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Professors-in-charge
Atindra Mohon Goon  Ashok Mustafi

Publication Secretary
Sanjay Chakraborty

Editors
Debraj Bhattacharya  Pathikrit Sengupta
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১৮১৭ সালে হিন্দু কলেজ রূপে আর্থিক দুঃখ দিয়ে আমাদের এই বিদ্যায়তন বন্ধনে পাশাপাশি নিক্ষেপ করা সম্পর্কে এক মহত্ত্বীয় ধারণা প্রকাশ করে এবং এই ধারণার সময় আলোচনা করে এড বিদ্যায়তনটির সুসংগঠন করা প্রয়োজন হয়। ১৯১১-১২ সালে কলেজের ১৭৫তম বারো উদ্যোগের মধ্য দিয়ে এক গৌরবময় ঐতিহ্যের প্রতি আমাদের নিঃসরণ ঘটনাসমূহ উল্লেখ করা হয়।

প্রেসিডেন্সি কলেজ পরিকা অনুযায়ী এটি প্রাথমিক সময়ে; তার যাত্রা শুরু হয়েছিল ১৯১৪-১৫ সালে। কিন্তু তখন দেশের বিবেচনায় সংগঠনের বিনিয়োগ ও সচিব পরিদর্শকর মতাদৃষ্টি এটি কলেজের পর্যায়ে বস্তু হয়ে উঠেছিল। কমিটির মাধ্যমে কর্তৃক বছর ব্যবস্থাপনা ও সার্টিফিকেট প্রদানের মাধ্যমে এই কলেজ শুরু হয়েছে। সাময়িক কালে একটি বিশ্বাস পরিকায় প্রকাশিত স্বরাষ্ট্র ও কর্মকর্তাদের অবস্থান ঘটনায় এমন একটা অভিযোগ প্রদান করা যায়। তবে কি প্রেসিডেন্সির ভাষাবলীর নির্দেশিত পাঠাধ্যায়ের সামাজিক ও সাংস্কৃতিক ঘটনার সাথে ভাষাবিদ্যায় কার্যরত তারা হারিয়ে যেতেছে? না, তার প্রাক্তনের কার্যত বা প্রকাশের আগে করা হয়েছে?

বা হক, এ বছর পরিকায় মোহন অধ্যক্ষ বর্তমান মাত্র বাসের মতো জন্য চেষ্টা করেছে। এ বিষয়ক মাত্র মাত্র ভারতীয় অধ্যাপকদের চরম প্রশংসা গ্রহণ করেছে। এর ফলে যদি পরিকায় পাঠাধ্যায় সমান্তরালে পরিষেবা প্রদান করা আমারা সুবিধা হবে।

এ বছর প্রেসিডেন্সির কিছু প্রাক্তন মাত্র অন্যান্য ভাষায় পাঠাধ্যায় প্রদান করা যেতে হয়েছে যেহেতু হিন্দু জাতীয় ভাষাতে বিদ্যায়তন ও জাতীয় ভাষাতে বিদ্যায়তন সাহিত্য ছিল। এই সময় অমিত সতেজ বরস, মেহেন্দি সাহী, প্রফেসর মহানন্দ মল্লিকার, মেহেন্দি রায় রেহাইম, মুনিতঘোষের চতুর্দশাব্দের যুগের কবরকথার নাম বিখ্যাত হয়েছে। আধুনিক ভাষায় সমাপ্তকরণ এর নিয়ে আলোচনা পরিকায় রাখায় সকল হবে আমাদের আশা করি।

ভাষার প্রথম মূল সুন্দর এক ধরনের সেট, নতুন সুষ্ণবিদ্যা, ভূমিকা দুর্ব্রহ্ম, অন্যান্য সংস্কার ও পক্ষান্তরের বিষয়গুলি মনোভাবের অন্যান্য কার্যকর তুলে ধরা হয়েছে। কিন্তু তা ভাষায় মতভেদ অপরিহার্য হবে। পাঠকগণের মতভাব অন্যতম বিষয় যা প্রয়োজন, হলো সাংস্কৃতিকভাবে আরও বাংলা বর্তমান যা এবং এমন মনোভাব বিশেষ করে এদের নিয়মে প্রেসিডেন্সির ভাষাবিদ্যায় তত্ত্বাবধায় করে এবং কলেজ পরিকায় পাঠায় যান ভাষাবিদ্যায় প্রস্তুতিতে এমন আশা নিয়ে আমাদের বক্তব্য শেষ করি।

