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1984 AND THE ORWELLIAN PROPHECY

GOVIND TALWALKAR

IN A lucid article on Dickens and Tolstoy George Orwell had said that though Dickens could reach simple people and Tolstoy could not, Tolstoy's appeal was wider; his characters could cross a frontier. Dickens, according to him, was unintelligible outside the English-speaking culture.

George Orwell was unlike his fellow-countrymen in that he could cross the frontier as is well illustrated by, at least, his *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Both of them have to be considered together, as although their treatment is different, the theme is the same. *Animal Farm* takes after fable while *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is anti-Utopia. They deal with the failure of a revolution and the consequent terror, suppression of the individual, usurpation of power by the ruthless who use it to dehumanise people who are helpless and lifeless to face the onslaught of the totalitarian state.

Both the novels have become classics but anybody would prefer *Animal Farm* to *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as the former is superior as a work of art, though the latter is more talked about. But both of them have gone deep into the psyche of the thinking people. They have enriched the English language, giving it new words, telling phrases with nouns and pronouns being turned into adjectives. Hence we speak of an Orwellian situation.

Orwell had to slog for many years but with *Animal Farm* he was acclaimed as a great writer. Though the manuscript was rejected by over a dozen publishers both in England and in America, once it saw the light of the day its popularity never abated or waned. To be successful, satire had to be gay and funny. *Animal Farm* measures up to it. With its success Orwell came into his own and so we have a confident note in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* which he completed on his

deathbed. Of course, the satirical vein continues in this last novel and his essay on the principle of the Newspeak, given as an appendix, reaches the height of satire.

With these two novels Orwell is ranked with Swift. He himself had a great fascination for Swift whose *Gulliver's Travels* held sway over him even when he was eight years old. Like *Gulliver's Travels*, Orwell's *Animal Farm* became a children's book, though Orwell himself, it is said, would request the owners of the bookshop to remove it from the children's section. Orwell as a master of satire could be in the same class as Swift but was not one with him by temperament or political outlook. He once observed that Swift had no belief in progress and had a general hatred towards humanity. Besides, he was a Tory. Swift confessed:

He was an Honest Man, I'll swear —

Why, Sir, I differ from you there,

For, I have heard another Story,

He was a most confounded Tory.

Orwell had no general hatred for humanity. He might occasionally be given to a vile mood, would indulge in invective; being angry with Kingsley Martin's politics, would refuse to see his face in a restaurant, but he had no hatred for humanity. As Michael Foot has observed, Swift's pessimism stayed close to his orthodox Christianity. Orwell, however, was not religious in the conventional sense. He was horrified by the totalitarian states and outlook, but he had not lost faith in human beings, even when we know that Winston Smith in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is reduced to pulp and was dehumanised enough to denounce his beloved.

Malcolm Muggeridge has described him as Knight of the Woeful Countenance, as Don Quixote, but he also says that Orwell was really, in his own odd way,

quite a happy man as Don Quixote might have been. Such a man is not given to black despair like Swift.

Unlike Swift, Orwell was not a Tory. When *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was acclaimed as a denunciation of socialism, Orwell asked his publisher to refute this and himself issued a statement affirming his faith in democratic socialism. He was convinced that the managerial state was established in Russia in the name of the proletarian revolution which was run by a new class. But he did not want the revival of unbridled capitalism.

As with his other novels, both *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* reveal the personality and life of Orwell. Friends like Cyril Connolly have pointed out that Orwell by nature was a lonely man. At Eton the boy found himself to be surrounded by a crowd and yet kept to himself. When the same boy became a man he found himself to be still lonely though Orwell had a good number of friends and admirers. This feeling of loneliness and helplessness is all-pervading in his last two novels.

Orwell had a shattering experience of betrayal by the Soviet Union of the left in the Spanish Civil War. He saw how the communists were indulging in lies and falsehood and the so-called progressives were drawing wool over their eyes to save the "cause". After his return from Spain the story of *Animal Farm* came to him in bits and pieces. But when one day he saw a little boy driving a huge cart-horse along a narrow path whipping it whenever it tried to return, Orwell

thought that if animals became aware of their strength then men would not have power over them. As men exploit animals, capitalists exploit people. Orwell then examined Marx's theory from the angle of the animal and came to the conclusion that the Russian revolution was a great betrayal.

