mutandis,* with the work of our own E. M. Delafield".

There was a time when S. V. V. used to make his weekly bow to the readers of *The Hindu* with the unfaltering regularity and the unfailing fascination of "Y. Y." of *The New Statesman and Nation.* As a matter of convenience, we might suppose that S. V. V. has lived (so to put it) three distinct literary lives as an Indo-Anglian. In the first, he regularly contributed to the pages of the now defunct *Everyman's Review.* "An Elephant's Creed in Court", in which S. V. V. gave an amusingly satirical account of the interminable disputes between the *tengalais* and *vadagalais* of South India, appeared over twenty years ago—and perhaps S. V. V. never did anything better!

Presently, sketches and skits, usually one column in length, began to appear in the *Saturday Hindu*. "Don't Meddle with Coffee", "Worry over Slippers", "In Search of a Son-in-law",—these were some of the skits published during this period. Light as the wind, uproariously gay, quotable, memorable, the "S. V. V." weekly dose of irresponsible wisdom, in which the experience of thousands of South Indians was held in animated suspension, became the most delectable of week-end dainties. Easy, charming, indulgent, generous; now and then, a caricaturist's stroke; and now and again, care-free bursts of good humour; and never vulgar, never fantastic, never dull. This was the S. V. V. that became an institution in South India—a very difficult job, since every Madrasee would fain think that he alone is the one institution worth preserving!

Years passed; the *Hindu Illustrated Weekly* was "muddling through" till at last it became, after diverting vicissitudes, the Sunday Illustrated Edition. During these years S. V. V.'s art deteriorated; serials like *The Holiday Trip* were inflated trifles that made one laugh, but also made one sigh that the buoyant charm of the earlier essays had somehow faded away. Even so, "The Geography of Madras" was good; "Buttons" was very good; "Dreams" was tremendous fun; and "3sh. 6d." was a riot of laughter. And yet one wished one was vouchsafed that earlier strain, the inimitable strains of "Don't Meddle with Coffee".

S. V. V. writes in English no more; but he now wields the Tamil language with a facility that he never commanded in English, and hence Tamil hearts are full of gratitude to him. It was, therefore, in the fitness of things that his admirers presented him, three or four years ago, on the occasion of his sixty-first birthday, a public address under the presidency of the Rt. Hon. V. S. Srinivasa Sastri.

III

Another essayist, almost as contagiously delightful as S. V. V., is Mr. R. Bangaruswami, Associate Editor of the *My Magazine of India*. Like S. V. V., Bangaruswami too started life as a mofussil lawyer; and they both find in the seeming inessentials of life a whole fund of meaning and humour.

Scores of Bangaruswami's skits and essays have appeared in the columns of *My Magazine, Merry Magazine, The Scholar*, and other periodicals. Not only is Bangaruswami's control over the resources of the English language singularly competent, but his range as a humorist is exceptionally wide and he ever writes only to amuse and never to wound. Even as a social satirist, Bangaruswami's touch is very light and leaves no rancour behind; humanity and a wide-awake sympathy are thus the sustaining key notes of his essays. Individual skits like "In Defence of Nonsense", "Touts", "Forensic Theatricalism", "Bugs", and "Pseudo-Philosophy" are all at once profoundly wise and soaked in healthy gaiety.

Bangaruswami's essays are in divers styles; they are now gently and disarmingly humorous like Robert Lynd's, now tantalizingly provoking like Stephen Leacock's, now irresistibly and uproariously gay like P. G. Wodehouse's stories. He talks on and on, giving one no respite but overwhelming one in a cascade of laughter:

> "If I were a dictator! ..... Surely I would prescribe crushing punishments for those who use harmoniums and gramophones and thereby corrupt the public taste; for those hotel-keepers who invent fantastic names for familiar dishes; for street-vendors and street-singers who pervert language and split words and mutilate them; for research workers who want twenty volumes to prove that man has generally two legs, that sugar can be said to taste sweet from the

available evidence, that the Raman Effect in butter-milk is rather funny; for those public bodies who read more than one address in every twenty years; for those who mix more than three languages in the course of a single sentence ... There would be a total reform in penal administration. All imprisonment in jails will go, root and branch. But they will be succeeded by severer punishments: being asked to support more than one family ... being asked to repeat poetry backwards; being asked to sing the Pythagoras Theorem, proof, Q.E.D., and all ...".

Bangaruswami has also published many series of skits,—*Misleading Cases, The Law of the Jungle, Unreported Conferences, Dummi's Fortnightly Diary, Balu and His Friends, Law and Life* and *My Domestics*. In *Misleading Cases* Bangaruswami has tried with success to mirror—albeit only with the use of a concave or convex mirror—court life in the mofussil courts just as Mr. A. P. Herbert has done with astonishing ease with reference to English Common Law. *The Law of the Jungle* takes us to the jungle and its litigants, lawyers and judges; here too the court proceedings are most lively and we realize presently that Bangaruswami is all the time laughing, not at the lions and foxes and bears and elephants, but actually at ourselves! Many of these legal travesties have been put together and published with the title *My Lord Kukudoon Koon*.

Unreported Conferences is a book of fantastic speeches and even more fantastic resolutions; for all its hilarious exuberance, the book is a pointed satire on the many meaningless and soulless conferences that it has now become a mania to hold in all sorts of places with all sorts of objectives. *Dummi's Fortnightly Diary* is as vivacious, as interesting, as full of wisdom and social criticism as is Delafield's *Diary of a Provin-*

cial Lady. Balu, on the other hand, is a recognizable cousin of 'William', the popular creation of Miss Richmal Crompton's.

Occasionally, one feels that Bangaruswami's humour is a little too broad or too loud ; but the general tone is ever one of unoffending urbanity and charm.

IV

Mr. K. Iswara Dutt, formerly of the *Leader* of Allahabad and now editor of the *Twentieth Century*, gave over ten years ago a small delightful packet of essays entitled, *And All That*. It contains ten very readable essays on subjects as various as "On a Razor", "On the Pleasures of Unemployment", "On the Parental Problem", "On a Tuft of Hair", "On Matrimonial Prescriptions", "In Praise of Lady Nicotine", "On Congress Paradoxes", and "On the Hobbies of Celebrities".

An accomplished journalist, a "taster" of life who has rolled about the busy world a good deal, Iswara Dutt writes with confidence and ease. As Professor Radhakrishnan points out in his brief Foreword to the book, "These 'skits' are written with a literary taste and lightness of touch that remind me of the essays of Robert Lynd". The essays are all commendably brief and are all full of worldly wisdom and wit and they uncannily spot out the ludicrous in men and affairs. Moreover, many of the essays are judiciously spiced with appropriate quotations in prose and verse. Iswara Dutt is indeed a most agreeable companion to spend an hour with !

Rarely does Iswara Dutt falter at the exordium. Here is the beginning of the essay, "On a Razor":

> "Time was when the razor was the barber's pride and monopoly but alas ! the times are out of joint for him. Now it is here, there and everywhere. Particularly the table of a modern gentleman is incomplete without a razor. It is as indispensable to him as a walking stick, the obvious diffe-

rence being that he keeps the one inside and carries the other outside".

As he begins, so he writes "straight on"; whether he discourses on a Tuft of Hair or on Congress Paradoxes, Iswara Dutt is a delightful talker. How unmalicious and enjoyable is this enumeration of "Congress Paradoxes":

> "But, between ourselves, while the Congress personalities did not interest me less, the Congress paradoxes interested me more. Where else can one find politicians and statesmen surrendering to a saint and a sage in the realm of politics or dictatorship being enthroned in the name of democracy? Where else can one find men wedded to non-violence applauding the heroism of political assassins, revolutionaries coolly submitting to *lathi* charge courageously administered by police on unarmed crowds, and men of peace forming 'war councils' and appointing 'dictators'? Where else, indeed, can one find khaddar-clad men coming out of Rolls Royces, women with bobbed hair singing songs of the *charka*, urban magnates lecturing on the possibilities of rural reconstruction and village rustics talking high politics, orators remaining tongue-tied and poor polls getting rid of gibberish, Upper India men eschewing English like poison and men from the South retaliating in their respective vernaculars! Where else outside the Congress, I ask, can one find responsible public men make suggestions seriously fixing the Viceroy's salary at six thousand rupees per annum and with an easy conscience put twenty-six thousand rupees in the Congress coffers, levied as a tax on visitors for a few indifferent and some irrelevant speeches delivered in the course of the day at a meeting of the All-India Congress Committee"!

Or, for a change, one can turn to Mr. Iswara Dutt's defence of smoking or his discourse on the pleasures of un-

employment or his dissertation on hobbies,—and always he writes with candour and clarity and writes only to please his readers and in his own way to ennoble his subjects!

V

Our magazines and newspapers, and especially our educational miscellanies with their undergraduate contributors, are all giving us essays of varying degrees of excellence. There are "third leaders" in papers like *The Hindu*, *The Leader*, *The Amrita Bazar Patrika* and *The Hindustan Times* that raise a smile and even compel a burst of healthy laughter. There are also columnists like Mr. D. F. Karaka of the *Bombay Chronicle*, the "Little Man" of the *Bombay Sentinel* and Mr. Pothan Joseph (who used to write under the title "Over a Cup of Tea"), who delicately graze the surface eccentricities and idiosyncracies of life and help thousands of readers to spend every day a refreshing five minutes or so.

There are, again, occasions when a statesman like the Rt. Hon. V. S. Srinivasa Sastri or a Dewan like Sir T. Vijiaraghavachari or an active politician like Jawaharlal Nehru graciously unbends and shows that laughter is, after all, the badge of all the generations of Adam. No doubt, essays need not be necessarily of the 'lighter' sort that makes one laugh. True sensibility is the hall-mark of the essayist, and hence he can be interested as much in the serious as in the more obviously familiar and popular things. An essayist can legitimately muse on the ultimates of life just as he can skirmish amidst turnips and tomatoes and tea cups; communicated sensibility is the thing!

An essay is not a treatise, but it may be serious; an essay is not a resounding peroration, but it may be a thinking aloud or it may partake of the gentle murmur of a friendly conversation. Mahatma Gandhi's "Sermon on God" is rather a per-

sonal revelation; it is a spiritual curtain that envelops him and the reader, or the listener, into a little universe of felicity and self-knowledge. It is a singular revelation, it is an inspiring confession of faith; but it is also a beautiful little speech, almost a perfect essay!

Again, some of Sir Nizamat Jung's "Casual Reflections" and "Morning Thoughts" also deserve to be called miniature essays. Sir Nizamat writes serenely and wisely on a variety of themes—"Life an Examination", "Resignation", "Seeking Refuge from Evil", "Perpetual Change", "Good and Bad Thoughts", "The Unreality of this World", "The Dust of Life's Journey", "Mind and Muscle', and scores of others; but these "Morning Thoughts", elegant, personal, persuasive, trite, jotted down apparently without premeditation, come to us with a reassuring squeeze of one's hand. Here is a sample of Sir Nizamat's prose:

> "Look at Nature's face, and you look into her heart, and by looking into her heart you can reach God. You cannot see God except in his works, and His works are around you. They are Nature, and in Nature everything is good and beautiful. If you see anything that is not good and beautiful be sure it is your own blurred vision that makes it appear so".

VI

Sir Bomanji Wadia, the present Vice-Chancellor of the Bombay University, is a writer of chiselled prose and his occasional essays, even if they be professedly on literary or cultural themes, are more like confessions of faith than like attempts at cold or formal criticism or exegesis. He may be writing on "The Qualities of Great Literature" or on "The March of the Human Mind" or on "Literature in its Changing Moods", but the heightened sensibility of these contributions

makes them true essays. As a specimen of his light touch and utter sincerity, we extract this passage from his charming little essay on "Little Things that Matter":

> "It is a gift to see ourselves as others see us; but those who have got it are so few. The impression we produce on others is very different from that which we produce on ourselves. Our self-esteem often leads to an over-estimate. There are little civilities and acts of politeness in which we often lack, but we do not notice them; our neighbours do .....
>
> Happiness is a question of degree; it depends on our wants and requirements. Its chief secret lies in not suffering little things to give us the 'black mood'. It is not the place nor the condition, but a man's own disposition that is accountable for much of his joy or misery. All of us have our handful of thorns to cope with. No one can escape them. But even thorns have roses, and the stars are hidden behind the darkest clouds".

One more essayist must be named here—Prof. F. Correia-Afonso. An important figure in the Indian Catholic world, Prof. Correia-Afonso is a close student of English, Latin and Portuguese, and is an exceptionally effective platform speaker. Platform speaking is with him an art and there can be few pleasures more exhilarating than hearing him at his best. In recent years, he has been exhorting his fellow-Catholics to "Indianize" themselves. Indian Catholics can be true Catholics and true Indians at the same time: this is the burden of Prof. Correia-Afonso's collection of luminous little essays suggestively entitled, *Plain Living and Plain Thinking*.

The eleven essays included in the book range from "Gone West" and "Education in Simplicity" to "A Philosophy of Clothes" and "The condition of the Working Class". Educa-

tion, food and clothes, amusements, religion, the press, all are "embraced" as it were; and Prof. Correia-Afonso's remarks, though primarily addressed to his Catholic countrymen, are *mutatis mutandis* applicable no less to the Hindus and the Muslims and the Parsis and the rest. The impact of the West and the ready acceptance of Western civilization have reduced many an educated Indian into a pathetic misfit in his own country. These misguided Westernized men and women should retrace their steps—else we perish!

Prof. Correia-Afonso's argument is thus an urgent one; but he develops it with ease, with conviction, with omnipresent humour. It is a sermon still, but it is a sermon that sings itself into our ears and glides irresistibly into our hearts. We should be "national and rational"; "we must be Indian; but not all that is Indian is commendable"! As for dress reform, here too we should be "national *and* rational":

> "In the matter of rational and national dress, the problem of our women is easily solved. They should wear the sari, as many are already doing. Not all, perhaps, have done it from national motives, but because they look pretty in them; yet let it be counted unto them for righteousness. Father Hull once said that female fashions in Europe changed constantly, while they did not change in India, because the European woman was ever seeking for perfection in dress, whereas the Indian woman has found it. The sari is indeed a thing of beauty and a joy for ever .... Every woman is a maharani by the dignity of her womanhood, but she need not dress like the Maharani of Cooch-Behar, when she is only the maharani of *cooch nahin*".

Indeed, as the Most Rev. Thomas Roberts has pointed out, Prof. Correia-Afonso can make Truth itself appear attractive!

CHAPTER XXV

CRITICISM

1

When English became the medium of instruction in the Indian colleges and universities, it was inevitable that Indians should attempt literary criticism of one type or another in English. For one thing, annotated texts were required for the use of Indian students ; here was a ready market for *swadeshi* goods, and enterprising Indians, often indeed with more enthusiasm than scholarship or the necessary equipment, came forward to write to order notes, guides, summaries, text examiners, digests, and so forth. Of late, this particular business has assumed colossal proportions.

Nearly fifty years ago, Ram Chandra Ghose published *A Synopsis of English Literature ;* subsequently, innumerable books of like nature—not seldom badly digested, badly conceived, badly written, and badly printed—have rolled out of Indian presses. It is needless to say more about this branch of book production in India ; its aim is to make money if possible by feeding upon the average student's dread of University Examinations.

Now and then, however, an Amaranatha Jha or a Sadasiva Aiyar shows that the thing can be properly and efficiently done. Amaranatha Jha's "Selections" from Frederick Harrison and Modern English Poetry, Sadasiva Aiyar's *Hamlet* and *The Tempest*, T. M. Advani's edition of Carlyle's *Heroes* and K. Swaminathan's abridged edition of Trevelyan's *Macaulay* are some of the splendid exceptions that help us to forget the puerility of the general run of Indian editions of English classics. For the most part, these "fruits" of the misdirected efforts of Indo-Anglian pseudoscholarship live only for a year or

two in the drawers or on the tables of harassed undergraduates, and are soon remade into desirable pulp.