অধ্যাৎপত্তিক অধ্যাপক
অগ্নিহীন মূর্তি
আবার ডিসেম্বর মাস।
কলেজ মাল্টিপল ক্যাম্পাস হয়েছে, — প্রক্ষেপন করলে রাতে অন্তরীত নিশ্চিত হয়েছে।
এমন গল্প পালের প্রাপ্ত হয়েছে।
আর সন্ধ্যা বিরতীতে—
পাড়ায় পাড়ায় অসামান্য রূপের হে হে
হিমবাহের হিমনিন্তন
কন্ধীর আবার সত্ত্ব শিক্ষাব্যাপার
শিখার ক্ষেত্রে কেরাফে, আরও অনেক কিছুই —
নমাই, বুধেন মার্কেট, প্রোফেসর শান্তনু, কিছু টিকে রোন ইত্যাদি আনুষ্ঠানিক সাধারণ....
আর
ঠাকুর লজার-এর নতুন পোশাক, পেপসি — কোকা-কোলা —
এমন কি সমাজকল্যাণের মানিকচন্দ্রের বাড়ি থেকে দেওয়া হয়েছে।
এই বৃষ্টিজ্ঞান — গত ডিসেম্বরের মত একবারও গ্রুপসপ-দৃষ্টিতে তালুকে যাইতে চায়-বাহিনীর
- রক সম্প্রতিক আর ফাস্কার শোরা পাশ নিয়ে। আছে আমার, আছি — প্রজন্তির পড়লেই।

দেখল না আজকের ইতিহাসে-এর যুগের সঙ্গে তাল রেখে আমারও কলেজ পরিক্রমা থাকায় আসেসেট-
এ। হতে করিতে রাতে পড়তে প্রায় ১০ টারা — কলেজের ১৭৫ বছরের ইতিহাস প্রথম - ( কাঙ্ক্ষা
জনালম — এই আশায় যে গতবারের মত পরিক্রমা কপি কলেজের লাল পাড়াশিড় ঢালে না। )
কলেজ পরিক্রমা কেন্দ্র কলেজের উৎসাহে অত্যন্ত, — লেখা লেখায় জন্য তিন কুমারী — এসব উচ্চস্থ করা বাহুল্য।
বলা তালুকে যে, আমার কিছু লেখার পেপসি — যারা পাতিয়ে কিছু বলতে না দিতে
চায় — এখনে। তাই তাপচিত্র একে ধর্মালম — আনন্দ মার্কেটে চলে গিনা।

না। লেখাটা কিছুতেই ঠিক প্রকাশনা-সিডির কলমের মত হয়ে উঠেছে না — ঠিক অকারাকারে না
কিছুতেই। কোন কিছুতেই কিছু অন্য পাঁচটা — আজ, — আমাদের চারপাশে....
আইনগুলো আপেক্ষিক — কেশগুলো ও....
ডিসেম্বরের তেম কুকুরশায়া আবার বাই পড়াও, নবজানলা দিয়ে.....
বাইন শিখার ভিতে পড়ে বাজে....
পাশের নাড়ীতে সেলজাত সুপার কারা....

সন্ধ্যা চরমকের
প্রকাশনা সচিব
সমালোচনা

ঘড়িটা আবার চলতে শুরু করেছে। শোনা যে যে ঘড়িটা চলতে শেষ কিছুটা খাচা হয়েছে। কলেজের বায়া হলো একধরে পাঁচালি, অসহ্য চালাও অন্ধকারের আঘাত করা হলো। রাত্রিপথ এলেন, বড় বড় শিশুরা এলেন। আমরাও আগ্রহে আঘাতবিপন্ন হলাম।

গরে বুক ফুলে উঠে। এই সব করতে গিয়ে কয়েক লক্ষ টাকা খাচা হলো। তা হেঁটে টাকা তো জনগণের। আমরা তো কি করবো? লাশায় প্রচুর ক্যাফেত হয়েছে কলেজের চারপাশের লোকেদের, তাই বলে আমারা কি উৎসব সড়ক করবো? আবশ্যক নয়। 

বুক লক্ষ টাকা থেকে এক লক্ষ টাকা অনেকের মানুষের সাহায্যের কথা আমদের বাত করা উচিত ছিল? আবশ্যক নয়। আমরা পাঠদাতাদের বাসিন্দা। এই সব আলো ফালো নাপাগ নিয়ে আমদের চিত্ত করা উচিত নয়।