He was never enamoured of communism or of the Soviet Union. Russian treachery in Spain revolted him and even in wartime he used to ridicule and lambast the Soviets in his *Tribune* articles. He was sustained by Aneurin Bevan. And when he saw that three powers had divided the world at Tehran and Yalta he did not feel assured that the good relations between the Soviet Union and the West would last long. This underlies the plot of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* whose scenario he conceived in 1945, i.e., six years before writing.

Stimulus was provided by three books. One was a novel, *We*, written by E. I. Zamyatin who was a Russian novelist and critic. He died in Paris in 1937 and wrote this novel in 1923. It had no direct connection with contemporary politics but is a fantasy depicting life in the twenty-sixth century. Orwell reviewed the novel in 1946 and felt that it might have inspired Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*.

In Zamyatin's Utopia individuals lose their identity completely and they are known by their numbers. They live in glass houses which are supervised by the political police. Everybody uses an uniform and the

(Continued on page 7)



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AMNESTY'S INDICTMENT

K. S. VENKATESWARAN

THE PUBLICATION, each year, of Amnesty International's Annual Report on human rights violations has become an eagerly-awaited event among civil libertarian activists and groups the world over. Until recently, the report (which usually appears towards the end of the year) used to cover the period up to the preceding April/May, but for some unexplained reason the latest edition, released in October last, adopts December 1982 as the cut-off date.

What the report may lack in terms of currency is, however, more than made up in terms of content. Like its predecessors, the 1983 edition chronicles with painstaking accuracy and in elaborate detail the shameless hypocrisy that characterises the conduct of governments in the area of human rights compliance. That it succeeds in doing so without even once deviating from its self-imposed policy of strict neutrality and moderation of tone is a tribute to the organisation's maturity and apolitical character.

Unfortunately, not many governments have looked at it that way. More often than not, the publication of an AI report on human rights violations in specific countries or groups of countries is followed by increasingly intemperate attacks—sometimes bordering on the ridiculous—against the organisation and its activities. The Soviet Union, for instance, published a book last year wherein it alleged that AI “conducts espionage and has rarely taken up human rights violations in any other country”. The Guatemalan government accused the movement of running a defamation campaign, while the public prosecutor in Yugoslavia characterised statements by AI as “malicious and untrue”.

In a sense, such desperate pronouncements only testify to the growing effectiveness of the movement as an independent monitoring agency on international human rights compliance. Occasionally, of course, even the most repressive regime feels compelled by the sheer embarrassment of an AI exposure to make concessions, however symbolic, in domestic practice. Following the publication of an Amnesty report on the Philippines, for instance, President Marcos reportedly took steps last year to curb abuses by the police and armed forces personnel, including dismissing 113 members of the armed forces, evolving new procedures for investigating and prosecuting cases involving offences against civilians, and instituting a “rehabilitation battalion” for personnel found guilty of such abuses.

The catalogue of countrywise human rights abuses, alas, continues to make as grim reading as ever. Illegal detentions, “disappearances”, torture, extrajudicial killings, and so on dominate the range of AI's concerns in most nations, irrespective of the political arrangements or ideological orientation of the governments concerned. Whether in Botha's South Africa or Mugabe's Zimbabwe, whether in Pinochet's Chile or Karmal's Afghanistan, ill-treatment of detainees and deaths in state custody appear to have become routine. Not surprisingly some of the worst offenders are those whose rhetorical outpourings at international fora have commanded the maximum media attention in recent years.

AI, however, resolutely refrains from ranking countries on the basis of their human rights record. “Such comparisons could never be meaningful, not only because information is suppressed in many countries but also because forms of repression cannot be measured and compared. Any attempt to grade governments would be immediately open to misuse for political ends.” But does AI's scrupulous concern for accuracy, authenticity and impartiality justify the non-inclusion of entries on such significant countries as Botswana, Jordan, Kuwait, Qatar, the UAE and Yemen Arab Republic, on the grounds that information on human rights violations in these countries is insufficient?

On India, mercifully, the report is fairly eloquent. AI's main concerns here related to “the use of preventive detention to detain critics of the government, persistent reports of widespread police brutality, torture and deaths in police custody and prisons, continued killings in staged ‘encounters’ of political activists by police and the use of the death penalty”. During the period under review, AI had the privilege of receiving a reply from the Government of India to its letter of 4 November 1980 which had raised, *inter alia*, the issue of preventive detention. In characteristic fashion, the Ministry of External Affairs blandly stated that “in the interests of the security of India, and of certain aspects of essential public interest,” the Constitution allowed preventive detention. Predictably, “the government's reply did not comment on any of the specific recommendations submitted by AI in its ~~aide memoire~~ *aide memoire* which had also, among other things, argued that there was an urgent need for a permanent, independent body at central government level to investigate allegations of ill-treatment, torture and deaths in police custody.”