II

The critical work attempted by the Indo-Anglians falls under two heads : the criticism of English authors and English classics and the criticism of Sanskrit and the various modern Indian literatures. We have had good examples of the latter kind for over fifty years. After all, Sanskrit was a virgin field and much had to be done and still remains to be done in describing and interpreting the treasures of Sanskrit literature to the English-speaking world. Since English can claim to be the language familiar to the intelligentsia all over India, it is and has been for the past five or six decades the obvious medium for the expression of literary criticism relating to Sanskrit literature. Even writers who wish to assess the contributions of a vernacular literature have sometimes preferred to write in English in view of its all-India appeal.

It was thus that the late Romesh Chunder Dutt was inspired to write in English his *Literature of Bengal* (1877). More recently, Prof. Bhate has done his *Modern Marathi Literature* in English ; so have K. M. Munshi, Birinchi Kumar Barua and Annada Shankar Ray with reference to Gujarati, Assamese and Bengali literatures respectively. Similarly, Masti Venkatesa Iyenger has given us an illuminating study of Valmiki's poetry ; Aurobindo's studies of Bankim Chandra and Kalidasa are also in English ; and A. S. P. Ayyar's *Bhasa* is written somewhat on the lines of the English Men of Letters Series.

More frequently, critical studies on Sanskrit and vernacular literatures, both ancient and modern, are appearing in popular English journals like *The Modern Review, The Hindustan Review, Prabuddha Bharata, Triveni, The Aryan Path, The Indian P. E. N.*, and *The Indian Review*. Mr. Chalapa-

ti Rau's "Subba Rau's Yenki Songs", Professor V. K. Gokak's "Mr. Bendre's poetry" and "The Vision of the Kannada Dramatist", the late Dr. M. T. Patwardhan's "Modern Marathi Literature" and the late Ramananda Chatterjee's varied contributions to *The Modern Review* on Bengali literature come immediately to the present writer's mind ; of course, many more equally valuable articles may be discovered in the old files of the journals catalogued above.

III

Another important branch of criticism also may be referred to in passing. Several Indo-Anglians have published meritorious studies of Art in general or of Indian Art, Indian Architecture, Indian Music, etc. Principal K. M. Khadye's *Benedetto Croce's Aesthetic Applied to Literary Criticism* is a conscientious and illuminating essay that assesses Croce's work as a critic with convincing finality. While Croce is inspiring as a practical critic, he is of little help "as a formulator of an adequate theory of art which can be usefully applied to literature". Principal Khadye is very widely read in literature, his powers of critical analysis are worthy of admiration, and he wields a clear, dry and an uncompromisingly outspoken and effective prose style.

Mr. Shahid Suhrawardy's *Prefaces : Lectures on Art Subjects* has already been mentioned in an earlier chapter. Suhrawardy's subjects range from "On the Study of Indian Art", "Art and Education", and "A Nation's Art" to "The Modern European Stage" and "Some Continental Writers". Suhrawardy complains that the average modern Indian has no eye for Art :

> "The sources of Indian art have completely dried. The grand tradition of our mediaeval sculpture, which knew how to inform stone with miraculous movements in order to por-

tray the lives of gods involved in human relations, that splendid realization of the Indian ideal of god-man, unparalleled in the world's art for plasticity and dramatism, has been allowed to lapse into oblivion ... Art study and art appreciation is banished from our lives".

Suhrawardy would have present day India shed its insularity, because he firmly and rightly believes that a nation's art "can be vigorous and effective only when it has the courage to accept freely adaptable foreign influences, and is vital enough to assimilate them to its own artistic needs".

Mr. Bal S. Mardhekar's *Arts and Man*, a brilliant, if not altogether convincing piece of criticism, outlines a new æsthetic, attempts "a new and a more scientific ascending and descending order of fine arts, at the top of which will be music and at the bottom, poetry". The "mighty" poets, who have all along "arrogated to themselves a prerogative, premier position on the Mount of Paranassus", will have now to vacate their high seats, giving place to the supreme musicians. The poets "have been, directly or indirectly, responsible for so much of what has vitiated art appreciation and æsthetics and they can hardly complain if Nemesis overtakes them". Mardhekar's more recent work, *Two Lectures on an Aesthetic of Literature*, is equally provocative and thoughtful.

In his illuminating brochure, *The National Value of Art*, Sri Aurobindo gives us a significant tract for the times. It is the testament of a seer and is uttered in prophetic accents. In the course of about fifty luminous pages, Sri Aurobindo memorably stresses the æsthetic, intellectual and spiritual aspects of art, in integral relation to the life of the nation. Only one quotation can be extracted here :

"Poetry raises the emotions and gives each its separate delight. Art stills the emotions and teaches them the delight of a restrained and limited satisfaction,—this indeed was

the characteristic that the Greeks, a nation of artists far more artistic than poetic, tried to bring into their poetry. Music deepens the emotions and harmonizes them with each other. Between them, music, art and poetry are a perfect education for the soul ; they make and keep its movements purified, self-controlled, deep and harmonious. These, therefore, are agents which cannot profitably be neglected by humanity on its onward march or degraded to the mere satisfaction of sensuous pleasures which will disintegrate rather than build character. They are, when properly used, great educating, edifying and civilizing forces".

We have necessarily to be brief about the other Indo-Anglian art critics, and no more than a bare mention of the names of some of the prominent among them is feasible within the limits at our disposal. Mr. O. C. Gangoly and Mr. Abanindranath Tagore have both done yeomen service towards the interpretation of Indian Art. Ananda Coomaraswamy's meritorious publications include *Rajput Painting, History of Indian and Indonesian Art* and *The Transformation of Nature in Art.* Mr. Dubash's *Hindu Art* in its *Social Setting* is an interesting book to read ; Mr. K. Chandrasekharan, in his *An Approach to Art,* and Prof. Baldoon Dhingra, in his *Genius and Artistic Enjoyment,* have both made useful contributions to æsthetics ; and Dr. R. K. Yajnik's *The Indian Theatre* is a very informative book on a most absorbing subject. Other Indo-Anglian art and music critics include Saurindranath Tagore, Gopinatha Rao, Pratima Devi, N. C. Mehta, Atiya Begum and C. Subramania Ayyar.

IV

Indo-Anglian criticism proper is the criticism of English authors and of English classics ; and here the odds are generally against the aspiring Indo-Anglian critic.

An Indian who wishes to pursue the apparently easy profession of literary criticism soon finds that the business is not so easy as it appears to be. Our aspiring Indo-Anglian critic has first to form in his mind certain categories current in critical literature by a diligent study of good models from Aristotle and Horace to Arnold and T. S. Eliot; only when this laborious process of assimilation is over, and this might take several years even for persons of sensitive memory, can the Indo-Anglian critic apply those categories to a given work or body of creative literature.

It is not surprising, therefore, that under such conditions of composition much Indo-Anglian criticism turns out to be merely derivative, conventional or stale. Very rarely indeed do we come across passages of direct, strong and personal thinking. In England, serious literary criticism is done either by the Professors of English or by eminent reviewers like Desmond MacCarthy, Virginia Woolf and Sir John Squire. In India, on the other hand, Professors of English almost as a rule lack both the facilities and the inclination to attempt serious literary criticism. There are professors who are content or even proud to be mere electioneering strategists and zone dictators of pseudo-culture rather than conscientious scholars or teachers; many are so wretchedly paid and are so overworked that they feel satisfied if they are able to do the routine work of teaching and examining without a hitch; some are driven by sheer economic considerations to hack for some shark publisher, writing "notes" at, say, six annas per page; and several more are merely and sublimely indolent and care not for the laurels and perils of authorship.

Indeed, even those Professors of English who are obliged to do some sort of critical work before they obtain their Doctorate degrees, more often than not relapse into somnolent inactivity afterwards. This is due to an understandable feel-

ing of defeatism that the best they can do in the field is very likely to look insignificant by the side of the works of criticism that are being produced in the British and American universities. And yet one fervently hopes that there will be less of this effeminate timidity and inaction in the future.

As for free-lance critics of the type of Desmond MacCarthy and Sir John Squire, our journalists are as a rule so very much preoccupied with politics that they can hardly cultivate the detachment of a literary critic. All-rounders like Nagendranath Gupta, Sachchidananda Sinha and Narasimha Chintaman Kelkar have given us some very good specimens of literary criticism. Sir Bomanji Wadia, a former Judge of the Bombay High Court, gives us in essays like "The Modern Literary Scene" literary criticism that is well-informed, discriminating and beautifully expressed. But in India free-lance critics and reviewers of current literature are either hacks or people who do reviewing more or less as a hobby. This is so in Indo-Anglian as well as in most vernacular literatures.

V

Notwithstanding all this, the Indo-Anglians have given us many interesting and some even illuminating studies and essays in criticism. Only a bare enumeration of some of the more important of these books and studies is here possible.

Sir Brajendranath Seal, one of the "Old Guard", author of the philosophical poem, *The Quest Eternal*, also wrote a number of critical essays, some of which are included in *New Essays in Criticism*. Mr. Nagendranath Gupta, another of the "Old Guard, was a penetrating critic, and the high quality of his literary criticism can be seen in the essays included in the collection, *The Place of Man and Other Essays*. Another veteran. Mr. Narasimha Chintaman Kelkar, contributed many

critical essays to *The Mahratta* during the long years of his close association with that paper.

Among Professors of English, it is now possible to find quite a few who have adventured into the perilous unknown of literary criticism. Dr. N. K. Siddhanta's *The Heroic Age of India* attempts to study the Indian epics, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, in relation to the age in which they were produced; his book is therefore complementary to Professor Chadwick's classic of criticism, *The Heroic Age*. Dr. Siddhanta is a diligent student of English Language and Literature and presides with distinction over the English Department of the Lucknow University.

Of other professors who have turned critics, we may mention the following: Prof. P. K. Guha's *Tragic Relief* is a useful footnote to the vast and ever growing literature on Tragedy as a literary form; Dr. Sen Gupta has published a thoughtful brochure on the Art of Bernard Shaw; Prof. Bhavani Shanker has given us a helpful and discriminating study of Modern English Poetry. These books, and those that are included in the selected reading lists, show that the Indo-Anglians have of late shed their inferiority complex and attempted serious literary criticism in English. Some of the critical works of the Indo-Anglians have received a good press in Britain no less than in India and have been sponsored by responsible English and Indian publishers.

VI

Shakespeare, in particular, has fascinated Indians and won a secure place in their hearts. Shakespeare's plays have been translated into the Indian vernaculars and Indian school boys know the stories of King Lear and Othello and Shylock and Macbeth almost as intimately as they know the stories of Sita

and Sakuntala and Duryodhana and Savitri. And books on Shakespeare too—books of all sorts—have been appearing frequently in English no less than in the major modern Indian languages. As for journalistical studies on Shakespeare, their name is indeed legion.

Three or four decades ago, a gentleman by name Rentala Venkata Subba Rau published two extraordinary and voluminous books, *Othello Unveiled* and *Hamlet Unveiled*, in which he seemed to see a lot more in the two tragedies than Shakespeare himself probably did. Perhaps, their value is negligible as criticism; but they deserve to be read as tantalizing structures of fancy—in other words, as independent fictional essays on the careers of Hamlet and Othello.

Principal K. M. Khadye, Dean of the Faculty of Arts of the Bombay University, has published thoughtful studies of two of Shakespeare's plays, *Antony and Cleopatra* and *A Winter's Tale*.

Prof. P. G. Sahasranama Iyer, formerly of the Travancore University, has published a small brochure entitled, *Tragi-Comedy in English and Sanskrit Literatures*; in this eye-opener, Prof. Iyer has pertinently drawn our attention to the parallels between plays like *Svapnavasavadatta* and *Mrichchakatika* on the one hand and *Cymbeline, A Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest* on the other.

Prof. Amaranatha Jha, the present Vice-Chancellor of the University of Allahabad, is both a well-informed and genuinely enthusiastic student of English literature; besides he wields an attractive pen. In addition to his thoughtful volume, *Literary Studies*, Professor Jha has also published stimulating studies of Wilfrid Gibson, Rudyard Kipling, W. B. Yeats, Toru Dutt, A. E. Housman, Frederick Harrison and John Morley. Further, he has published, not only a discriminating study of Shakespearian Comedy, but also learned papers on "Shakes-

peare's Plant-Lore", "From Ape to Man in Shakespeare" and "Shakespeare's Use of the Monosyllable". Professor Jha is a master of many languages—English, Sanskrit, Maithili, Hindi, Bengali—and is a true heir, in name and fame and scholarship, to the Ganganath Jha tradition.

Professor T. M. Advani of the D. J. Sind College, Karachi, has published valuable papers on "Wordsworth as a Moral Teacher", "Literature and Life", "Tennyson and the Problem of Immortality" and "Carlyle's Conception of the Hero"; as a close student of Shakespeare, he has given us very interesting papers on "The Womanly Woman of Shakespeare", "The Fools of Shakespeare" and "Crime and Punishment in Shakespeare".

Dr. R. G. Shahani's *Shakespeare through Eastern Eyes*, a competent re-hash of existing material, is nevertheless a very readable book, inspired by genuine enthusiasm for the Master Dramatist. Dr. Shahani has also very recently published a rather controversial book, *A White Man in Search of God*.

VII

Special mention should be made of Prof. V. K. Ayappan Pillai's *Shakespeare Criticism*, an interesting and reliable survey from the beginnings to Dr. Johnson. "The appreciation of literature in a particular age is virtually the touchstone of the age—the standard by which the Zeit-Geist should be judged": it is from this sane standpoint that Prof. Pillai considers the vicissitudes of Shakespeare criticism in England from contemporary estimates to the time of Dr. Johnson and his famous edition of Shakespeare's plays. It is an eminently readable and stimulating account of what prominent men and men of letters have said or written about Shakespeare and it almost constitutes a history of literary taste during the seventeenth

and eighteenth centuries. When the lectures that constitute the book were originally delivered, it appears that, day after day, "a crowded hall listened in tense silence". Prof. Pillai's book is an invaluable introduction to Augustus Ralli's monumental volumes on the subject; and it is to be hoped that Prof. Pillai will complete his survey by publishing a supplementary volume or two. Prof. Pillai has also published papers on "The Song of Roland" and "Fables and Fabulists".

Finally, Dr. C. Narayana Menon's *Shakespeare Criticism : An Essay in Synthesis* (1938) is that rare thing—an original book on Shakespeare that is scholarly, sane and stimulating at the same time. Dr. Menon, who is a Professor of English in the Benares Hindu University, aims at showing that "the kernel of every Shakespearian play—tragedy, comedy, or history—is the potential in us ... When the emotional stress is shifted from the centre to the circumference, and from the circumference to a point outside the design, tragedy changes into comedy and history". Throughout his absorbing essay, Dr. Menon shows that his heart is as active as is his head and hence he is able to produce a convincing impression of his intelligent reactions to the multiverses of Shakespearian drama. Dr. Menon has lived in Shakespeare, and his interpretations are often intuitive and are expressed in *sutra* form. While his conclusions are intuitive, he has also corroborated them with an imposing load of "authorities"; we have thus in *Shakespeare Criticism* a true "essay in synthesis", an inspiring fusion of Western and Eastern criticism.

Dr. Menon's more recent brochure, *An Approach to the Ramayana*, also reveals the same healthy qualities. His view is that the *Ramayana* "represents a synthesis of the cults and cultures prevalent in different parts of India. It is the first poem of Akhand Hindustan". In less than thirty pages of packed thought, Dr. Menon ably establishes his thesis that a

study of this great national epic " is consistent with both reason and self-respect ".

Prof. R. Sadasiva Aiyar, whose *King Lear*, *Hamlet* and *The Tempest* maintain a very high standard of scholarship and criticism, has also recently broken fresh ground in his thoughtful essay, " *The Ramayana* in the light of Aristotle's *Poetics* ".