কলেজের প্রাণগ্রাহীর অন্যত্ব দেখলে কলেজের রোষটি ধরা পাল। প্রথ্যায়ের হোদার অভাব নেই, কিন্তু ঠিক মত কাটাতে নেই। কোন বইটি কমনহেইড, কোন বইটি পাপরা যায় তা বোঝার উপায় নেই। সকল দশটায় হোদারের জন্য বিগত জমা দিয়ে বই পাপরা যায়। এটি দরকার। তাও দরকার যাকেল। যেকোনো পরিমাণে আলো হাওয়া নেই। বিশেষ সিদ্ধির বিশেষ অসময়ে এসে কাফ না করলে কাফ হবে না। অথচ টাকার অভাব নেই, লোকেদের ও অভিযোগ নেই। অথচ শুধু আপ্রতিকৃত।

ইতিহাস করলেই প্রাণগ্রাহীর দুটিকে সুন্দর ভাবে সাজিয়ে তোলা যায়, কতগুলো অন্তর নিয়ম করলে ফেলা যায়। কিছু বললেই কে? প্রাণগ্রাহীর দুটি আমাদের কলেজের ঐতিহ্যের অংশ যেন রাখলে অনেক দুর্দম নয় যে প্রহসনবুদ্ধিকে রক্ষা করবে?

আমার কথা হল আমদের কলেজের আরেক ঐতিহ্য, কলেজ ম্যাগাজিনটি বাঁচিয়ে রাখা গেল। শুধু তাই নয়, গত কয়েক বছরের পরিকার চেয়ে অনেক উত্তরমার একটি পতিকা বার করা হয়। প্রথম প্রথায় খুব বেশী লেখা না পাওয়া পরে গেছেছি। অথবা বিজ্ঞান-সাহিত্যায় লেখা একটিও পাওয়া যায় নি। যেসব কিছু বিজ্ঞাপনও জেগে উঠেছে। যেখানে বিজ্ঞাপন ঘোষণা করেছে এবং যেখানে বিজ্ঞাপন দিয়েছেন তাদের ধনবাদ। নিজেদের সাথে দোকানে, যার সাহায্য হাড় রোধের শেষ পর্যন্ত পতিকা প্রকাশিত হতো না। নিজেদের মধ্যে আমাদের এক-বিষক্ত হয়েছে, তবে একটা লড়াই মনোভাব ছিল, তাই শেষ পর্যন্ত পতিকা প্রকাশিত হলো।

এই মনোভাবের আশা করা বিষয়ের তারা-হারিরের মধ্যে ধাক্কাতে।

"প্রেস ডি কলেজ আব আঘাতের ছায়া" — এই অপমনের হত থেকে মুখে পাপরা আনায় সত্য নয়। ঘড়ির বাঁটা দুর্দম হয়েছে। আশা করি সময় এসিয়ে যাবে আয়নের ভিতে।

দেবরাজ ভট্টাচার্য
EDITORIAL

What a long strange trip it has been: after traversing and stumbling across various obstacles, assorted deliberations, re-writing and re-editing, the Presidency College Magazine 92-93 has finally been published, or to be more precise - at the time of writing is going to be published.

It is strange that the college magazine of the premier educational institution of the country – and I speak in terms of history – has evoked such little enthusiasm on the part of its students, on whose behalf and for whom, it is published.

Presidency College, in its concrete manifestation; which is not the monolith and its hallowed portals but its students, has become dated, somewhat jaded. Through its innards, the long musty corridors no longer flow new ideas or pertinent thought but simply passive, inert students without commitment for whom reality is embossed on T-shirt proclaiming ‘PRESIDENCY’. But reality, all that is real in case of this college, cannot simply be painted on to a T-shirt. It cannot be cleaved apart from its geographical and periodic social milieu – Calcutta and its College Street. Reality in stark form is ensconced a step away from the college gate, in College Street: in its bookshops, beggars, traffic jams and processions even what with the lure of IIM’s and IAS and the new avatar JNU withstanding. These are indeed turbulent times. Honesty, sincerity, secularism stalk the razors edge. Future meaningful life, I believe, is going to be in terms of these three years of culling knowledge, not pedantic, but of broadening of one’s horizons and comprehension of relevant reality.

In this necessarily embittered editorial, I draw upon my hapless experience as the Editor of the Magazine to bring things into perspective and to criticize. The Presidency College Magazine is supposed to be an organic entity, a pastiche reflecting the views and ideas of ‘elite’ students: future teachers, scholars, bureaucrats, journalists, administrators et al. Open any old copy of the college magazine, notice the names of its contributors, and you will known.

I am confident enough to believe that we are justified to feel proud of being students of this college, the reason being that people still listen to us. Newspapers still report the reasons for, and the outcome of a general body meeting of the Union. We still matter, but for how long?

It is time to take a stand, it is time to exorcize the zeitgeist. To stop this magnificent giant from eroding into the dust, a discontinuance of contrived affections, petulant traditions and anachronistic pretensions is necessary on part of the entire college community.