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FREEDOM LOSES TWO CHAMPIONS

MINOO MASANI

TWO EMINENT intellectuals and champions of freedom whom I knew have passed away recently.

During the bilingual discussions that took place in English and French at meetings of the International Executive Committee of the Congress for Cultural Freedom in Paris throughout the fifties and sixties, I found it difficult to follow the interventions in French of several esteemed colleagues of mine like Ignazio Silone, Pierre Emmanuel and Manes Sperber. French is a language that is often spoken with a lot of emotion and gesticulation. Not all words are clearly pronounced. Also, as with Indian languages, speeches are delivered at breakneck speed. I therefore had to ask someone to sit near me who could give me the gist in English of what was being said at great length in French. There was, however, one exception, for whom I was always grateful, and that was my friend Monsieur Raymond Aron. Aron not only spoke English extremely well, but he also spoke French with much deliberation and clarity that even I could follow him and reply to him in English. We enjoyed our bilingual debates. Not that I disagreed with him on anything worth mentioning.

Raymond Aron died on 16th October 1983 in Paris at the age of 78 and I felt sad on noting the passing away of one more figure of my time.

Aron's main intellectual role during the half century when he wrote and spoke was to counter the pro-Marxist trends among the French intelligentsia led by Jean-Paul Sartre. He was the best known French intellectual abroad and one of the obituary notices in the *International Herald Tribune* went so far as to say that "he was better appreciated in the United States than in France". Not really, if one takes note of the fact that his latest book *Memoirs—30 Years of Political Reflection* sold 300,000 copies in three weeks and currently heads the French best-seller lists. His other works include *The Opium of the Intellectuals* (1955), *Eighteen Lessons on Industrial Society* (1963) and *Essay on Freedoms, Democracy and Totalitarianism* (1965). "I am not the chief of a school or a sect. . .", he once wrote, "I belong to the race of people who ask questions."

In an obituary that was published on the 18th October 1983, *The Times* (London) wrote: "He collected Honorary Doctorates as other men do postal stamps".

Aron started as a scholarly Marxist and Socialist but, once he began to study economics, he soon got cured of that malady. The horrors of Totalitarianism

caused him to shift towards Liberal pluralism in politics and a pragmatic approach in theory. As Editor of *Le Figaro* he wielded what was described as "the pen of the most formidable journalist".

In his memoirs he described the intellectual chasm between the two conflicting lines of thought in the following words: "Marxism-Leninism deserves to be described as a superstition in the full sense of the word. . . . Intellectual and spiritual pluralism does not pretend to offer a truth comparable to the truths of mathematics or physics. But nor does it offer merely opinion. Pluralism justifies itself by the falseness of the beliefs that oppose it."

The other friend I have recently lost was Professor Leonard Schapiro who was one of the West's leading analysts of Soviet affairs and was from 1955 to 1975 a Professor at my *alma mater*, the London School of Economics. He was a son-in-law of that doyen of Liberal intellectuals and exile from Franco's Spain, Don Salvador de Madariaga.

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(Continued from page 2)

popular recreation is marching in fours. The state is known as Single State whose principle is that freedom and happiness are indivisible. Man was happy in the Garden of Eden but he foolishly demanded freedom and lost happiness. This Single State has abolished freedom and so everybody is deemed to be happy.

Orwell thought that Zamyatin's book was superior to Huxley's as he says that the book had an intuitive grasp of the irrational side of totalitarianism — human sacrifice, cruelty as an end in itself, the worship of a leader who is credited with divine attributes, etc.

The second book influencing Orwell was the *Spanish Cockpit* by Franz Borkman. The third was Burnham's *Managerial Revolution*.

These three books along with his own experiences and his reading of the situation prevented him from being enamoured of communists or communism or the Soviet Union. So he had little frustration of the God that failed. Arthur Koestler, paying tributes to him, observed that in Spain Orwell "did not join the sham fraternity of the International Brigades" and that "he was the only one whom his grim integrity kept immune against the spurious mystique of the 'Movement'."