CHAPTER XXVI

SOME CRITICS

I

In an earlier chapter, we have considered Sri Aurobindo as a poet and as a prose writer ; but Sri Aurobindo is also a critic, indeed the most outstanding and inspiring of Indo-Anglian critics. His studies of Bankim Chandra and Kalidasa, luminous essays both, are available in book form ; but the series of thirty-two essays that he contributed to the columns of the *Arya* over two decades ago under the general title, *The Future Poetry*, has not yet been made available to us in a handy form. This extraordinary series of critical essays really began as a notice of Dr. J. H. Cousins's *New Ways in English Literature ;* the review, however, was only a starting point, for the massive argument was drawn rather from Sri Aurobindo's own ideas and his already conceived view of Art and life.

The Future Poetry takes up about three hundred and fifty pages of the *Arya*. Literary history, æsthetic criticism, appreciations of Individual English poets from Anglo-Saxon to very recent times, speculations on the future of poetry in general and of English poetry in particular, discussions on recondite themes like "Rhythm and Movement", "Style and Substance", " Poetic Vision and the Mantra ", " The Ideal Spirit of Poetry ", " The Sun of Poetic Truth ", " The Breath of Greater

Life", "The Soul of Poetic Delight and Beauty", "The Word and the Spirit" and "The Form and the Spirit", all these are seemingly recklessly thrown into Sri Aurobindo's critical and creative melting pot, and the result is a most refreshing and illuminatingly informative and prophetic work of literary criticism.)

The seer that he is, Sri Aurobindo glimpses the very head and front, feels the very pulse and the very heart-beats, of the Future Poetry. Characteristically does he call his series of critical essays, not the "Future of Poetry", but simply as the "Future Poetry"; it is a thing as good as decreed that the future poetry should partake of the nature of the mantra : "Poetry in the past has done that in moments of supreme elevation ; in the future there seems to be some chance of its making it a more conscious aim and steadfast endeavour".

Sri Aurobindo's "survey" of English poetry is not an academic history ; it is rather a personal, a temperamental survey ; and it is more interesting on that score and, as sheer interpretative criticism, more valuable also at the same time. Everywhere one comes across the same passion for seizing the essential truth, the same intuition into the uttermost essence of poetry, the same unfailing sense for detecting subtle sound values and delicate movements in rhythm, and above all, the same wonderful mastery of language that weaves derogation and appreciation, criticism and prophecy, illustration and generalization into a truly wonderful and mighty fabric of elaborate and enchanting prose.

We have no space to discuss in detail *The Future Poetry*. Individual appreciations—of Chaucer and Spenser, of Marlowe and Shakespeare, of Milton, of Wordsworth and Byron, of Shelley and Keats, of Tennyson and Browning, of Whitman and Yeats—are couched in a language that often sounds like a blinding cataract ; and the judgments are wonderfully balanc-

ed and essentially just. For a specimen we might extract this paragraph on Marlowe :

> "Marlowe alone of the lesser Elizabethan dramatists stands apart from his fellows, not only by his strong and magnificent vein of poetry, but because he knows what he is about ; he alone has some clearly grasped dramatic idea. And not only is he conscious of his artistic aim, but it is a sound aim on the higher levels of the dramatic art. He knows that the human soul in action is his subject and Karma the power of the theme, and he attempts to create a drama of the human will throwing itself on life, the will egoistic and Asuric, conquering only to succumb to the great adversary Death or breaking itself against the forces its violence has brought into hostile play. This is certainly a high and fit subject for tragic creation and his highly coloured and strongly cut style and rhythm are well-suited for its expression. Unhappily, Marlowe had the conception, but not any real power of dramatic execution. Hs is unable to give the least awakening breath of life to his figures ; in the external manner so common in English poetry and fiction he rather constructs than evolves, portrays than throws out into life, paints up or sculptures from outside than creates from within, which is yet the sole true method of poetic or at least of dramatic creation. He has not, either, the indispensable art of construction .... In fact, Marlowe was not a born dramatist ; his true genius was lyrical, narrative and epic. Limited by his inborn characteristics, he succeeds in bringing out his poetic motive only in strong detached scenes and passages or in great culminating moments in which the lyrical cry and the epic touch break out through the form of drama ".

Likewise, Sri Aurobindo's summing-up of the characteristics of a whole age—the Elizabethan or the Victorian Age, for instance

—is full of balanced wisdom and has the ring of finality and truth.

Towards the close of his treatise, Sri Aurobindo discusses the possibilities of the future and expresses his belief that the day is not far off when the rendition of the veil that obscures the vision of the present day poet will be accomplished at last and the new poet will hymn his songs in the voice of the inmost spirit and truth of things; when the "futurist" poet will achieve the beginningless, eternal, ineffable rhythms of the spirit, —poetic recordations charged with the triune glories of the Beautiful, the Good and the True, but wholly and seraphically free from the blemish of personality and mortality.

II

Of recent Indo-Anglian publications in criticism, more than a passing mention must be made of Dr. Amiya Chakravarty's *The Dynasts and the Post-War Age in Poetry : A Study in Modern Ideas*. Dr. Chakravarty was long and intimately associated with the late Rabindranath Tagore, many of whose poems he rendered into beautiful English. A Bengali poet in his own right, Dr. Chakravarty is a Professor of English in the Calcutta University and is an acute and well-informed literary critic.

Dr. Chakravarty begins his thesis on *The Dynasts* with the assertion that "the dominant problem in modern poetry, both as a subjective concern and as revealed in its manner of expression, is the problem of self-consciousness". Although the problem had been faced by other nineteenth century poets like Wordsworth, Tennyson, Browning and Arnold, it was Thomas Hardy who for the first time tackled the problem squarely and boldly, and gave it a status and a name in contemporary poetry.

Superficially, of course, *The Dynasts* is a chronicle of wasted efforts on an international scale during the Napoleonic era. But to Hardy even the Napoleonic wars are merely of pigmy importance in the cosmic background. Hardy shows man—reasoning, thinking, willing, conscious man—as being again and again checkmated by the vast Unconscious in Nature, which, having evolved the human consciousness, more often than not daunts and defeats the very phenomenon it has engendered.

Since Hardy has given in his works many instances of this "thwarted purposing", he has laid himself open to the charge of "pessimism". But there is in Hardy also the same tragic richness that redeems the pessimism of a play like *King Lear*. In Dr. Chakravarty's words, "as, after seeing a drama of Shakespeare in which storms have raged and human passions wrought havoc with human lives, we have yet felt consciously re-assured by the simultaneous presence of the supreme beauty and nobility in the drama of life, so here too, on the basis of that realization, Pity dares to raise its hymn to the Will in whom it has trusted". And the last Chorus in *The Dynasts* is almost a message of hope to ailing humanity.

Dr. Chakravarty's critical analysis of *The Dynasts* is an admirable piece of work. His note on the influence of *The Dynasts* on modern poetic drama and the illuminating contrasts he has instituted between Eliot and Auden on the one hand and Hamlet and Napoleon on the other reveal a fine critical mind at work. Dr. Chakravarty seems to move in the forest that is modern English poetry with ease and confidence and hence his critical assessments are both scholarly and stimulating.

III

Professor Humayun Kabir, whose poetry has already been discussed in an earlier chapter, gave the Sir George Stanley

Lectures under the auspices of the University of Madras in 1941 ; the lectures have been issued in convenient book form by the Calcutta University with the title, *Poetry, Monads and Society*. In his Preface, Professor Kabir points out that his lectures "centre round the problem of reconciling the claims to uniqueness and universality which art simultaneously makes".

The opening lecture on "Poetry, Pleasure and Utility" is largely devoted to a criticism of the views of "modernist" critics of poetry like Professor Joad and Dr. Richards. In the second lecture, "Poetry, Katharsis and Creativity", Professor Kabir gives his own explanation of the Aristotelian terms of mimesis and katharsis, and concludes by comparing Poetry to Love :

> "Poetry is indeed in a way like love. There may be, and in fact are, thousands and millions of women in the world but at the moment of ecstatic love, it is the 'unique she' who alone exists for the lover. The delight of this knowledge of her uniqueness is inseparably tied up with the fervour and emotional excitement of his being. If the lover is told that it is an illusion, he simply laughs at the remark. Nothing can prove to him the falsity of what he so directly apprehends. And if he is indeed deluded, is not his dream better than the awakening?
>
> The poet's function then is to see the uniqueness of things, and give them a permanent form".

In the third lecture, "Poetry, Monads and Society", Professor Kabir is at once a literary critic and a philosopher. Poetry is akin to the monad ; "it is unrelated, windowless and unique" ; and so every poem "is a monad, an entirely novel unit of reality even though it might contain elements that it shares in common with other poems"; and, above all, "the monad of poetry mirrors not only the personal universe of the poet but also his social and racial universes".

Professor Kabir has printed as an appendix to his book his discriminating appreciation of the poetry of Willian Butler Yeats. No doubt, there is not one, but two or three Yeatses; the Yeats of the Celtic Revival is at one end of the scale, the "modernist" Yeats with his affiliations to the school of Eliot is at the other end; and yet Professor Kabir is quite right when he says that "the synthesis of emotion and intellect is the key-note of Yeats's poetry". While recognizing the discernible periods in Yeats's enormous poetic career, let us also hold fast to the truth that, in the final resort, Yeats's was a singularly harmonious poetic power and personality: for, to quote Professor Kabir again, "the synthesis of imaginative content with conceptual thought worked to make his poetry vital and concrete. It earned for Yeats the status of a timeless seer".

Very recently, Professor Kabir has published a study of Sarat Chandra Chatterji, the Bengali novelist. Besides attempting a critical account of Sarat Chandra's great novels, the monograph also roughly indicates his affiliations to Bankim Chandra and Rabindranath. The book is animatedly and interestingly written; but it lacks the weight and finish of Professor Kabir's *Poetry, Monads and Society.*

IV

A few more names and titles may also be added; Prof. Amiyakumar Sen's *Studies in Shelley*; Prof. K. K. Mehrotra's *Horace Walpole and the English Novel*; Dr. G. Kar's *Thoughts on the Mediaeval Lyric*; Prof. Mohinimohan Bhattacharji's *Platonic Ideas in Spenser*; Prof. H. K. Banerji's *Henry Fielding*; Mr. V. K. Krishna Menon's *Laughter*; Prof. P. Seshadri's monograph on John Leyden; the present writer's *Lytton Strachey*; Dr. A. C. Bose's *Three Mystic Poets: Yeats, A. E., Tagore*; and Jehangir R. P. Mody's *Vondel and Milton.*

A word now about reviewers. Reviewing of new literature is not very efficiently done in India, although there are notable exceptions like *The Hindu, The Modern Review, The Indian Review, The Aryan Path, The New Review, The Hindustan Review* and *The Indian P. E. N.* The Literary Supplement of *The Hindu* at one time enjoyed a considerable vogue and commanded the services of a notable band of reviewers. Under the stress of war-time economy, it has now lost much of its well-merited importance and the reviews that now appear in its columns are often scrappy and sometimes even perverse. It is to be earnestly hoped that as the war is over *The Hindu* will once again publish an efficient Literary Supplement, somewhat along the lines of the *Times Literary Supplement*. And, of late, the *All-India Weekly* has developed into a full-blooded literary paper, rather analogous to the *John O'London's Weekly*.

When the Literary Supplement of *The Hindu* was issued every Wednesday, discriminating readers gave special importance to the reviews appearing over the initials "K. S." "K. S." is, in fact, Professor K. Swaminathan of the Madras Presidency College. We have already referred to his excellent edition of Trevelyan's *Life of Macaulay;* it is a thorough piece of work and gives one an idea of the kind of work he can do if he likes. But he is —or till lately he was— generally contented with reviewing current literature in *The Hindu*.

Some of Prof. Swaminathan's reviews—like the review of Walter de la Mare's poems, for example—are fine essays in criticism, discriminating in their judgments and careful, perhaps extra careful, in their phrasing. Even if he is but summarizing his author, one cannot but admire the lucid clarity of a passage like this:

> "In Milton, there is a dualism which is not only self-conscious but deliberately artistic. This dualism, however,

is one of forces, not of purpose. Sensuous desire and chastity are brought together by their mutual passion for conflict. Intolerance, fierce and fanatical, is the very life-breath of Milton's poetry and the one principle of union between his fell, incensed and mighty opposites. The conflict, which is the central theme of Milton from *Comus* to *Samson*, is not internal or mental, but external and material. 'The dark unfathomed infinite abyss' that Shakespeare explores with wandering feet is within the mind of Troilus, Hamlet, Othello, Lear; but Satan's perilous journey, long and hard, takes him through a ponderable chaos".

Occasionally, K. S. can be pompous and pontifical as in: "we have refrained from bespattering this notice with epithets of indiscriminate laudation" or "most Indo-Anglian poetry is born dead and deserves and is doomed to prompt and perpetual damnation" or "fabricate a format of this studied and unstinted sumptuousness". He also often exhibits a fatal weakness for discovering echoes rather indiscriminately: for instance, while reviewing Dr. Cousins's poetry, he discovers in it echoes from Browning, Belloc, Spenser, Shelley, Tennyson, Francis Thompson and Milton. He may be right, but the method tends to become a vexatious affectation. His extreme self-consciousness also sometimes prevents him from apprehending the sheer authentic in new literature. Only rarely can K. S. wholeheartedly surrender himself to a book or an author; and the result is that the self-conscious reviewer often stifles the lover of literature! But, on the whole, K. S. is a reliable critic and a fastidious scholar and a conscientious teacher of English Literature.

CHAPTER XXVII

BIOGRAPHY AND AUTOBIOGRAPHY

I

Biography is not a trifling matter of putting together facts and dates and letters and speeches and what not; biography is an art and it should be cultivated as an art. But we have not as yet many examples of good Indo-Anglian biography; we have produced no Boswell, no Aubrey, no Lytton Strachey; our massive biographies are unreadable and our shorter ones puerile. A book like Dhanakoti Raju's *Queen Empress Victoria, her Life and Times* (1887) is merely a haphazard compilation, but it gives the pattern of the general run of so-called biographies published in India. Journalistic hacks put together in a mood of incredible hurry stray speeches and statements and scatter a number of dates in between; the resulting monstrosity is supposed to do duty for a biography!

Messrs. G. A. Natesan of Madras have published a number of brief biographies—turned out according to an unalterable formula—and they are informative and they have no doubt their own uses; but they never aspire to be true biographies like those of Plutarch's or Johnson's.

Nagendranath Ghose's *Memoirs of Maharaja Nubkissen Bahadur* and *Kristo Das Pal* are early Indo-Anglian attempts at serious biography; but they cannot be said to be successes. Of more recent attempts, we may mention Bepin Chandra Pal's *Mrs. Annie Besant* and Sir Dinsha Wacha's admirable *J. N. Tata: his Life and Life-Work.*

Principal T. K. Shahani's *Gopal Krishna Gokhale*, described as a "Historical Biography", is a very competent piece of work; it is carefully documented, and it shows a complete grasp of the political and economic questions which Gokhale was called upon to tackle in his all too brief public career.

Gokhale's early years, his "apprenticeship", his determination to dedicate his all to the Motherland, his grasp of questions relating to Indian finance, his moderatism, his pioneering labours in the cause of education, all are surveyed in considerable detail. Principal Shahani's 400-page biography is an imposing record of the career of one of India's greatest men ; but it does not show us Gokhale the *man* ; and it is therefore necessary to turn also to the Rt. Hon. Srinivasa Sastri's Mysore University Extension Lectures on the life of Gokhale to get a complete picture of the departed patriot and statesman.

Mr. Sastri's *Life of Gokhale* is a collection of extempore speeches on the subject to evening audiences in Bangalore. And yet the book is all the better for it and the more resplendently does the personality of Gokhale shine on its radiant pages. Like all good biographies, Mr. Sastri's *Life of Gokhale* also enables us to know intimately both the hero and the biographer ; and spoken throughout in the pellucid prose of which Mr. Sastri is so absolute a master, *Life of Gokhale* is a book which familiarly shares confidence with us rather than pontifically imparts information to us ; it is, in short, the work of a Boswell on Dr. Johnson, and it is consequently splendid stuff. Mr. Sastri's recent address on Mahadev Govind Ranade, smaller in scope than the lectures on Gokhale, reveals nonetheless the same qualities of divination and sheer literary artistry.