As the worried Editor of the College Magazine, I approach the present Union leadership with certain suggestions with regard to future publications. The College Magazine is not a transient annual event, that work on it be started at the instant of its publication. A Publication Committee should be formed at the time the new Union Council assumes leadership. Collection of articles and accumulation of funds should be an ongoing process, the responsibility of which should be vested in this committee so that at the end of the academic year a ‘quality’ magazine can be published. Participation of Professors as contributors in its truest sense would be most welcome.

I thank all the contributors to this magazine, and Saswata Ghosh, without whose help it would have been difficult to publish this Magazine.

I must thank the advertisers for their kind patronage which has permitted the Magazine ‘to go off set’, a first in its history.

Pathikrit Sengupta
# Past Editors & Secretaries

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When there are no more bombs,
Shall you let me go up on earth again?
Why do you keep asking; little one....
I want to see the uncles and aunts I loved,
Are they still fighting Mama?
I want to see the yankee,
Mama, does it look like a human being

— A vietnamese soldier-poet.

Prologue

20 years ago from now that is about when most of us in the college were born, the last batch of the American soldiers left Da Nang and Saigon, Vietnam. The date was March 29, 1973.

Thus came to an end the most shameful, but also the most glorious chapter in the contemporary world history. A chapter characterised by barbaric and inhuman violence on an unprecedented scale, a war of attrition waged by the mightiest and the richest nation of the world against the people of a tiny country, — Vietnam.

But that March morning the American soldiers who were stepping into their ships and aircrafts, formed the last batch of a defeated army, totally vanquished. It was not Vietnam that was ‘brought to its knees’ as was the much publicised American policy, it was USA, with all its economic, military and technological superiority that was brought to its knees by the people of that tiny country whose ultimate weapon was patriotism.

Today the global scenario is very different from what it was 20 years ago. In the changed scenario U.S.A has already assumed the role of the “peace-keeper” in the world, openly bullying other nations to total submission to its military, economic and technological hegemony. In such a situation, it is relevant and important to look back into the history of Vietnam. The lesson of Vietnam can provide courage to the people of those nations of the world who have to stand up and retaliate against the American onslaught, sooner or later.

The End of the French Colonial Rule in Indo-China

The people of Vietnam have a long history of struggle against foreign domination. Colonised by the French in the last century, the struggle of the Vietnamese reached a new height when the Communist Party of Vietnam was established in 1930. Among those who took the lead was Nguyen Tat Thanh, better known as Ho Chi Minh. A wave of peasant insurrections and workers strikes flared
up. Massive repression by France followed, including bombing raids.

During the second World War the struggle received a new impetus. In May 1941, Ho Chi Minh announced the formation of VietMinh, the league for the independence of Vietnam. The National Salvation Army was also formed during this time. Vietnam was under de-facto Japanese occupation at this time and Vietnamese communists waged a continuous guerrilla war against the Japanese occupation forces.

In March 1945, Japan ended the de-jure French rule and established Bao Dai as the emperor of Vietnam. But in a few months time, in August 1945, as Japan surrendered Ho Chi Minh declared independence. But within a short while, the British and the American actively collaborated to reinstall the colonial French rule in Vietnam. The people of Vietnam who had tasted independence for a short while, prepared themselves for another war. It was only after three decades of continuous struggle and bloodbath the Vietnamese finally gained independence.

The Second Indo-China War (1946-54) lasted for 9 years, culminating in Viet-Minh victory at Dien Bien Phu (May, 1954). At Dien Bien Phu, general Vo Nguyen Giap's peasant army defeated a contingent of 20,000 elite French paratroopers. The US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles generously offered nuclear weapons — for "burning the red termites off" — to the French. The French Govt. declined as it would have wiped out their soldiers too. The news of Dien Bien Phu deeply traumatized the Western ruling class but in Paris Jean Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir openly celebrated the Vietnamese victory.

In the Geneva Conference [July, 1954] ceasefire was declared. The country was temporarily divided into two military zones in the north and south of 17 degrees parallel. The VietMinh was offered the north since they already controlled that area. In the south, it was decided that 'free general election by secret ballot' was to be held in July 1956, under the supervision of the International Control Commission to decide its future.

American Subversion Begins

Covert American Subversion of the Geneva Agreement began simultaneously with final signing. The American policy makers knew that if free and fair elections were held then most of the people in the south would vote for the Vietminh. America was determined to prevent this. President Eisenhower openly declared as early as August 4, 1953 that U.S.A could not afford to lose the area because of the rich resources of tin and tungsten. Also, USA could not afford to let the whole Vietnamese people to vote for the communists, which was a certainty.