As his articles on the Spanish war were rejected by the *New Statesman* he was enraged but thought that his views about totalitarianism and the fellow-travelling progressives were vindicated. He had thought over totalitarianism deeply and had dealt with the subject in several articles and reviews. His oft quoted statement is: "The sin of nearly all left-wingers from 1933 onwards is that they wanted to be anti-Fascist without being anti-totalitarian." They allowed the distortion of truth and perversion of history, while in Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Russia past history was also falsified. Hence we find in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* that a whole department works to change the articles and news items in *The Times* and other periodicals and books. "The idea behind this was that if all records told the same tale the lie passed into history and became truth." "Who controls the past controls the future and who controls the present controls the past", was the slogan of the Party.

In an article entitled "The Prevention of Literature" Orwell wrote: "A totalitarian society which succeeded in perpetuating itself would probably set up a schizophrenic system of thought in which the laws of commonsense held good in everyday life and in certain exact sciences, but could be disregarded by the politician, the historian and the sociologist. Already there are countless people who would think it scandalous to falsify a scientific text book, but would see nothing wrong in falsifying an historical fact."

Orwell dealt with this theme again and again. He has pointed out that totalitarianism not only forbade you to express, even to think certain thoughts, but it dictates what you shall think. So we find in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* that Winston Smith was made to believe that 2 plus 2 was not 4 but 5.

Orwell was keen about clear thinking and plain language. But he found that political language consists largely of euphemism. He thought that the great enemy of clear language was insincerity. He says, "When the general atmosphere is bad, language must suffer. But if thought corrupts language, language corrupts thought." This is amply illustrated in both *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. So the imperative need of Newspeak.

Orwell had warned that the overthrow of capitalism would not necessarily bring in democratic socialism. This is what has happened in Eastern Europe and other parts of the world.

The impact of Orwell's thought was felt beyond the frontiers of England. Some of the Russian and East European writers wondered how Orwell could describe so correctly the working of the totalitarian state and society. Eugenia Ginzburg referred to Orwell in her autobiography. When Fyvel, Orwell's close friend and writer, mentioned Orwell to his Russian friend who had left the Soviet Union, she said, "What do you mean? With his 'Newspeak' and 'doublethink' Orwell wrote for us! No Westerner could understand him as intimately as we in the Soviet Union felt he understood our lives."

There is another testimony to Orwell's insight about the totalitarian state by Czeslaw Miloz, author of *The Captive Mind*, about Polish intellectuals in Poland. He says, "Few (in Poland) have become acquainted with Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, because it is both difficult to obtain and dangerous to possess; it is known only to certain members of the Inner Party. Orwell fascinates them through his insight into details they know well and through his use of Swiftian satire. Such a form of writing is forbidden by the New Faith because allegory, by nature manifold in meaning, would trespass beyond the prescriptions of socialist realism and the demands of the censor. Even those who know Orwell only by hearsay are amazed that a writer who never lived in Russia should have so keen a perception into its life."

On the other hand, Isaac Deutscher categorised these two novels as mysticism of cruelty and thought that Orwell encountered communism at a bad moment, viz., 1937 when the Moscow treason trials were on. He, therefore described Orwell as a naive outsider. But insiders like Ginzburg and Miloz thought otherwise, and so the cap of being naive fits Deutscher instead. Of course it was expected of Deutscher to be critical

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of Orwell as he was a Trotskyite and there is nothing to choose between Trotskyites and Stalinists.

With the advent of the year 1984, has the prophecy of Orwell come true? Certainly not. But Orwell himself had no illusions. Before his death he wrote to an official of the United Automobile Workers, Francis Henson: "I do not believe the kind of society that I describe necessarily *will* arrive, but I believe (allowing of course for the fact that the book is a satire) that something resembling it *could* arrive. I believe also that totalitarian ideas have taken root in the minds of intellectuals everywhere and I have tried to draw these ideas out to their logical consequences. The scene of the book is laid in Britain in order to emphasise that the English-speaking races are not innately better than any other and that totalitarianism, *if not fought against*, could triumph anywhere."

Orwell is right as the power of the State and organised groups has grown enormously and the individual's position is considerably weakened. The electronic revolution has given a tremendous leverage to the State which can control and influence the lives of the people in various ways. Industrial conglomerates, with their vast publicity and marketing apparatus, are the butt of criticism by economists like Galbraith. Labour unions are another centre of power and they often hold society to ransom. Any section of society

which can organise itself furthers its own interests at the cost of the others. Lobbying has therefore taken precedence over persuasion. Orwell's fears were against the rise of collectivism, and he appears to be justified in the fears by the existing state of affairs.