II

There are other useful and informative biographical studies also which may be appropriately referred to here : P. C. Ray's *Life and Times of C. R. Das*, Sir Jogendra Singh's *Guru Nanak*, Kartar Singh's *Guru Govind Singh*, S. Natarajan's *Lallubhai Samaldas*, Anup Singh's *Nehru, the Rising Star of India*, the present writer's *S. Srinivasa Iyengar* and Iqbal Singh's *Gautama Buddha*. Many so-called Indian biographies are merely

political or philosophical essays, or no more than chronicles; and hence they rarely succeed in revealing the contours of the very human personalities of the respective heroes.

Professor Correia-Afonso's *The Spirit of Xavier* is an adequately documented, yet very readable and inspiring, study of the great St. Francis Xavier, the Apostle of the Indies. Prof. Correia-Afonso succinctly calls St. Xavier "the a Kempis of action: his life is—the Imitation of Christ". The Spaniard, the scholar, the Jesuit, the missionary, the saint, these facets of Xavier are one by one lovingly and reverently delineated; and an inspiring picture emerges at last.

Perhaps, the single outstanding example of Indo-Anglian biography is Sir Rustom Masani's *Dadabhai Naoroji*, a veracious, conscientious and thorough piece of work. The narrative is lucid and straight-forward; the book is interspersed with many self-revealing letters; and the remorseless march of the years and the procession of the events coalesce naturally with the life-story of the Grand Old Man, one of the makers of modern India.

Sir Rustom has succeeded where others have so signally failed because he alone has fully realized the importance of personal letters and he alone has evinced both sympathy with the subject and respect for Truth; and he alone has had at once the patience to collect all the available material and the discrimination to utilize only the most significant among them.

It may be added, in conclusion, that the task of the Indo-Anglian biographer is difficult, if not impossible, because our heroes do not (generally speaking) keep diaries or write long or self-revealing letters; even if they do, they are very soon lost and do not become available to the biographer. That is the reason why our biographies tend to lay more emphasis on the heroes' public life or publicly expressed opinions than on their "inner" life, their human attitudes, occupations, and

foibles or the interesting circumstances of their private life. It is a pity that we cannot know our heroes—a Pandit Motilal Nehru, a Bal Gangadhar Tilak, a Lala Lajpat Rai, an S. Srinivasa Iyengar,—as intimately as we can a Dr. Johnson or a Walter Scott or a Disraeli.

Mr. N. C. Kelkar's Marathi biography of Lokamanya Tilak has been in part translated into English, and it is a meritorious work indeed, being a biography in the Boswellian tradition ; but we want more such books, more and more of them, in English and in the vernaculars.

III

While the Indo-Anglians have given us few good biographies, they have been more successful in attempting miniature portraits after the manner of A. G. Gardiner, Philip Guedella, Hannen Swaffer, Ernest Raymond and Harold Laski.

Mr. Iswara Dutt's *Sparks and Fumes* contains pen-pictures of thirteen Andhra leaders like C. R. Reddy, C. Y. Chintamani, Konda Venkatappiah, T. Prakasam, B. Sambamurti and Pattabhi Sitaramiah. The sketches are all eminently readable and enjoyable and we can but echo the late Mr. S. Srinivasa Iyengar's words in the Foreword : " His phrasing is crisp and convincing, his style has both vigour and freshness, and his delineation is characterized by shrewdness and subtlety ". We have to content ourselves with only a single extract, taken from the essay on Bulusu Sambamurti .

" He is always one step in advance of the national regiment. To him Dr. Pattabhi is an extremist among moderates and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru a moderate among extremists. Ipso facto, he is an extremist among extremists. Primarily a man for direct action, he would laugh to scorn all puerile controversies and petty wranglings, and openly sneer at all mellifluous apologies to consecrated political tradi-

tions.... He turns Nelson's blind eye to all verbal tight-rope dance, and hears only the paeans of the battle-field."

Mr. K. Chandrasekharan's *Persons and Personalities*, being the work of a lawyer rather than that of a journalist, is more judicial and less vivacious, Mr. Chandrasekharan writes soberly and thereby sometimes leaves a more lasting impression than others do with their seeming glitter and raciness. For one thing, Chandrasekharan writes of people whom he has personally known, people (let us say) in the delectable regions of Mylapore. That is the reason why Chandrasekharan delivers the goods without fuss and without a hitch. Not only are 'persons' like the Rt. Hon. Srinivasa Sastri, Sir S. Varadachari, Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar and Mr. Venkataramani snapped convincingly in these pages, but 'personalities' like "My Favourite Guest", "My Family Friend", "My Teacher" and "My Pundit" are also charmingly portrayed. It is the true measure of Chandrasekharan's distinction as a portraitist that his sketches are written "in simple and elegant prose and with a justness of appreciation and real understanding".

Mr. Yusuf Meherally's *Leaders of India* contains thumb-nail sketches of Abul Kalam Azad, C. Rajagopalachari, Sarojini Naidu, Jayaprakash Narain and other front-rank leaders. The portraits are somewhat journalistically written and appeal to the reader at once.

Khasa Subba Rau's *Men in the Limelight* is a collection of twelve pen-portraits. There are politicians, journalists like Pothan Joseph and K. Srinivasan, a philosopher like Professor Radhakrishnan, an idealist like S. Doraiswami Iyer; but inevitably the politicians outnumber the rest. Subba Rau is a facile writer and writes freely and even fearlessly. One of the best essays in the collection is that on the late S. Srinivasa Iyengar; the lawyer, the politician, the dynamic leader, the brave Achilles sulking in his tents, the statesman, these facets

of the great departed leader's personality are lovingly touched and a fine portrait emerges in the end. Here is a memorable snap of the lawyer :

> " In the High Court, where he is undoubtedly the most distinguished legal practitioner of his generation, his bearing is one of quiet confidence. Punctilious punctuality, a mastery over self that never wavers or permits the slightest loss of temper, a reserve so complete as to be almost forbidding and to ward off all familiarities from the officious, are the ingredients of his external functioning as an advocate. Years of practice have fashioned out of them a standard of professional comportment unmatched for its suggestion of latent power without any taint of affectation or a desire to impress, a rare combination of attributes which may be regarded as the essence of artistry in the craftsmanship of advocacy. Under this disciplined exterior is a veritable dynamo of uncanny cerebral activity going on in the midst of an almost oceanic immensity of legal knowledge, and the reverence evoked in consequence whenever he enters any gathering of lawyers amounts to a feeling of awe.... He walks the courts apparently as all other advocates do, but hushed sensation follows his footsteps as a symbol of mental homage and he is treated by Bench and Bar alike as an Olympian whose supremacy none dare challenge."

The same crispness in phrasing is also evident in the other sketches in *Men in the Limelight.*

Dr. Sachchidananda Sinha, who has meritoriously distinguished himself in many walks of life, who has been eminent in the fields of law, education, journalism and public life, has also been publishing from time to time character-sketches of his eminent contemporaries ; to read Dr. Sinha's sketches of Dr. Ganganath Jha or Devamitta Dharmapala or Dr. Rajendra Prasad is to exchange pulses with these great personalities as

also with the great scholar-journalist who has served the Mother in many capacities over a period of five or more decades.

Special mention must also be made of Professor P. A. Wadia's *Mahatma Gandhi*, an original character-study in the form of a discussion between four persons, representing four points of view. The book is *sui generis*, and has properly become a best-seller.

In conclusion it may be stated that it is, on the whole, rather difficult for Indians to write good biographies and character-sketches, not only on account of the paucity of easily accessible data in the form of letters and diaries, but also because with us, as Mr. S. Srinivasa Iyengar once clinchingly put it, "the skin is still sensitive to criticism but gluttonous to flattery". To be both sympathetic and just is like walking on the razor's edge and few Indo-Anglians are quite able to achieve the feat. Anyhow, we have begun with a fair number of creditable biographies and miniatures, and we should be able to do better in the future.

IV

In the field of auto-biography, on the other hand, the Indo-Anglians have given us many interesting and two or three triumphant exhibits. Raja Rammohan Roy wrote a brief autobiographical sketch in English which is reproduced in Raja Rao and Iqbal Singh's *Changing India*; and many autobiographies and autobiographical sketches have appeared since in English as well as in the vernaculars.

Maharshi Debendranath Tagore's autobiography, which has been rendered into English by Satyendranath Tagore and Indira Devi, is an inspiring piece of writing. So is Mahatma Gandhi's autobiography, *My Experiments with Truth*, Englished beautifully by the late Mahadeo Desai. If the original

is a Gujarati classic, Mahadev Desai's version is no less an English classic. The autobiography is written with utter honesty, a painstaking accuracy, and a disarming candour.

It is said that anyone almost can write an absorbing autobiography if he is unashamedly candid and sincere and if he can also write with ease. And when the writer is a person of the eminence of Mahatma Gandhi, who has lived life intensely and richly and variously, the result is bound to be a masterpiece —and so indeed it is. Gandhi hides nothing ; he spares none, least of all himself ; he has absolutely no axes to grind. A beautiful tranquillity shines on the pages of the autobiography ; school life or dietetics or *brahmacharya* or politics, they are all truthfully and serenely told with neither extenuation nor special pleading. Whether we consider it as a record of righteous adventure or as a moral tract or simply as a model of pellucid writing, Gandhi's autobiography is a vastly important work.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's *Autobiography* has been a best-seller in India and in England, and even in America, since its publication a few years ago. The causes of its popularity are not difficult to enumerate. It is, in the first place, the autobiography of one of India's foremost leaders, one who is often identified with Renascent India itself in the throes of her rebirth. It is, in the second place, a fairly accurate picture of Indian politics during the twenties and thirties, snapped from the vantage ground of what one might call popular extremism. It is, in the third place, a very readable book, fresh and conversational in tone, faultless and unlaboured in its idiom.

The book runs to over six hundred pages ; and yet there is no dull page in the book. Pandit Nehru wrote the book in prison between June 1934 and February 1935 ; he saw it through the press when his wife, Kamala Nehru, was lying seriously ill in a continental sanatorium ; and he dedicated it

to "Kamala who is no more". Perhaps, had Pandit Nehru found time to write an Autobiography in his own Allahabad residence, he might have produced a tome more full of facts and dates and extracts and cross-references than the one we now possess; and less of an autobiography it would have been! A personal statement is what we want and this is what he gives us in his *Autobiography*; indeed, the book would be even better than it is did it contain less politics and more humanity.

Pandit Jawaharlal's political graph was determined by the trilinear co-ordinates of Motilal Nehru, a prolonged education in England, and the impact of Mahatma Gandhi on Young India; the graph has held to its own course and followed its own unique undulations without a doubt; but always it has felt the necessity to draw its strength from these three influences. It is interesting, even instructive, to follow step by step Jawaharlal's transformation from the "prig" who returned to India in the autumn of 1912—through war-time politics, Rowlatt Satyagraha, Non-co-operation, Municipal politics, the Brussels Congress, the Independence movement, and Salt Satyagraha—into the President of the Congress. It is the story of two decades of Indian politics—but our interest is all the time claimed by the hero of the pages, Pandit Nehru himself.

The autobiographer should be thoroughly honest; he should not be afraid of looking a fool; he is writing, not to make out a case for himself, but to lay bare the "facts of the case" about himself. Pandit Nehru knows this and generally refrains from writing about things that might defeat his purpose. And when he writes about his own feelings and the results of his own self-introspections, there is just that combination of self-control and self-knowledge out of which great autobiography is made.

Pen-pictures of several leaders, snaps of many more, are

scattered in the pages of the book. Some of the judgments are biassed; some are too harsh; the withering allusion to the Rt. Hon. Srinivasa Sastri's address to students on the necessity of discipline savours too much of the Bright Young Thing, while the vehemence of the attacks against rival schools of political thought betrays a cocksureness that is more amateurish than profound. But all is redeemed by a pervading openheartedness and an unfailing clarity of expression. It is beyond question one of the great autobiographies of our time.

V

Subhas Bose's autobiography, *An Indian Pilgrim*, reputed to be the genuine article, has not yet had its chance in India. The full-length autobiographies of Sir P. C. Ray and Sir Surendranath Bannerjee are also very inspiring stuff and deserve a greater vogue than they enjoy at present.

Many other Indo-Anglians have produced partial autobiographies or travel sketches. Rabindranath Tagore's *My Reminiscences* is full of memorable bursts of self-revelation and is written in beautiful prose. The late G. K. Chettur's *The Last Enchantment*, like Karaka's *The Pulse of Oxford*, is a book on Oxford; in it Chettur's humanity is revealed as fully as his mastery over English.

Mr. K. M. Munshi's *I Follow the Mahatma* is an arresting record that helps us to understand both Munshi and Mahatmaji. It is also, like Jawaharlal's *Autobiography*, a personal political record, inspired by a fervent patriotism and written with candour and ease.

Travel books are in a class apart. And some of them—for instance, A. S. Wadia's *The Call of the World*, A. S. P. Ayyar's *An Indian in Western Europe*, S. Natarajan's *West of Suez*, Karaka's *Chunking Diary* and K. S. Bannerjee's *Across the Near East*—show that our travellers have a wide-awake

curiosity and are willing to take the trouble to share their experiences with others. Mr. Wadia's book takes us round the world—Britain, America and the Far East; his is a scholar's record, and it is replete with literary echoes and apt quotations from a variety of literary celebrities. Ayyar's is a straightforward and informative book and it is written with convincing sincerity and force. Karaka's book is competent journalism but, as Mr. Edgar Snow points out, it has a practical as well as an entertainment value; for, it is indeed "a vivid document of personal experience, a lively and witty response to the stimuli of a historic struggle going on in India's front-yard".

Natarajan's *West of Suez* is also journalistically written, but it has much more than an ephemeral value. Natarajan writes clearly, directly, and effectively; he has courage to call a spade a spade; he describes men and things, movements and ideas; and he not seldom allows us to get near to him, and exchange confidences with him.

CHAPTER XXVIII

HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY

I

Many Indians have published historical surveys and studies in the English language. Framji Dosabhai's *The Parsees: their History, Manners, Customs and Religion* was published as early as 1858. Rajendralal Mitra published a similar study, *The Parsees of Bombay*, in 1880; he was also the author of *The Antiquities of Orissa* and *Indo-Aryans*, sumptuous volumes both. Other early historical studies are Romesh Chunder Dutt's *A History of Civilization in Ancient India*, *The Economic History of British India*, *India in the Victorian Age* and *Later Hindu Civilization*.

Syed Ahmad Khan, the eminent Muslim educationist and social reformer, wrote a competent *Archaeological History of Delhi* while his no less distinguished son, Syed Mahmood the jurist, wrote a *History of Education in India*. Another eminent Muslim, the Rt. Hon. Syed Ameer Ali, published *A Short History of the Saracens*.

Mahadev Govind Ranade, often called the "father of Indian Economics", was versatile in his accomplishments and was indeed one of the makers of modern India. His monumental historical work, *The Rise of the Maratha Power*, was published in 1900. Barrister V. D. Savarkar's more recent book, *Hindu Pad Padshahi*, is another eye-opener in regard to one of the inspiring chapters of Indian history.

Among the other historical studies published in the last century, we may here mention M. N. Mehta's *Native States of India*, J. N. Bhattacharya's *Hindu Castes and Sects* and P. N. Bose's *Hindu Civilization under British Rule*. Many more titles might be listed, but these books, however meritorious in themselves, are nowadays untouched by any except antiquarians and researchers; but there they are,—symbols of the industry of an earlier generation of Indo-Anglians.

II

In the twentieth century, historical works are being published in very considerable numbers. Research journals have been started in different parts of the country and some of them are doing very good work indeed; two of these, the *Indian Historical Quarterly* and the *Journal of Indian History*, are on an all-India basis, while others like the *Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Historical Research Society* or the *Jaina Quarterly*, are conducted on sectional or regional lines. No doubt, only rarely do "research" papers achieve readability; addressed to a select class of readers, weighted with loads of footnotes and

innumerable citations, they generally frighten the common reader.