It may be held that *satyagraha* on Gandhian lines would be an effective shield to protect the individual. But *satyagraha* loses its worth and meaning when the powers-that-be are ruthless and devoid of any scruples. This is borne out by the happenings in Poland. The only hope lies in the robbers falling out with each other, and in the process letting individuals gain freedom.

Koestler has said that Orwell was a missing link between Swift and Kafka. It is true and all three of them have raised a moral question. Richard Rees, Orwell's close friend, brought out this point and has said that "Orwell was appalled, like the saints, by the realisation that human nature is fundamentally self-centred; and in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* the triumph of the totalitarian state is not complete until it has been demonstrated to the last resister that in the last resort he would sacrifice the person he loves the best in order to save his skin."

Orwell, therefore, had no great expectations. He wanted freedom of speech, truthful language in politics and common decency in social life. He did not feel assured of this. Therefore, as Muggeridge has observed, "Orwell loved the past, hated the present and dreaded the future." Any sensitive person would have the same feeling; but even in the hateful present not losing one's sensitivity is what is given to us by honest souls and writers and artists like George Orwell.

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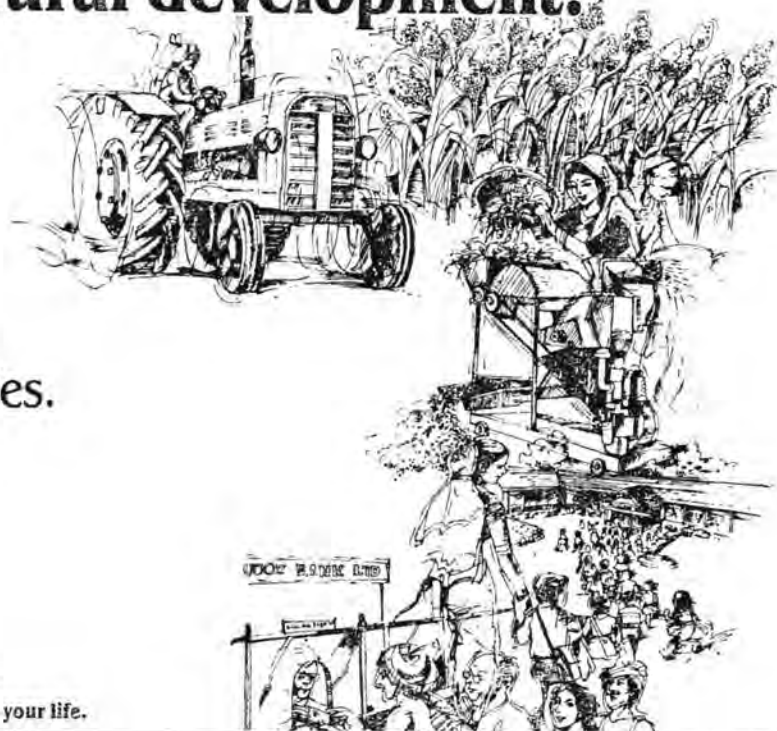
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CULTURAL ROUNDABOUT

S. I. CLERK

WHEN PEARL Padamsee agrees to direct a play, often the play is of some significance. And over the years, she knows how to "extract" the best and the utmost out of her cast. Her latest offering, *Children of a Lesser God* written by Mark Medoff is no exception. The play revolves round the deaf-mutes and the scientific attempt(s) being made to make them speak in a normal manner. There is the Community of the Deaf, its head, a speech teacher, the principal girl student, her mother, some couple of other students and a woman lawyer. The teacher gets emotionally involved with his girl student; they marry; he discovers that her deafness is incurable and ultimately it is love and a deep understanding that triumphs over logic and intellect.