And yet a historical narrative *can* be made at once authoritative and irresistibly interesting. A great historian will give his narrative the sinuosity and the curve, the roar and the march, the beauty and the significance, of a true heroic poem. A Herodotus, a Caesar, a Gibbon, a Carlyle, a Macaulay,—they are all historians and they are also men of letters in their own right. It is the artist's, the poet's, privilege to see the significance behind a multitude of isolated facts and dates and names and details, while the mere researcher is but a plodder, at best no more than a hewer of wood and a drawer of water for the imaginative historian who makes a historical record a work of prose art.

Sir Jadunath Sarcar is easily the most outstanding figure among the Indo-Anglian historians. His well-known *History of Aurangazib* in five volumes is both meritorious as history and fascinating as literature. His other books include *Fall of the Mughal Empire, India through the Ages, Shivaji* and *Chaitanya.* Sir Jadunath wields a powerful prose style which reduces to order, shapeliness and beauty the stories of Shivaji and Chaitanya and of the long and fateful reign of Emperor Aurangazib.

Various other historians also have achieved the feat of harmonizing severe scholarship with readability and even beauty. Prof. K. T. Shah is a brilliant economist and political commentator; his *Post-War Germany* and *The Russian Experiment* are useful and interesting studies; his books on the Government of India Act of 1935 and on India's present-day problems are all written trenchantly; it is, however, in his massive volume, *The Splendour that was Ind,* that Prof. Shah gives us an inspiring record of the vicissitudes and indubitable

achievements of Indian civilization. Dr. Radhakumud Mukerjea also has given a useful treatise on *Hindu Civilization.*

Of the other Indo-Anglian historians, Ishwari Prasad P. T. Srinivasa Iyengar, A. Yusuf Ali, and a few others stand prominent. These distinguished scholars have published specialist studies of various epochs of Indian history ; but, generally speaking, either their works are too specialist and heavy or, when they attempt popular history, their works are just school and college text-books. Although an Ishwari Prasad or a Nilakanta Sastri is better informed than most European students of Indian history, it is nevertheless a Vincent Smith or a Sir George Dunbar who produces a readable history of India for the general reader no less than for the college student.

It is, therefore, to be hoped that the Indo-Anglians will give us in the future, not merely scholarly treatises, but also historical surveys that will attract and hold the attention of the common reader. Some at least of our historians, who like Jadunath Sarcar have a gift for style, should strive to be our Trevelyans and Fishers and Wingfield-Stratfords. In other words, our best historical studies should aspire to the status of literature. And historians like Romesh Chunder Dutt and Jadunath Sarcar have shown already that the task is not impossible.

III

While professors and teachers have no doubt given us many useful and reliable histories—while some of them have devoted many long years to untie the baffling knots in human history—they are not the only people who have attempted to tell the stories of men and of nations. In the midst of a busy professional life, Ranade was able to write a history of the rise of the Maratha power ; likewise Lokamanya Tilak produced his stimulating and thoughtful studies, *Orion* and *The Arctic*

Home of the Vedas; Major M. D. Basu wrote a number of books on the British period of Indian History; Mr. Ambika Charan Majumdar's *Indian National Evolution* and Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya's *History of the Indian National Congress* are both very well written and are very reliable records; and Lala Lajpat Rai's *Unhappy India* also may be roughly classed with these illuminating surveys and historical studies.

But, perhaps, no popular history by an Indo-Anglian has quite achieved the vogue of Jawaharlal Nehru's *Glimpses of World History*. It is chattily written and consists of a series of familiar letters addressed to his daughter, Indira. The *Glimpses* is by no means a historical treatise; "I have given you", he says in the last letter, "the barest outline; this is not history; they are but fleeting glimpses of our long past". Pandit Nehru is a clever chronicler, charmed by the pageant of world history, and he re-tells the oft-told tale in an animated and self-confident manner.

The *Glimpses* has become somewhat of a best-seller in the English-speaking countries. Jawaharlal is certainly among the finest of present-day English prose writers and his epistles hum and sparkle and argue and prophesy with a singular cocksureness and charm that capture our imagination at once. Towards the close of his book, Jawaharlal assures his daughter:

> "If, then, you look upon past history with the eye of sympathy, the dry bones will fill up with flesh and blood, and you will see a mighty procession of living men and women and children in every age and every clime, different from us and yet very like us, with much the same human virtues and human failings. History is not a magic show, but there is plenty of magic in it for those who have eyes to see."

And certainly many a letter in *Glimpses of World History* proves a charmed magic casement and "innumerable pictures

from the gallery of history crowd our minds". To young and old alike, reading the *Glimpses* will ever prove a most enlightening experience.

IV

Philosophy has always attracted the Indo-Anglians. The impact of the West on the Orient compelled a reconsideration and revaluation of India's religions and philosophies; and in due course philosophical studies and treatises appeared in English.

Raja Rammohan Roy was one of the first, if not the very first, to attempt an exposition of the basic truths of Hinduism through the medium of English. He published a number of thoughtful brochures like *A Defence of Hindu Theism* and *Divine Worship by means of Gayuttree*. Although Rammohan is often wrongly represented, especially by some Christian missionaries, as a total rebel against Hinduism, he was really, as Dr. Wingfield-Stratford has wisely discerned, "a loyal Hindu, a Brahman of the Brahmans, steeped in the lore of the Upanishads and making his life's work the restoration of the Hindu faith to its pristine simplicity".

Many writers, Hindu and Muslim, soon followed in the wake of Rammohan's inspiring example and we have had in consequence a considerable harvest of philosophical literature. Some of these early publications include Gangopadhyaya's *Life and Religion of the Hindus* (1860), Chandra's *Brahmanism* (1870), Syed Ameer Ali's *Ethics of Islam* and *The Spirit of Islam*, P. C. Majumdar's Lowell Lectures on *Hindu Religion and Society* and Sir Brajendranath Seal's *Comparative Studies in Vaishnavism and Christianity*.

Meanwhile two very helpful books appeared which gave a fillip to the new scholarship: Rajendrabala Mitra's "A Scheme for the rendering of European Scientific Terms into

the Vernaculars of India" (1877) and Ramakrishna Gopal Bhandarkar's "Critical, comparative, and historical method of inquiry as applied to Sanskrit scholarship and philosophy and Indian Archaeology" (1888). Another book of like nature, *An Introduction to Textual Criticism,* has very recently been published by Dr. S. M. Katre of the Deccan College Research Institute.

Dr. Bhandarkar himself applied the method of inquiry he had explained in the above brochure to a critical study of Indian languages, literatures and philosophical systems. He published a very large number of learned papers on a variety of subjects and some of his books, for instance *Vaishnavism, Shaivism and Minor Religious Systems* and his Grammars of the Sanskrit language, are still very widely used and admired.

Other well-known scholars like the late K. T. Telang, Ganganath Jha, M. G. Ranade, V. Rangacharya and K. Sundararaman also did yeomen service to English readers by either translating Sanskrit classics into English or by publishing commentaries or criticisms of the same. Telang's translation of the *Bhagavad Gita* and Rangacharya's lectures on the *Gita* in three massive volumes no less than Ganganath Jha's and Sundararaman's learned introductions and commentaries deserve special mention here. And Swami Ram Tirth's innumerable lectures on Hindu philosophy can still be read with much pleasure and profit.

V

It was, however, Swami Vivekananda that first definitely put Indian philosophy on the world map. His addresses on Vedanta philosophy, his lectures on Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Raja Yoga and Jnana Yoga, and his beautiful monographs on Hinduism and Vedanta, all took India by storm about forty years ago. Vivekananda was a popularizer of genius; but

he was a creative philosophical thinker also at the same time. He played a competent St. Paul to the great Jesus that Ramakrishna had been.

Vivekananda's active career was compressed into a brief period; "like a meteor of the first magnitude" to quote Mr. N. C. Kelkar, "he lighted up the face of his country and went down the horizon—all within ten short years". But even within this brief span, he laid the foundations of the Ramakrishna Asram on a secure basis and left it to continue his great work. His ideal can be summed up in his own words:

"The gift of India is the gift of religion and philosophy, wisdom and spirituality; and religion does not want cohorts to march before its path and clear its way. Wisdom and philosophy do not want to be carried on torrents of blood. They do not march upon bloody human bodies, do not march with human violence, but come on the wings of peace and love. Like the gentle dew that falls unseen and unheard and yet brings into blossom the fairest of roses, so has been the contribution of India to the thought of the world....I am an imaginative man and my idea is the conquest of the whole world by the Hindu race".

Ramakrishna's and Vivekananda's work is being continued by the Ramakrishna Asrams scattered all over the world and by philosophical journals like the *Prabuddha Bharata* and the *Vedanta Kesari.*

In this connection may also be mentioned the first editor of the *Prabuddha Bharata,* the late B. R. Rajam Aiyar, whose death at the tender age of twenty-six was no mean loss to Indian letters. His varied contributions to the *Prabuddha Bharata* are now collected and published in one volume of about seven hundred pages with the excellent title, *Rumbles in Vedanta.* If one wants to learn philosophy, especially Vedanta philosophy, without tears, one cannot do better than

spend an hour every day with Rajam Aiyar's *Rambles in Vedanta*. Erudition, humour, wit, candour, a sense of style, a feeling for Sanskrit, English and Tamil poetry, all are evident on the pages of the book. He is clever and wise enough to trip Mr. Caldwell on his own chosen ground ; his essays on the *Gita* appeal to our hearts at once ; his interpretations of symbols like Nataraja and Seshasayana are both interesting and convincing ; his life-sketches of "Seekers after God" like Nanda, Sri Alawandar, Buddha, and Ramakrishna are inspiring chronicles ; and, in short, once we open *Rambles in Vedanta* we shall find it very difficult to shut it—it is so sincerely, beautifully and fascinatingly written. And it is a book for the young as well as for the old.

Rabindranath Tagore was primarily a poet and when he turned a philosopher, as he did in *Sadhana* and *Religion of Man* (Hibbert Lectures), he gave us not merely the philosophy of a poet but the very poetry of philosophy. He had the poet's genius for seizing the essentials and exhibiting them in all their significance and beauty. His Foreword to the Everymans edition of *Hindu Scriptures* is hardly two pages in length, but it succintly and memorably tells us the essence of the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads* and the *Gita*. He could state the ancient Indian ideal in but a couple of sentences :

> "The ideal that India tried to realize led her best men to the isolation of a contemplative life, and the treasures that she gained for mankind by penetrating into the mysteries of reality cost her dear in the sphere of worldly success. Yet, this also was a sublime achievement—it was a supreme manifestation of that human aspiration which knows no limit, and which has for its object nothing less than the realization of the Infinite."

Tagore's Hibbert Lectures on the "Religion of Man" are a poet's ripe testament. "It gives me a great joy", he says,

to feel in my life detachment at the idea of a mystery of a meeting between the two (the Infinite and Man) in a creative comradeship. I felt that I had found my religion at last, the Religion of Man, in which the Infinite became defined in humanity and came close to me so as to need my love and co-operation". This intimate and perennial personal touch with God is the recurring note of Tagore's "Religion of Man". He was no believer in mere asceticism and he exhorted Man to be faithful to the kindred and reconcilable claims of "Heaven and Home".

VI

Sir S. Radhakrishnan, who has deservedly won a world-wide reputation as an interpreter of India's philosophy, is among the two or three Indo-Anglian philosophers who are perfectly at home in the English language. He is widely read in English and European literature and this knowledge gives a peculiar flavour to his philosophical writings. Further, he is reputed to be a very good student of both Western and Indian thought and this, again, stands him in good stead when he embarks on comparative studies in philosophy or when he tries to make the West and the East understand and appreciate each other. Bampton and Hibbert Lecturer, member of the British Academy, Spalding Professor in the University of Oxford, Professor Radhakrishnan is India's cultural ambassador to the West; but he is at the same time a leader of India and it is appropriate that he should be the Vice-Chancellor of the Benares Hindu University.

Professor Radhakrishnan's works include *The Reign of Religion in Contemporary Philosophy, The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore, The Hindu View of Life, Indian Philosophy, An Idealist View of Life, The Heart of Hindustan, Kalki or the Future of Civilization* and *Eastern Religions and*

Western Thought. His massive two-volume survey of Indian Philosophy has now become a classic. We cannot refrain from giving here the opinion of the late Mahamahopadhyaya S. Kuppuswami Sastri : "Professor Radhakrishnan's volumes on Indian Philosophy easily surpass similar works about the same subject in respect of form and matter, in respect of expositary brilliance and estimative tact, and in respect of textual correlations and technical elucidations....the gripping and living interest of Professor Radhakrishnan's volumes, which successfully exhibit the course of Indian philosophical thought as a perennial stream of progressive sweetness, and the ancient makers and moulders of this thought, not as so many embalmed corpses, but as living embodiments of philosophical insight and continually suggestive forces of well-regulated reason".

In his more recent works, Professor Radhakrishnan is seen to be an inspiring and reliable guide to Indian philosophy,—a constructive thinker on his own. He has not been inaptly compared to Cardinal Newman ; and, indeed, some of Professor Radhakrishnan's pronouncements are prophetic in their vision and fervour. His diagnosis of the modern world's manifold ills and his programme for reform are alike worthy of our earnest consideration :

"We are at a gloomy moment in history. Never has the future seemed so incalculable. With a dreary fatality the tragedy moves on. The world of nations seems to be like a nursery full of perverse, bumptious, ill-tempered children, nagging one another and making a display of their toys of earthly possessions, thrilled by mere size. This is true of all countries. It is not a question of East or West, of Asia or Europe. No intelligent Asiatic can help admiring and reverencing the great races that live in Europe and their noble and exalted achievements. His heart is wrung when he sees dark clouds massing on the horizon. There is something coarse at the very

centre of our civilization by which it is betrayed again and again. No civilization, however brilliant, can stand up against the social resentments and class conflicts which accompany a maladjustment of wealth, labour and leisure. Perpetual disturbance will be our doom if we do not recognize that the world is one and interdependent. If we do not alter the framework of the social system and the international order, which are based on force and the exploitation of the inferior individuals and backward nations, world peace will be a wild dream. While resolved to renounce nothing, this generation wishes to enjoy the fruits of renunciation .... Owing to a cross-fertilization of ideas and insights, behind which lie centuries of racial and cultural tradition and earnest endeavour, a great unification is taking place in the fabric of men's thoughts".

Professor Radhakrishnan's central interest has always been "the practical bearing of philosophy on life"; and it is to his credit that he has given Indian Philosophy the place it deserves in the entire scheme of modern thought.

Besides Professor Radhakrishnan, other Indian professors of philosophy or Sanskrit also have given us reliable and readable surveys of Indian Philosophy or studies of particular aspects of the same. Dr. Surendranath Dasgupta gives abundant proof of his oceanic scholarship and Himalayan industry in the three monumental volumes of his history of Indian Philosophy while Professor M. Hiriyanna's shorter survey of the subject is, perhaps, the best one-volume study now available in English.