The story *per se* could be dismissed as age old and/or sentimental. However, there is a serious striving to highlight the two utterly different worlds of the deaf-mutes and their more fortunate brethren. In the process there is also an involvement of psychology. In its own way, it is a serious, thought-provoking play with little or no "entertainment" (apart from a few touches of humour). Actingwise, needless to mention, the overall standard is high. The cast of seven is truly involved with the various roles and seems to have done its homework well. Ronnie Screwvala and Farida Pedder are outstanding in their lead roles. Farida is sensitively expressive with her face and body gestures. Ronnie Screwvala, on the other hand, is striking, particularly in interpreting/translating Farida's sign language. The presentation is sleek. The lighting and other effects on the white backdrop evinces understanding of the psychological value of the various colours. Kudos to Pesi Patel who is responsible for the lights. The imaginative sets are designed by Urshila Kerkar and Arty Joshi.

* * * * *

ON THE Gujarati stage, Chorus Unit offer *Dholido*, an adaptation of the popular musical *Fiddler On The Roof*. Set in pre-independence rural India, the original fiddler is transformed in this play into an untouchable drummer, Bhalo Bhagat, who has five daughters. It is a light play with some mild sarcasms against the rituals, the conventions and the traditions. Nimesh Desai is Bhalo Bhagat; he is also the director and handles the music, too. Sonal Dutt as Khemi, the eldest daughter, steals the show; there are also the veterans like Pratap Oza and Dinu Trivedi in a cast of about 40.

WITH THE monsoon over, Bombay's art world is once again active. There was a group exhibition at Jehangir Art Gallery by five artists from Madras: three painters—Gopinath, Jayapal and Reddeppa Naidu—and two sculptors—Nandagopal and Janakiram. A striking feature of this exhibition was that it was sponsored by Mahindra and Mahindra Ltd.—an instance of enlightened patronage of arts by industry. Whilst some of the works were characteristic creations of the artists involved, it must be said that the exhibition on the whole was a noteworthy representation of the current art trend in South India. Overall, one could feel a certain movement away from the mythologicals and the traditionalists which have hitherto dominated the art scene in South India. Nandagopal's "Bird" or P. Gopinath's "Bio-Morphic Forms" would appear to be illustrative of this trend. Incidentally, Gopinath, Jayapal and Nandagopal are based in the Choramandal Artists' Village, Madras, where the group has been doing some sterling work in the field of art. The group also brings out the art journal *Arttrends*, well-known for its studied articles.

* * * * *

THE INDIAN Council For Cultural Relations in collaboration with the NCPA organised at the Jehangir Nicholson Museum of Modern Art a fascinating exhibition entitled "Korean Ceramics Today". It covered selected works by nine contemporary Korean ceramic artists. Their sources of inspiration seemed to be Nature, Poetry, Zen and objects of day-to-day life.

* * * * *

CO-SPONSORED by British Council, the National Centre and Hong Kong Bank, The New London Wind Trio (Neil Black—oboe, Roger Birnstingl—bassoon, Keith Puddy—clarinet) presented a most delightful evening of wind music—eight items of solos, duos and trios from works by German, French and English composers. The first half of the evening had Mozart, Telermann, Beethoven and Henri Tomasi. After the interval there were compositions by Jean Francaix, Alan Ridout, Malcolm Arnold and Jacques Ibert. High technique was well married to deeply sensitive interpretations/renditions of the composers' intentions. Here was indeed an outstanding concert of the current season. The Trio is superb both on the individual and on the group levels.

BOOK REVIEW

THE GANDHI READER, edited by Dr. Homer A. Jack; Affiliated East-West Press Pvt. Ltd., Madras; Rs. 90.

Dr. Homer A. Jack, an American theologian who became an ardent Gandhian, is among the few who really understood Gandhi and his philosophy as is very apparent in the manner in which he has compiled and edited this magnificent "Gandhi Reader".

While he has taken pains to make this Reader an authentic "autobiography" of the Mahatma, the selection of the subjects from the plethora of Gandhian musings indicates Dr. Jack's awareness of the problems that still plague India. Untouchability, communalism, Hinduism, conditions of labour, strikes and the burning question: "Is Gandhism relevant today?" are some of the issues dealt with in this book with great facility. This is understandable since Dr. Jack knows more about Indian problems than Indians themselves. This country is virtually his second home and he keeps in close touch with happenings here.