Prof. P. N. Srinivasachari, a very good scholar and a writer with an adequate command of the English language, has published a number of books that seek to interpret Vedanta philosophy from the Visishtadvaita standpoint. His *magnum opus* is the recently published treatise, *The Philosophy of Visishtadvaita*; his other works include *Ramanuja's Idea of the infinite Self, Philosophy of Bhedabheda, Studies in Vedanta,*

The Philosophy of the Beautiful and *The Ethical Philosophy of the Gita.*

A few more names should close this section : Prof. R. D. Ranade's classic, *A Constructive Survey of Upanishadic Philosophy,* Dr. Mahendranath Sircar's *Hindu Mysticism* and *Eastern Lights,* Babu Bhagawan Das's *Hindu Ethics,* Sir Rustum Masani's *The Religion of the Good Life,* D. M. Datta's *Six Ways of Knowing,* and Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar's *World Religions.*

VII

The most original and outstanding of the Indo-Anglian philosophers is, however, Sri Aurobindo Ghose. We have already discussed his poetry in a previous chapter and have also referred to his prose writings and contributions to literary criticism. But to-day he is known to the civilized world principally as a philosopher and yogi. His great treatise, *The Life Divine,* which appeared serially in the *Arya* about twenty years ago has been recently published in book form and has been acclaimed by Sir Francis Younghusband as the greatest book produced in our time. Sri Aurobindo's other books on philosophy and Yoga include *The Synthesis of Yoga, The Essays on the Gita, The Mother, The Riddle of This World, The Secret of the Veda* and the commentary on *Isha Upanishad.*

The Life Divine, a massive treatise of about fifteen hundred pages, is, among text-books on Metaphysics, *the* book par excellence. Members of different faiths, partisans of different schools of philosophy, admirers of different world-figures like Plato, Hegel, St. Thomas Aquinas, Sankara, Ramanuja, all seem to find in *The Life Divine* a solution of some of their most obstreperous difficulties. It has therefore been not inaptly described by Dr. S. K. Maitra of the Benares Hindu University

as the last arch in the "bridge of thoughts and sights which spans the history of Aryan culture".

Sri Aurobindo's *Essays on the Gita* is another important contribution to philosophical literature. The *Gita* has been commented upon so frequently, so voluminously, from so many viewpoints, commented upon again so brilliantly and so eloquently and so persuasively, that it is astonishing that Sri Aurobindo should nevertheless have succeeded in making his thousand-page treatise not a whit superfluous, not a whit second-hand or disagreeably obvious, but rather a radiant re-evocation of the *philosophia perennis* embodied in the Lord's Song.

The Synthesis of Yoga and *The Secret of the Veda*, massive sequences both, are not available in book form. Philosopher or Yogi, Sri Aurobindo is the prophet of the Life Divine, essentially a creative spirit. His message can be summarized thus in the words of Dr. Mahendranath Sircar :

> "The philosophy of Aurobindo utilizes the Divine Shakti to the utmost and establishes a race on earth which will make it full of supramental wisdom and supramental power. This new race—a race free from all conventions of life—will carry with it Peace, Power and Plenty. This is the promise of his philosophy".

It is clear, then, that Sri Aurobindo's message is addressed to the West no less than to the East, and he is truly the Prophet of To-day and To-morrow.

CHAPTER XXIX

JOURNALISTS AND JURISTS

I

Although the printing press had been introduced into India about the middle of the eighteenth century (in the sixties, to be precise), the first "native" newspaper was started only in 1818. Anglo-Indian journalists had already done considerable

spade-work, and now men like Raja Rammohan Roy came forward to lend their support to indigenous journalism. The abolition, in 1833, of the much abused system of licenses and other restrictions helped the press to breathe a healthy air and "native" journalism was now well under way.

And yet all was not well with Indian journalism. Most Indian newspapers led a hand-to-mouth existence,—lacking funds, lacking readers, lacking competent staffs. The institution of the first Indian universities in 1857 led to the gradual spread of education; and the next two or three decades saw the emergence of a new class—the "educated" class of readers who were eager to read—and occasionally even to write to—these newspapers. Towards the close of the nineteenth century, there were in all 647 periodicals in Bengal, 200 in Bombay and 111 in Madras.

As is only to be expected, the vernacular newspapers are far more numerous than the English ones; but Indians have shown—and are showing—distinctive ability in English journalism. Mr. G. T. Garrett points out in *The Legacy of India*:

> "In considering the Indian writers in English a tribute must be paid to the extraordinary brilliance with which certain Indian races overcome linguistic difficulties. Bengalis, Chitpavan and Kashmiri Brahmins, Madrassis, and Parsis have produced a succession of capable journalists and publicists, who have served the nationalist cause by writing clear and trenchant English prose—Tilak, Gokhale, Aurobindo Ghose, Ranade, Surendranath Bannerjee, R. C. Dutt, N. C. Kelkar, Phirozshah Mehta, and a host of other writers have shown that Indian English can develop into a powerful weapon of attack".

No Indian can, after all, feel really at home in an alien language like English; but the Indo-Anglian journalists of about fifty

years ago looked upon English as an unescapable and necessary evil, and many of them made a virtue of this necessity. As Babu Sambhunath Mukherji, himself a pioneer in Indo-Anglian journalism, explained in the course of a letter to Mr. Meredith Townshend :

> " We might have created one of the finest literatures in the world without making any impression in the camp of our British rulers and of course without advancing our political or even social status. Nay, the truth is we *have* created a literature and a very respectable literature it is. All that copiousness and all that wealth, however, has not helped us one whit or rescued us from degradation. Hence we are compelled to journalism and authorship in a foreign tongue, to make English a kind of second vernacular to us, if possible ..... we, who write in English, have to make this sacrifice for the fatherland ".

The aim of the Indo-Anglian journalist is generally two-fold : firstly, to make an appeal to the Indian intelligentsia and, secondly, to interpret India's aspirations and to voice forth her grievances for the enlightenment of the Britisher. The best of the Indo-Anglian journalists have always played this dual role with consummate tact and surprising ability. Since the arrival of Mahatma Gandhi on the Indian political scene twenty-five years ago, vernacular journalism has also made great strides and the number of vernacular journals has increased and is increasing at a welcome rate ; but the vogue for Indo-Anglian journalism has shown no signs of decline either !

The early Indo-Anglian journalists had necessarily to be all-rounders in public life—politicians, editors, lawyers, teachers, litterateurs, often all at once ! They were generally cast on a heroic mould, they were very Titans. The mere names tell a Titanic tale : Rammohan Roy and Harish Chandra Mukherji, Kristo Das Pal and Sambhunath Mukherji, Motilal Ghose and

Narendranath Sen, Subramania Aiyer and Sankaran Nair, Vijiaraghavachari and Kasturiranga Iyengar, Karunakara Menon and K. Natarajan, Dadabhai Naoroji and Behramji Malabari, Mahadev Ranade and Narayan Chandavarkar, Lokmanya Tilak and Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Pandit Bishen Narayen and Ganga Prasad Verma. Writing of these and their contemporaries, Mr. N. C. Kelkar, himself a very distinguished Marathi and Indo-Anglian journalist, remarked over forty years ago : " This is a galaxy of journalists who have by their brilliance shed a light of glory upon their country and who, under more favourable conditions of political life, would certainly have come up to a higher level as publicists than they at present occupy ".

Thanks to the endeavours of some of these great journalists and their successors, we have to-day a number of first-rate Indian-owned and Indian-managed English newspapers and periodicals in the country, which are quite as good as their Anglo-Indian contemporaries. The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* of Calcutta, the *Hindu* of Madras, the *Bombay Chronicle*, the *Leader* of Allahabad, the *Tribune* of Lahore, and, among weekly and monthly journals, the *Modern Review*, the *Hindustan Review*, the *Indian Review*, the *Aryan Path*, the *Indian Social Reformer*, the *Mahratta*, the *Twentieth Century*, and the *New Review*, all are doing very meritorious work in their respective fields or areas.

In India, editors have almost as a rule been also front-rank politicians ; and often politicians have turned to journalism in order to propagate their particular gospels. Among these journalist-politicians of the past two or three decades, we may mention Mahatma Gandhi of *Young India* and *Harijan*, Lala Lajpat Rai of the *People*, Maulana Muhammad Ali of *Comrade*, T. Prakasan of *Swarajya*, C. R. Das of the *Forward*, Subhas Chandra Bose of the *Forward Bloc*, M. N. Roy of

the *Independent India*, K. M. Munshi of the *Social Welfare*, and Pattabhi Sitaramayya of the *Janmabhumi*; some of these papers are now defunct, but they had a tremendous vogue at one time.

On the other hand, the late Ramananda Chatterjee and Sir C. Y. Chintamani, Pothan Joseph and K. Natarajan, Syed Abdulla Brelvi and A. D. Mani, K. Iswara Dutt and S. Natarajan are journalists first and politicians (if at all) only afterwards. Ramananda Chatterjee made the *Modern Review* unquestionably the most important and weighty monthly journal in India, and one of the best anywhere; the late Sir C. Y. Chintamani, migrating from Andhra Desha to Allahabad, made the *Leader* a power in North India. Pothan Joseph has been moving from place to place and was lately the editor of the *Dawn*, the organ of the Muslim League, but his editorials are as trenchant as ever and his "Over a Cup of Tea" continues to delight thousands of readers all over India; the Natarajans, father and son, have made the *Indian Social Reformer* their life vocation, although the father once created a diversion by occupying for a while the editorial sanctum of the *Indian Daily Mail*; Brelvi of the *Bombay Chronicle* is a Nationalist Muslim in politics and is one of the most competent Indo-Anglian journalists of the day; A. D. Mani started as a free-lance in Madras, but he is now the editor of the *Hitavada* of Nagpur; and Iswara Dutt, formerly of the *Leader*, is the founder-editor of the *Twentieth Century*, but for a few months he edited also that excellent journal, the *Week-End*.

III

Dr. Sachchidananda Sinha is a class by himself. A veteran publicist, a versatile scholar, a distinguished member of the bar, a former Executive Councillor, till lately Vice-Chancellor

of the Patna University, Dr. Sinha has also edited for a period of forty years the *Hindustan Review*, a monthly journal with a long and meritorious record of public service. Dr. Sinha shares with the great Victorians a toughness of fibre and the stamina for sustained and purposeful endeavour ; he has played the roles of lawyer, legislator, executive councillor, social reformer, educationist and humanist with earnestness, integrity and conspicuous ability ; and he has all along known the " importance of being earnest." Dr. Sinha's editorials, book-reviews, and other contributions reveal his versatility of approach and his astonishing scholarship. He has faith, he believes in himself and in the world, he believes in work and in relaxation, in beauty and in the stern realities of life. He is equally interested in the poetry of Sir Mahomed Iqbal, the personality of Devamitta Dharmapala, the satires of John Dryden, and in the beauties of Kashmir. Several of his important contributions to the *Hindustan Review* are included in the recently published *A Selection from the Speeches and Writings of Sachchidananda Sinha* and deserve to be read with care.

The late Nagendranath Gupta was another outstanding journalist who was at home as much in literature as in politics ; and some of his most characteristic work is included in *The Place of Man and Other Essays*. St. Nihal Singh is a free-lance of genius and his career has been a long and very distinguished one. Mr. K. Ramakotiswara Rau has made his *Triveni* a respected high-class journal devoted to the interpretation of the main currents in India's cultural life. *The Prabuddha Bharata* and *The Vedanta Kesari* are both devoted to philosophy and are conducted efficiently by the Swamis of the Ramakrishna Asram. Of late, the Indo-Anglians are also producing popular journals devoted to the worlds of sport, cinema, finance, and what not. Columnists too are now in evidence here and there, and some of them—" Dim " of the *Bombay*

Chronicle and "Little Man" of the *Bombay Sentinel*—are very good indeed.

No doubt, as Mr. Garrett has pointed out, "polemical writing can only with great difficulty reach the level of literature, and very little is likely to survive from the vast mass of political and economic articles and books which have been produced in India during the last half-century"; but this is true, not only of Indo-Anglian, but of any living literature. A journalist is required to live for the moment and to assume a sort of omniscience; and the journalists of an earlier generation and even many journalists to-day are compelled to battle against a variety of adverse circumstances like poor pay, insecurity of tenure, the frowns of the powers that be, and the uncertain conditions engendered by civil disobedience movements and consequent repressive acts on the part of the Government. And yet the Indo-Anglian journalists have bravely carried on through fair weather and foul,—and hence they are entitled to the gratitude of their countrymen.

One of the greatest of Indo-Anglian journalists, Aurobindo Ghose contributed a series of articles to the *Indu Prakash* when he was hardly twenty-one or twenty-two; these were sparklingly original and scintillated with brilliance. Later on he became the editor of the *Bandemataram* during the "anti-partition" days; he soon made the paper a power in the country. The paper—especially the "Weekly Bandemataram"—found its way to every patriotic home and millions responded to the gospel of nationalism propagated by the paper. Wit and sarcasm, logic and scholarship, humour and irony, poetry and eloquence, all came handy to Sri Aurobindo, and hence some at least of his contributions to the *Bandemataram* deserve to rank as literature. Subsequently he also edited the *Karmayogin* and the *Arya*; in these Sri Aurobindo is no journalist but rather a prophet and, in the *Arya*, a philosopher and a

yogi. Many of the *Karmayogin* and *Arya* articles and sequences have been reprinted in book form and they prove that Sri Aurobindo is a master of eloquent, persuasive and beautiful prose.

Few Indian newspapers publish satisfactory "Literary Pages"; we have likewise hardly any really satisfying week-end newspapers like the London *Observer* or *Sunday Times*; nor have we any *Punch* or even *Tit Bits*; but let us be thankful for what the Indo-Anglian journalists have already given us, for they have truly given us the best that they could give. It is for others of the present generation to go one better—if they can.

IV

As for Indo-Anglian lawyers and jurists, their name is legion; but a few stand out head and shoulders above the crowd. We can merely mention the names of eminent Indian judges like Sir T. Muthusami Ayyar, Dwaraknath Mitter, Mahadev Govind Ranade, Sir Subramania Ayyar, Sir V. Bhashyam Iyengar, Syed Ameer Ali, Syed Mahmood, Sir Ashutosh Mukherji, Sir Narayan Chandavarkar, Sir Shah Sulaiman, V. Krishnaswami Iyer, and Dinshah F. Mulla; and, among those still with us, Sir Abdur Rahim, Sir S. Varadachariar, and M. R. Jayakar come readily to one's mind. Indian judges have filled with distinction the highest places and some like Sir Subramania Ayyar and Sir Shadi Lal have shed lustre on the office of Chief Justiceship itself while Jayakar, Ameer Ali, Mulla, Shah Sulaiman and Varadachariar have earned a great reputation either as members of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council or as Judges of the Indian Supreme Court.

The present writer is not competent to pronounce an opinion on the work of the Indian judges; but the considered opinion of Sir Brojendra Mitter, sometime Law Member of

the Government of India and later its Advocate-General, is most enlightening :

> "By learning, knowledge of the feelings and habits of the people, independence and integrity, Indian judges have maintained the highest traditions of justice. Their greatest achievement has naturally been in the realm of the personal laws of the Indians. They have illumined the obscure, elucidated cardinal principles, reconciled differences and helped in the progressive growth of ancient laws through enlightened interpretation. At a time when few of the old texts were available to the uninitiated through translations, they explored original sources and brought to light the structure and organization of the different systems of law which governed the divers communities of India. Their service to jurisprudence has been of great value."

And Mr. Whitly Stokes, in his general introduction to the Anglo-Indian Codes, has given special praise to the judgments of Muthusami Ayyar and Syed Mahmood and has concluded his appreciation with the significant remark : "For the subtle races that produce such lawyers no legal doctrine can be too refined, no legal machinery can be too elaborate."

Apart from the treasures of legal wisdom contained in the weighty judgments of these eminent jurists, these judgments —at any rate the best among them—are also interesting to the historian of Indo-Anglian literature. The "decisions" are invariably preceded by elaborate historical, sociological, political or even philosophical discussions and sometimes these are couched in more than mere workmanlike style. Judges are no doubt sometimes long-winded, confused, or simply dull ; but the great judge invariably raises even the discussion of knotty points of law to the level of literature.

Some eminent lawyers have also given us legal treatises on the different branches of the law. Legal luminaries like Dinshah

Mulla and Hari Singh Gour have published valuable legal books that are deemed indispensable to the lawyer and the judge; S. Srinivasa Iyengar's new edition of Mayne's classic exposition of Hindu Law is itself a classic; and the lectures given under the Tagore Law Foundation are often of a very high quality; all these give abundant proof of creative activity on the part of Indo-Anglian lawyers and jurists.

CHAPTER XXX

ORATORS—AND THE REST

I

Many of the journalist-politicians mentioned in the previous chapter have also been effective speakers. Indeed, since the last quarter of the nineteenth century, India has produced a large number of eloquent and brilliant orators, who have used the English tongue with astonishing ease and dexterity. Among the orators of a generation or two ago, Dadabhai Naoroji, W. C. Bonnerjee, Phirozeshah Mehta, Rash Behari Ghose, Bepin Chandra Pal, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Lala Lajpat Rai, Madan Mohan Malaviya, Motilal Nehru, Sankaran Nair, V. Krishnaswami Iyer and men of like calibre made the English language their own and elaborated their arguments with all the arts of the Victorian orators. Many of them presided over the deliberations of one or more sessions of the Indian National Congress; and the presidential and other addresses delivered in the Congress constitute an inspiring store-house of Indo-Anglian oratory.

The late C. R. Das was a great orator. His forensic eloquence gained the admiration of the bench and the bar alike. When he plunged into politics, his moving voice and stirring words were heard from many a Congress and Swarajist platform. His presidential address at the Gaya Congress and his

Faridpore Speech are justly famous. The following is the peroration of his Gaya Presidential Address :

"Be it yours to wage a spiritual warfare so that the victory, when it comes, does not debase you, nor tempt you to retain the power of government in your own hands. But if yours is to be a spiritual warfare, your weapons must be those of the spiritual soldier. Anger is not for you, hatred is not for you ; nor for you is pettiness, meanness or falsehood. For you is the hope of dawn and the confidence of the morning, and for you is the song that was sung of Titan, chained and imprisoned but the champion of man, in the Greek fable :

> To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite :
> To forgive wrongs darker than death or night ;
> To defy Power, which seems omnipotent ;
> To love, and bear ; to hope till Hope creates
> From its own wreck the thing it contemplates ;
> Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent ;
> This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be
> Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free ;
> This is alone Life, Joy, Empire and Victory."

This was the peroration of a formal address ; but Chittaranjan's extempore speeches were equally sustained by his head no less than by his heart, and he was ever a careering Achilles on the public or council platform.

Gopal Krishna Gokhale and Srinivasa Sastri are in a class apart : Gokhale, "calm, unagitated, never seeking to adorn his style, but overwhelming his opponents by an array of figures and a wealth of information, patiently collected", and Srinivasa Sastri, "honey-tongued, the very embodiment of sweet resasonableness, from whose lips richly modulated words flow in rounded periods" ; Gokhale and Sastri, master and pupil, humanists and teachers both, who tried to conduct politics

without rancour and who have given their countrymen the ideals of unselfish service and enlightened patriotism! Gokhale's "Farewell to Fergusson College" is a mellow and beautiful piece of eloquence and the orator here wears his heart upon his sleeve; but Gokhale was always—whatever the occasion—a persuasive and thoughtful speaker. "The style is the man"—and the man fully revealed himself in his public utterances.

Srinivasa Sastri has been rightly described by the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* as "the greatest Indian orator of his day". His lectures on the Life of Gokhale and on the Rights and Duties of Indian Citizens are couched in a language of disarming simplicity and purity. His major addresses in India and abroad are models of limpid and moving eloquence. Unruffled and self-possessed, Srinivasa Sastri develops his themes rather like an artist; the exordium is quiet but confident, the structure of argument is close but never dull or tough, and the peroration is convincing and effective but not loud or flamboyant. A front-line statesman of India and the Empire, Sastri is at his best when he strives to reach the height of a political argument, but as a specimen of his mature oratorial style we prefer to extract the following paragraph from his address on "Birthright":

> "With the din of a disastrous war all round and the threatened crash of most human values, it is not wholly idle, nay, it is the compulsion of our anguish, to desire that the improvements we cherish should be acquired by methods of peace, understanding and mutual adjustment. The path of human progress need not be marked for ever by blood and wreckage. The way of war, though it be social or civil war, is not the way we should tread for the attainment of even our highest aims. I don't avow myself an extreme pacifist or a thorough-going votary of non-violence. But I am far

on the road. Like the Mahatma I believe that force will never end force, that what is won by force is apt to be lost by force and that that alone will be a lasting gain to our race which we secure by ways of peace, by ways of harmony and by ways of mutual help and mutual love."

II

The Gandhi era in politics has thrown up a number of orators, in English no less than in the various regional languages, especially in Hindi. Mahatmaji generally prefers to speak in Hindi or Gujarati; but when he does speak in English, he is a master of the spoken word. He speaks in an even voice; the words come naturally, effortlessly, and the magic of his personality invests even his casual utterances with a prophetic fervour and intensity. His historic "defence" at his trial in 1922 is one of the peaks of his effortless eloquence. By that memorable speech Mahatma Gandhi shunted (to quote Mr. N. C. Kelkar) "the train of the trial from the track of vulgar terror to that of refined sublimity". We shall, however, extract here a passage from the equally famous "Sermon on God" in which Mahatmaji is truly seen to be a godly man who is ever in search of God :

"There is an indefinable mysterious Power that pervades everything. I feel it, though I do not see it. It is this unseen power which makes itself felt and that defies all proof because it is so unlike all that I perceive through my senses. It transcends the senses because it is possible to reason out the existence of God only to a limited extent.... God, to be God, must rule the heart and transform it. He must express Himself in every smallest act of His votary. This can be done only through a definite realization more real than the five senses can ever produce.... I know, too, that I shall never know God if I do not wrestle with and against evil even at the cost of life itself. I am fortified in this

belief by my own humble and limited experience. The purer I try to become, the nearer to God I feel myself to be. How much more should I be near to Him when my faith is not a mere apology as it is to-day, but has become as immovable as the Himalayas and as white as the snows on their peaks."

There are literally hundreds of speeches in which Mahatmaji, by scorning the arts of the mere rhetorician, scores again and again ; he is never at a loss for the precise and yet familiar word, and it is out the thin, dry twigs of everyday speech that he ignites with such artless art the fire of his moving and swaying eloquence.

The late Pandit Motilal Nehru was an orator of eminence and many of his speeches on the floor of the Legislative Assembly—for instance, his speeches on the Public Safety Bill and on the resolution advocating boycott of the Simon Commission—were finished rhetorical improvisations, in which humour and sarcasm, logic and learning, pride and patriotism, all were thrown together to fuse into first-rate eloquence. His Congress presidential and other addresses were no less inspiring and colourful. Motilal had often to cross swords with Mr. Jinnah on the floor of the Legislative Assembly and their duels were in the nature of the clash between flint and steel ; on those occasions Roman met Roman indeed, Motilal's epigrams and Jinnah's repartees were of the *blitzkrieg* pattern, and thrilled and awed the benches and the galleries ; the tense and exotic atmosphere of the Assembly became more tense and exotic during those incredible moments and verbal missiles whizzed past the astonished spectators, not seldom pregnant with lightning and thunder.

As for Mr. M. A. Jinnah, he has been a fighter and speaker all his life. He has been literally a roaring and combative power in the law courts, legislative assemblies, and, more recently, on the platform of the Muslim League. Impe-

tuous and emotional, he could sway audiences and rouse them to a frenzy of shouting and waving of hands; with ready wit, smashing invective and convincing logic, he could turn the trend of debate in any direction he likes; he could negotiate, make compromises if possible, haggle interminably if necessary, and thus ever play his cards with the consummate ability of a master. Speech with Mr. Jinnah is the very oxygen of his political success. It is in his incredible orations that the whole man—demagogue and patriot and lawyer and prophet of Pakistan—is fully revealed, dazzling us with his cocksurenesses, kindling his listeners to action, painting his Utopias in vague yet fascinating colours. Like Motilal, Jinnah too can be a stern debater if he wants, and can always make a point with terrible force.

Like Mr. Jinnah and Pandit Motilal, the late S. Srinivasa Iyengar also was a leading lawyer-politician and was a conspicuous figure in the third Legislative Assembly. He was Pandit Motilal's "deputy" in the Swarajya Party, but he always spoke with the authority of a super-subtle constitutional lawyer and the fervour and emotional intensity of a true and fearless patriot. His oratory was intellectual rather than graceful, torrential rather than flowing; his sentences were often short and pithy and epigrammatical, but he too could hit back with vigour and accuracy if the need arose. Some of his speeches in the Assembly, his Congress presidential speech and other formal addresses, many of his public speeches during the last two years of his life, all show Srinivasa Iyengar's quick and forceful thinking, his severely beautiful logic, his fervent idealism and patriotism, and his immitigable and lovable humanity. We extract here this small passage on the strength of true Faith:

"Let us not forget, in the fever of political controversy, that the strength of each religion is derived from God and

is rooted in the souls of Prahladas. Not all the tortures of Torquemada nor all the burning at the stakes nor all other forms of persecution have been able to destroy the mystic quality of the human soul. Neither Hinduism nor Islam derives or requires strength either from the present or from any future government. Both stand far, far above Swaraj, which is not comparable to them. Neither foreign governments nor self-governments, neither democracies nor autocracies, can destroy that seed of faith which is in every one of us, that inspired interpretation of the Universe to which one clings for guidance and solace in this world and for salvation in the next".

III

The third Legislative Assembly (1927-1930) heard also the speeches of veteran orators like Malaviya and Lajpat Rai, Kelkar and Jayakar; there were also younger men like Shunmukham Chetty and Goswami. The fourth Legislative Assembly brought to prominence Bhulabhai Desai and S. Satyamurti, Cowasji Jehangir and Govind Vallabh Pant, C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar and A. Ramaswami Mudaliar, all orators of distinction for one or more commendable qualities.

Under the Constitution of 1935, the provincial Legislative Assemblies started working and many more parliamentarians found their vocation. Both within the Madras Legislature and on Congress platforms, Mr. C. Rajagopalachari's dialectical brilliance has tantalized audiences many a time; and at his best, Rajagopalachari or "Rajaji' (as he is universally called) is a very good speaker indeed, forbiddingly unruffled, quite sure of himself, equipped always with an inexhaustible armoury of parables that more often than not unerringly hit the bull's eye to the discomfiture of his detractors.

Like Rajaji, many of the Congress front-rank leaders are also very good orators when they choose to be. Rajendra Prasad, Jawaharlal Nehru, Pattabhi Sitaramayya, Sarojini Naidu, Vallabhbhai Patel, all can deliver the goods without the loss of "one poor scruple"; but sometimes they are content to be merely emphatic and bold, scorning the graces of restraint, reasonableness and humour, and pinning their faith on the strength of a party majority rather than on the granite strength of persuasion and argument. Only Sarojini Naidu never fails as a platform-speaker. Be the theme ever so obvious, be her assertions ever so stale and emphatic,—yet is she enough of a poet even in her most prosaic moments to make the trite appear to be a thing of wonder and wild surmise, to make human and patriotic hearts beat in response to her thrilling words and insinuating perorations. Her mere presence is sufficient to redeem the proceedings of even the dullest conference imaginable!

In one sense, however, modern oratory is on a lower level than the oratory of yesterday and of the day before; and this is, perhaps, as true of Britain and other countries as of India. To-day audiences cannot sit through a four-hour speech, whether it is delivered by a Gladstone or a Disraeli or by a Malaviya or a Muhammad Ali; we have no patience to listen to the sermons of a Vivekananda or of a Ram Tirth; we want speeches—and even the newspaper reports of speeches—in a tabloid form. Moreover, audiences to-day are far-flung and vastly bigger; and all sorts of people now-a-days rush to listen to public speeches. As a result, the modern orator—be he a Roosevelt or a Churchill or a Jinnah or a Jawaharlal—has to take care that he does not talk above the heads of his audience. Things have to be put briefly and simply; there is no room for stylistic elaborations and feats of sheer argumentation; there is no room either for recondite quotations

from four or five languages, for crescendoes and diminuendoes, for carefully prepared effects and perorations! Modern oratory, on the face of it, is a somewhat "democratic" and tame affair.

Even so, the modern orator somehow holds his own. Neither the loudspeaker nor the radio has quite discomfited him; rather has he turned these very circumstances of his limitation to his own profit. Present-day Indian orators like a C. R. Reddy, a Jayakar, a Radhakrishnan, a Jinnah, a Rajagopalachari, a Jawaharlal Nehru and others have learned the art of swaying the hearts of thousands or even millions of their countrymen. A loud voice is not necessary to-day; menacing gestures are actually out of place; clear articulation and a command over the resources of language are the primary requisites; and, above all, an alert mental forge at work; and our great Indo-Anglian orators possess them all.

IV

For the rest, the Indo-Anglians may be said to have attempted all kinds of useful literature and to have attempted them with success. Of writers on education, we can mention many names, beginning with Rammohan Roy and (for the time being) ending with T. N. Siqueira; we have also good educational journals like the *Educational Review* and *Teaching*. Every year, educationists and others are invited to deliver the convocation addresses in the universities or to preside over the various educational conferences organized all over India; the addresses are uneven and often of poor quality, but now and then a C. R. Reddy or a Radhakrishnan or a C. V. Raman or a Tej Bahadur Sapru or an Amaranatha Jha or a Mirza Ismail strikes a new or unexpected note, and a formal address acquires the dignity of literature. But such

memorable pronouncements are no more than the splendid exceptions that prove the rule of unescapable mediocrity.

Of writers on political and constitutional subjects, we may mention Tej Bahadur Sapru, P. S. Sivaswami Aiyar, K. M. Panikkar, N. D. Varadachari, A. Rangaswami Iyengar and Dr. Zacharias; Mr. M. Ruthnaswami's *The Making of the State* is a creditable contribution to the subject; S. Srinivasa Iyengar's *Problems of Democracy in India* and *Stalemate and Reorganization* are the stimulating essays of a constructive statesman; Shelvankar's *Ends are Means* is an effective reply to Aldous Huxley's *Ends and Means;* and Dr. Ambedkar's *Thoughts on Pakistan* is a conscientious and thorough piece of work.

Likewise, economists like Benoy Kumar Sarkar and Radhakamal Mukherji, K. T. Shah and P. A. Wadia; scientists like J. C. Bose, P. C. Ray, and C. V. Raman; writers like H. L. Kaji and Minoo Masani who have made even Geography a fascinating subject; all have successfully bent the apparently intractable English language to their own use. An address by J. C. Bose or by C. V. Raman is a veritable treat, not only because of the highly specialized knowledge it attempts to popularize, but also because of its sense of form and literary grace. And Minoo Masani's *Our India* has deservedly become a best-seller and a children's favourite.

We have few Indo-Anglian writers who, like a Belloc or an E. V. Lucas, attempt to delineate the treasures of sight and sound in our variegated country. Mr. A. S. Wadia gave us some years ago a very good book on Kashmir; and Dr. Sachchidananda Sinha, now full of honour and years, has just published a sumptuous volume of five hundred pages entitled, *Kashmir: the Play-Ground of Asia.* You may call it an anthology of choice verses culled from many writers; or a punctiliously precise guide-book; or a temperamental description of the

beauties and bounties of Kashmir ; or an authoritative monograph on Kashmiri politics and social life ; or an up-to-date descriptive bibliography of the literature on Kashmir. Well, it is all these things,—but it is also something that transcends these particular descriptions ; it is, in fact, an act of adoration, an inspiring homage to the " Land of Lalla Rookh "

CHAPTER XXXI

PROSPECT AND RETROSPECT

I

We have now come to the end of our survey –a partial and personal survey, if you will—of the varied contributions of Indians to English literature. For nearly one hundred years Indians have tried to achieve self-expression through the medium of English and they have, again and again, triumphed over its seeming intractability and produced poems, novels, essays, learned treatises, memoirs and monographs hardly distinguishable from similar productions of authentic English writers. In Professor E. E. Speight's words, the many Indians —men and women—who have written in English stand " as symbols of a power of adaptation which is so much more astonishing because it comes from a people who in other ways are so conservative ".