I first met Dr. Jack in the early fifties when he visited South Africa while he was still a Minister of the Unitarian Church of Evanston, Illinois. His interest in Gandhi had been fired. He had read almost everything he could lay his hands on and was in South Africa seemingly to relive and experience the atmosphere that once inspired the Mahatma. Such a visit would naturally bring him to Phoenix Ashram, the first institution that Gandhi started in a country

plagued by racism. I was in my teens then and can still vividly recall his many and long discussions with my father, Manilal, inevitably on the subject of the Gandhi Satyagraha, racialism and many other aspects of Gandhian thought and ideology. This was my father's cup of tea because I can't think of anyone else who had so voraciously devoured and digested every word that his father had uttered or penned. Indeed, he even argued with his father through correspondence on issues which he did not understand or could not appreciate. If he was impressed by Dr. Jack's grasp of the intricacies and nuances of Gandhism this, to my mind, is the ultimate in acknowledgement that anyone can hope for.

The depth of Dr. Jack's understanding and the quality of his perception is quite evident as one reads through the book which, to say the least, is eminently readable, facile and lucid. In his foreword Dr. Jack modestly claims that he envisages this book as a sort of autobiography of Gandhi since *The Experiments With Truth* stops in 1920 and the turbulent years thereafter remain unchronicled in the Mahatma's own words and thoughts. What is absent is the Mahatma's own perceptions and perspectives of his life as a whole; but Gandhi has written voluminously on varied subjects which, if judiciously edited, could make a useful anthology, which is just what Dr. Jack has done. While the book provides the lay reader with a complete panorama of Gandhi's life it is also a useful springboard for the serious student who wishes to delve into the depths of the man's thought processes. In short, therefore, no library,

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either private or public, would be complete without this book.

The present edition of the book is a reprint of the original which was published by Indian University Press in 1956, and is provoked largely by the renewed interest in Gandhi after Attenborough's film. While it is difficult to fault the content of the book, one does feel disappointed with the visual effect of the jacket. Simplicity does not mean drabness which is what the jacket looks to me. With a little imagination and artistic expertise the jacket could have been made strikingly attractive to compel the browser to pick it up and scan the contents. Packaging has come to mean a lot in modern times and one can no longer remain complacent in the belief that the contents are more important than the outward adornments.

The book lays bare some of the stark realities of India's present status and the problems that beset us. We flout with impunity a facade of being a Gandhian nation and call the old man the Father of Our Nation but the world knows we are far removed from what we profess. Though this is a widely known and accepted fact it becomes all the more apparent to me on reading this book. It is not that Dr. Jack consciously attempts to analyse our problems but the juxtapositioning of Gandhian thoughts on various current problems is so effectively done that a sensitive reader is bound to find the answers.

While reading the book I could not help wondering why we continue to debate the hackneyed question: "Is Gandhi relevant today?" Are we not aware that the very essence of his philosophy is based on love and compassion? In effect, therefore, what we are asking is whether love and compassion are relevant today and if we conclude that they are not, then I would ask: What sort of a civilisation are we attempting to build where love and compassion have no place?

Hate pervades us and two of the most sensitive issues—Hinduism and the holy cow—have time and again set us back a good few decades. Both have their genesis in hatred and misunderstandings. Vinoba Bhave, the exponent of Gandhian philosophy, once sought to "protect" the holy cow by invoking Gandhi and pressurising the Government into banning cow slaughter and, in recent months, the devout Hindus seek to strengthen and unify the religion by *yatras* and *yagnas* at colossal expenditure. Yet, both are fundamentally wrong, they ignore basic facts and are nowhere near Gandhi's concept of an Indian nation. The answers are there in the Gandhi Reader for those who care to search for them.

Let's take the case of the "holy cow"—an issue that continuously simmers and often comes to a boil. There is no denying that Gandhi did advocate the "protection" of the cow as enjoined upon all Hindus

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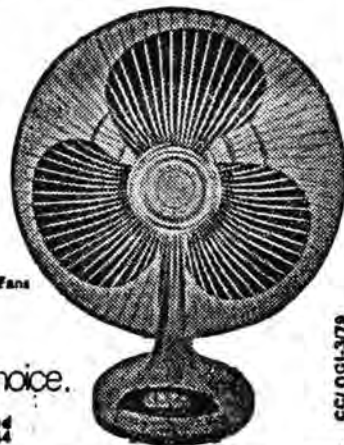
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by religion; but to him "protection" did not mean a mere ban on slaughter, nor did the "cow" literally mean a "cow" only. He says in an article quoted in the book under review that to him a "cow" symbolises "the whole dumb creation of God". In other words the entire species of sub-human life, according to him, needs protection and love from wanton destruction which, in modern parlance, simply means the protection of all wild life. He also says that it is no use protecting the animals, including the cow, from being killed and then allowing them to perish through neglect, starvation and cruelty which is what we subject all animals, including the cow, too. He adds that if Indian cows had the ability to voice their complaints in an international forum the truth of their plight would stagger the world.