There is no need either to be very proud of our achievements in the domain of Indo-Anglian literature or to be foolishly ashamed of them. That Indians were obliged to study English was an unpleasant necessity ; and Indians, be it said to their credit, have made a virtue of that necessity. If the study of English has weakened our love for our respective mother tongues, the fault, dear Brutus, is not with English but in ourselves. English occupied and still occupies a domi-

nant position in the curriculum, not because it is the language of our rulers, but because it has successfully functioned as a link between the different linguistic areas in India and between India and the rest of the civilized world.

On the other hand, our vernacular literatures have themselves greatly benefited by their living contact with English literature and this cross-fertilization has helped to usher in a new Indian renaissance. One is not a slave simply because one likes a foreign language in addition to one's own ; and one may be an adept in Tamil or Hindi and yet be a slave of slaves. We can easily make—and we often do make—a fetish of our sentimental objection to the English language and literature. As Dr. M. R. Jayakar once pointed out :

> " It will be a mistake to allow your political dislike of British rule to come in the way of your studying English literature with appreciation and good will. You will never make any progress, if your attitude is one of hatred, contempt or abhorrence for the culture of the people whose literature you are studying. You have to get over your political dislikes, if any, and concentrate your mind upon the beauty of the literature you read. When in the field of literature you are not a politician and have no political or social antipathies ".

These words were originally addressed to a group of college students, but they have a message for us all.

Let us by all means cultivate our own mother tongues, enrich our own indigenous literatures, and make the rest of the world respect them and even get intimately acquainted with them ; but there is no sense in putting the clock back and banishing the English language from our midst. It is certainly desirable that our mother tongues should become the media of instruction even at the university stages : and when this desire is realized, as it must be sooner or later,

English will automatically cease to have the importance it enjoys to-day. But it must continue to have an important place in the curriculum. In the words of Professor Amaranatha Jha, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Allahabad :

> "English .... should continue to be a second language. It is the international language now. It has been and can continue to be the source of delight and inspiration. It enables us to live close to some great minds. There need be no antagonism between English and our own languages. We shall develop our literatures, but we shall continue to get all the help we can to set back the frontiers of darkness, to listen and speak so that humanity may go on re-creating itself".

II

While some critics condemn the Indo-Anglians because they are supposed to be symbols of our slavery, others point out that most of the productions of the Indo-Anglians are poor in quality and from this jump to the conclusion that Indians should not attempt self-expression in English.

So long as human nature is what it is, second-rate and third-rate and *n*th rate writers there must be—in England and in America, and not only in India. Hundreds of writers are mentioned in the bibliographies of English literature, and yet how many of them are really read to-day? How many of the "masterpieces" announced to-day in the literary journals are likely to escape oblivion a decade hence?

Moreover, it is wrong to assume that an Indian who writes bad English verse is sure somehow to write first-rate Tamil or Bengali or Kannada poetry. True poetry springs from within; and if only darkness or chaos or mere chaff inhabits the writer's mind and soul, he can no more achieve glorious self-expression in his mother tongue than in an alien

language. Other things remaining the same, one's own mother tongue should come more naturally to one than an alien language like English; and, as a matter of fact, in the future—as in the past—most Indians will write only in their own mother tongues. But some will still woo English, fully aware of the perils confronting their paths; it is not for us to condemn them purely on *a priori* grounds. Nothing succeeds like success and nothing fails like failure: this paramount law will regulate the literary activities of Indo-Anglians as well as those of other classes of Indian men of letters.

Another criticism often advanced against the Indo-Anglians is that their English is not pure enough. It is no doubt inevitable that vernacularisms should creep into the language of the Indo-Anglians. An Indo-Anglian may never be quite able to achieve perfect mastery in English idiom; in other words, Indo-Anglian English may never be wholly indistinguishable from King's English. But, then, why should it be? For one thing, Mr. Bernard Shaw says that there is no such thing as "correct English"; for another, the Report of the Sadler Commission on the Calcutta University rightly points out:

> "We do not mean that the English of the Indian would necessarily be indistinguishable from that of the English-born citizen. But it would be by special qualities and characteristics that it would be distinguished, not by incongruities and faults".

Professor Amaranatha Jha is also in agreement with the above and is not frightened, as are more timid professors and pundits, by the term "Indian English"; on the contrary, he declares boldly: "A little courage, some determination, a wholesome respect for our own idioms, and we shall before long have a virile, vigorous Indian English". Be that as it may, it is strange that, not English critics and scholars, but it is the

Indo-Anglian purists and professors—who are themselves inhabiting very vulnerable glass-houses—that throw these absurd stones at the Indo-Anglian practitioners of prose and verse!

III

In any case, it is to little purpose to discuss interminably whether Indians should or should not write in English. They have done so in the past, and they will do so in the future—for a long time yet; we are here, not in the realm of speculation, but of facts and of recorded achievement. Granted that some Indians—a good number of them—are sure to write in English in the future, can we offer helpful suggestions regarding the future of Indo-Anglian literature?

The Indian writer of to-day has to wage a prolonged war against a host of adverse circumstances,—a war that, more often than not, daunts and defeats him at last and anyhow leaves him exhausted and bereft of all hope. We have few really enterprising and discriminating publishers, few acknowledged and competent reviewers, few high-class literary journals, and no adequately organized book trade. Many Indo-Anglian authors are obliged to publish their own books, arrange for their distribution, keep accounts, send out parcels, write all sorts of business letters,—in short, to be by turns author, printer, publisher, hawker, accountant, book-seller, peon, and advertiser! Under the circumstances, the average Indo-Anglian is content to print about one hundred copies of his books, present them to a few reviewers or friends,—and wait for orders which never come.

However, of late a few publishing firms like Taraporewala, New Book Company, Thackers, Karnatak Publishing House, Kitabistan, G. A. Natesan, Ram Narain Lal, Theosophical Publishing House, Kitab Mahal, Padma Publications, Signet Press, Minerva Book Depot, and a few others have

come into existence and are very active, more especially since the commencement of World War II. But even these publishers are not always enterprising enough and are generally—though not always—unwilling to take reasonable risks. The tendency is always to produce books that will sell immediately or books that can be prescribed as school or college text-books. But a beginning has been made anyhow and even these war time publications have given a fillip to book production in India.

It is besides creditable that on the form side also books published in India recently, notwithstanding the scarcity of paper and calico and strawboard, compare not unfavourably with books produced in America or in the continent of Europe. Again, some of our better organized newspapers and journals are now-a-days giving due importance to book-reviewing.

We have thus clearly made a hopeful beginning : but much more remains to be done. We want enterprising publishers, magazines, and newspapers ; we want editors and publishers who will make the profession of letters a paying profession ; we want all-India organizations of authors, publishers, editors, and book-sellers ; we want reliable authors' agents who will relieve authors of the burden of the purely business side of authorship ; we want National Book Councils and annual All-India Book Exhibitions ; and, above all, we want authors, more and more of them, men and women imbued with courage and faith, men and women who are prepared to *see* into the uttermost truth of things and to *say* the things they have seen for the edification of common humanity, men and women who have the vision and the strength to be the leaders and law-givers of to-day and to-morrow. The night is heavy, but the dew-filled dawn is just round the corner ; the hour is pregnant with possibilities and—if only we do not prove false to ourselves—the future is ours, and it will be a glorious future indeed !

POSTSCRIPT

INDO-ANGLIAN LITERATURE, 1944.

The war has proved both an immitigable curse and a blessing in disguise to Indian publishers. It has proved a curse because war-time controls of all sorts are trying to strangle the production and distribution of books and periodicals. On the other hand, the war has proved a blessing in disguise to Indian publishers because there is now a very real and still growing demand for new books. Thanks principally to the self-less endeavours of those of our men of letters who care for culture and literature more than for ready returns, Indo-Anglian journalism and Indo-Anglian literature are yet instruments of knowledge or engines of culture in these hectic, myopic, uncertain days.

We have, no doubt, to judge the living quality of a literature by its new poetry ; and the past twelve months have witnessed many new arrivals. At the same time, the veterans are also challengingly alive. Harindranath Chattopadhyaya's *Blood of Stones* is forged in the flaming fire of the poet's anguish, and the book is topical without ceasing to be poetry ; and a poem like " The pavement of Calcutta" is remorseless, grim and terribly articulate. *Look on Undaunted*, P. R. Kaikini's latest book of poems, reflects a mind sensitive to the many tremors and quakes and marsh vapours in the contemporary world, and its disturbed and hurried accents partake of the uncertainty and feverishness of these frenzied days. Sardar K. M. Panikkar's poem, *The Waves of Thought*, is a vigorous English rendering of his own Malayalam poem ; it is richly laden with memories, bitter-sweet memories that " in time blossom into many-hued flowers ". Nilima Devi's *When the Moon Died* is a very finely produced book, and its contents are not unworthy of the superb get-up ; Nilima is somewhat of a modernist poet—

but it is satisfactory to note that the emphasis is, not on "modernist", but on "poet". Humayun Kabir published his first book of poems about twelve years ago ; and he has enhanced the reputation he then gained with his new book, *Mahatma and Other Poems*. And Fyzee-Rahamin's *Man and Other Poems* contains quite a few good poems.

Of the new arrivals, Nolini Kanta Gupta's *To the Heights* is a collection of inspiring lyrics that summon the questing soul to the sun-lit heights of Realization ; most of the forty-six pieces in the book are in free verse, but their urgency and poetic quality are beyond disputation. Another new arrival, S. R. Dongerkery, is an inveterate traditionalist ; *The Ivory Tower*, his first book, has won the affection of many lovers of poetry by the immediacy of its appeal ; and, indeed, it is refreshing to come across a poet like Dongerkery who is content to see things with a child's wonder and reverence and who expresses his thoughts through home-spun felicities of sound and colour. Other new arrivals are K. S. Anantasubramony (*Fledgeling Flights*), R. V. M. G. Ramrau (*No...Name* and *Visions*) and M. J. Gordhandas (*A Forlorn Hope*). Besides, stray new poems by veterans like Armando Menezes, Bhushan, Adi K. Sett, Kaikini and Fyzee-Rahamin as also by freshers like Dongerkery, Cyril Modak, Wellington Figuereido and Kamala Dongerkery appear from time to time in the pages of our literary periodicals and give ample evidence of poetic activity. Of the new poets, Cyril Modak suggests great possibilities and his work is already rich in striking qualities. As a poet, he has a vision and a voice of his own. He is professedly a "progressive" poet, delighting more in the "bivouac of battle" than in "moonlit gardens". The underdog, the exploited, the outcaste, these are the recurrent themes of his poetry. But he is a poet, not because his themes are progressive, but because his responses are quick and genuine and his

articulation is strident and clear. His are truly poems of challenge, they bite or bleed, and his rhythms and stanza patterns are virile with the virility of youth and rugged with the ruggedness of Himalayan rocks. Occasionally, Cyril Modak forgets himself in Love's pure rapture, and he then achieves an unblemished note whose melody overpowers us with its nectariness and joy.

Many short stories are appearing in our Sunday newspapers and other magazines, and some of them—by an R. K. Narayan, a Khooshie L. Punjabi or a Mrs. Shantabai, for instance —seem destined to outlive the year in which they are first published. Of new novels, Khwaja Ahmed Abbas's *Tomorrow is Ours* deserves special mention; although the creative artist is now and then smothered by the screen writer, his delineation of Parvati, the heroine, is human enough to be convincing.

Another recent book by Abbas is *Invitation to Immortality*, an interesting and most enjoyable little play that ought to be a success on the stage. Some good fiction has also appeared in the form of translations—I have in mind especially *Short Stories* and *Subbanna* by Masti Venkatesa Iyengar and *Best Short Stories of Modern Bengal*, translated by Nilima Devi. Two more books of fiction worth reading are Kumara Guru's *Life's Shadows*, Volume II, and George Barret's *Forty-Three Years*: *Jayant and Tara*, the first volume of a projected trilogy whose laudable aim is to "produce a very authentic record of the life and emotions of 'average India'".

One of the unexpected publications of the year is *The Letters of the Rt. Hon. V. S. Srinivasa Sastri.* Everybody knows, of course, Sastriar's eminence as a flawless English speaker and writer; but his letters nevertheless come to us as a most agreeable surprise. The immaculate liberal statesman is a human being after all; and his letters, to public person-

ages or to private individuals, to solemn Secretaries of State or to intimate members of the family, are alike works of prose art that reveal the poise, the incorruptible integrity, and the utter humanity of the man. The letters are really letters, not learned essays on Napoleon or on the constitution of rocks or on the Binomial Theorem; and the letters are also an exquisite foot-note to the political history of India during the past thirty years.

Krishna Hutheesing's autobiography, *With No Regrets*, challenges comparison with her brother Jawaharlal's more famous *Autobiography*. Her candid narrative is interspersed with delicate pen-portraits of the various members of her family, and her prose style is clear and easy and natural. It is a measure of the popularity of the book that it has already appeared in a second edition.

On the occasion of Gandhiji's recent birthday, the Karnatak Publishing House brought out a sumptuous volume containing a number of informative and interpretative articles on his life and work; like the similar volume edited by Professor Radhakrishnan a few years ago—a volume that has recently come out in a second edition—this weighty and fastidiously got-up publication also will take a permanent place in Gandhi literature. Of other biographical and critical studies, I might mention here Sachchidananda Sinha's *Some Eminent Bihar Contemporaries*, Madan Gopal's *Premchand*, Dhurjati Prasad Mukherji's *Rabindranath Tagore* and Ahmed Ali's *Mr. Eliot's Penny World of Dreams*. Nor should I omit to make a reference to Ahmed Abbas's competent and moving story of the Indian medical mission to China, *...and One did not Come Back*; it is, incidentally, a fitting tribute to the memory of Dr. Kotnis,—a memory that belongs "not only to our two great nations but also to the noble ranks of the indomitable fighters for freedom and progress of all mankind".

Books in a lighter vein are rather rare. The war-weary but war-ridden world is too much with us, and we have little time to smile or to laugh. However, N. G. Jog's *Onions and Opinions*, G. L. Metha's *Perversities* and Frene Talyarkhan's *Pardon Me* are books that one might read without tears, but with very real pleasure. Besides, writers like "Jove" of the *Social Welfare* and R. Bangaruswami of *My Magazine* are giving us regular doses of deliciously satirical or humorous stuff, in a language that achieves again and again either a poniard's edge or a rainbow elusiveness and whimsicality. Like all good satirists, "Jove" (Joseph John) is also, firstly, an artist with an infallible sense of form, and, secondly, a humorist with an infallible sense of the ludicrous.

As for "serious" studies, their name is legion. Professor K. T. Shah's *Why Pakistan and why Not?* is, like all his works, weighty, conscientious and thorough, and is the most indispensable book on this most contentious subject. Cyril Modak's two recent books—*Marching Millions* and *India's Destiny*—are brilliantly written tracts for the times; I feel that I am the soberer and wiser for having read them, especially *India's Destiny;* and I should like it to reach the Indian masses through competent translations. Like many other educated men, Cyril Modak also is a clever man and a learned man; but he is also something that very few other "educated" men are—he is a wise man who is able to see through the clouds of controversy and sight and reveal to us the splendorous moon of India's great destiny. Other challenging recent studies are D. Pant's *The Varsities*, "Cactus's" *Give Democracy a Chance*, M. R. Masani's *Socialism Reconsidered* and Humayun Kabir's *Muslim Politics*, now in its third enlarged edition.

A few outstanding works of scholarship also have appeared in English of late. R. S. Pandit's efficient translation of

Mudra-Rakshasa, with a long historical and critical "Post-script", has recently appeared, and gives us cause to regret all the more his untimely demise. Pandit's literary rendering of *Mudra-Rakshasa* is nearly as beautiful as Laurence Binyon's *Shakuntala* and Sri Aurobindo's *The Hero and the Nymph.* Lastly, Radhakumud Mukherji's *Chandragupta Maurya,* Sharma's *Studies in the Renaissance of Hinduism in the 19th and 20th Centuries,* K. M. Munshi's *The Glory that was Gurjaradesha* and R. N. Saletore's *Life in the Gupta Age* are among the meritorious historical treatises published in recent months.

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