He says the cow was chosen as a symbol of protection because it happened to be then, and to some extent still is, an important part of the rural economy and if people learnt to respect and love this animal they would learn to care for all animals. Apart from this, the cow holds no special status in Hinduism.

Similarly warped are our ideas and concepts of the religion as a whole. We expend energy and money on *yatras* and *yagnas* to bind together the devotees while we placidly shut our eyes to the very dichotomies that tear asunder the social fabric of the religion.

Gandhi says in the chapter on Hinduism: "Unfortunately today Hinduism seems to consist merely in 'eating' and 'not eating'. Hinduism is in danger of losing its substance, it is resolving itself into a matter of elaborate rules as to what and with whom to eat. Abstemiousness from meat is undoubtedly a great aid to the evolution of the spirit, but it is by no means an end in itself. Many a man eating meat and dining with everybody, but living in the fear of God, is nearer to his salvation than a man religiously abstaining from meat and many other things, but blaspheming God in every one of his acts." Will the tallow-baiters please note!

Elaborating on the theme, Gandhi says in the same chapter: "Untouchability is repugnant to reason and to the instinct of pity or love. A religion that establishes the worship of the cow cannot possibly countenance or warrant a cruel and inhuman boycott of human beings; and I should be content to be torn to pieces rather than disown the suppressed classes. Hindus will certainly never deserve freedom, nor get it, if they allow their noble religion to be disgraced by the retention of the taint of untouchability." The *yatris*, please note!

These are harsh facts of life and the sooner we face up to them the better it will be for the salvation of mankind.

—Arun Gandhi

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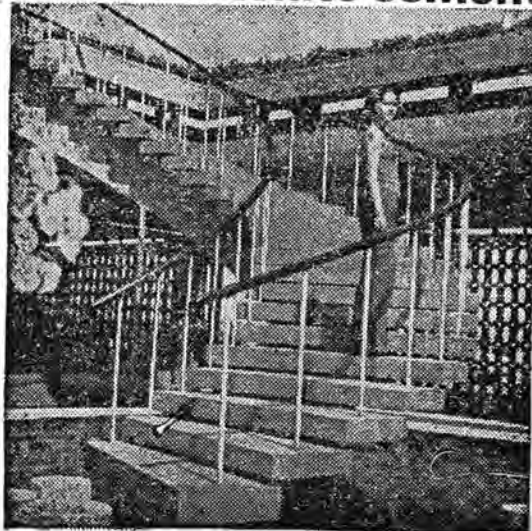
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WITH MANY VOICES

The housewife likes to be taken out for dinner primarily because she can dress up a little, and someone else prepares the food, serves it and then clears up afterwards. Her husband likes to eat out because it is more difficult for his wife to have a row with him in public, he has a wider choice of drinks than at home and, anyway, it's a change from his wife's cooking.

—Deborah Dudley in *Caterer and Hotelkeeper*,
quoted in *The Guardian*, September 12.

Many successful political leaders have had a love-hate relationship with their parties in which love did not predominate.

—Geoffrey Smith in *The Times*, September 20.

Those of us who write for publication have a special interest in defending the freedom of expression of people whose views we don't like.

—Conor Cruise O'Brien in *The Observer*,
September 18.

In my opinion, he (J. R. Jayawardene) is worse than Hitler, Mussolini and Idi Amin put together.

—TELF General Secretary, M. K. Eelaventhana,
quoted in the *Express Magazine*, November 6.

Too many laws, too many lawsuits and too many lawyers make the wheels of justice grind too slowly in America.

—*The Economist*, October 22.

To conclude that hypocrisy is a key element in Mrs. Gandhi's foreign policy is only an understatement.

—K. R. Sundar Rajan in *The Sunday Observer*,
September 10.

Those who are responsible for the country's defence . . . would not know the difference between a motor and a mortar, or between a guerilla and a gorilla. And a great many of them resemble the latter.

—Field Marshall Sam Manekshaw quoted in
The Observer, November 30.

One unifying factor would be for the opposition parties to agree to hate Mrs. Gandhi even more than they hate each other. It is far from clear that they do even that.

—*The Economist*, October 8.