The man who was to play a crucial role in the American design was chosen years ago - Ngo Dinh Diem. A staunch anti-communist nationalist, Diem was taken to USA in 1952 and groomed for 3 years for this purpose. In 1954 he was sent back to Saigon in South Vietnam. His goal was not to allow any elections for reunification. Between 1955-56, with American help, Diem established his control over Saigon and rejected the Geneva Agreement about elections. In total disregard of the Geneva Accord, he declared the southern parts of Vietnam a republic and installed himself as the president of the country — after holding a sham election with the aid of American advisors. Out of 450,000 voters in Saigon, 605,025 voted for him!

Diem’s Reign of Terror

With direct American support, Diem unleashed a reign of terror in South Vietnam.
Guided by American military advisors, Diem's immediate task was to crush the 'red devils' once for all. Thousands of people were arrested, tortured, and killed in this task. Diem was ably aided by the landlords and their agents.

In 1957, Diem went to the USA on a visit and was given a warm welcome by the Eisenhower administration. He was hailed as the Asian liberator by New York Times. Diem returned with promises of massive military aid.

In 1959, the National Liberation Front (NLF) was formed in South Vietnam against Diem and his sponsors. In no time they began to control the countryside — such was the love of the common people for them.

**Escalation Begins**

The anti-people policy of the Diem Govt., its ruthless repression of the common people only strengthened the resolve of the people to fight for liberation. The NLF was spreading its influence in the urban areas also.

It is around this time the American involvement began to escalate as can be seen from this following table:

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The initial phase of escalation was initiated by the liberal and youthful President — J.F. Kennedy. Massive amount of armaments were given to Diem's army. The Americans were fully involved in the war now — 13000 miles away from Washington!

From the supposed American aim to suppress the revolution in South Vietnam, it became an all out war against the people of Vietnam, north and south. American military advisors and personnel started taking direct part in actions. Repression of the Vietnamese people started in an unprecedented scale. Under the 'hamlet programme', thousands of people were uprooted from their houses and installed in guarded areas.

People's agitation against Diem and Americans also began to escalate. So much so, that at one point of time Diem himself realized that he needed to change his policies. In August 1967, Diem agreed to a French proposal of peace that amounted to a virtual acceptance of the geneva accord of 1954.

The American administration became panicky and realized that Diem's usefulness was over. On November 1, 1963 in a CIA-sponsored coup of South Vietnamese army generals, Diem and his brother were killed. The CIA file for the killing was cleared by President Kennedy himself as published documents now show. In a few days time Kennedy himself was assassinated and Lyndon B. Johnson took over as the President of USA. The escalation of the involvement of US military personnel began in an unprecedented scale. The bombing of North Vietnam started in 1964.

**A Genocide**

The Americans, with the scar of Korea and Cuba still fresh in their mind did not want
to take any risk in Vietnam. An example was to be set — an example of how America can stop the socialist revolution anywhere in the world. The American forces got the message clearly. They would destroy the VietCong even at the cost of wiping the Vietnamese from the force of the earth.

In the Vietnamese war, America used every type of weapon from its lethal arsenal, save the nuclear arms. Vietnam became the testing ground for American weapons of mass destruction. Vietnam was bombed day and night. Napalm (a lethal incendiary bomb which burns everything on contact) was used indiscriminately; even civilian targets such as hospitals and schools were not spared. The horror of these bombing attacks is expressed in a poem by Bryan A. Floyd, himself an American veteran of the Vietnam war —

....The jets would come in, low and terrible, sweeping down and screaming, in their first pass over the village. Then they would return, dropping their first bombs, that flattened the huts to rubble and debris. And then they would sweep back again and drop more bombs that blew the rubble and debris to dust ashes. And then the jets would come back once again in a last pass, this time to drop napalm that burned the dust and ashes to just nothing. Then the village that was not a village any more was our village.

A soldier, private first class, Reginald ‘Malik’ Edwards revealed later on, that they were ordered to ‘level’ a village if even a single shot was fired from it towards their helicopter. Another soldier writing home, related an incident about how they launched grenades at a hut, full of children.

In addition to napalm, white phosphorus and cluster bombs were widely used by the American forces. White phosphorus bombs were more suitable to the American purposes than the napalm which could be scraped off from the body. So polyesterene was added so that the flames stuck to the body burning the skin and flesh right down to the bones. It even burned under water. The cluster bombs, (the Vietnamese called it ‘bombi’ or ‘mother bomb’) exploded in the mid-air releasing 350 to 600 small bombs. When these hit the ground, each one exploded into thousands of metal pellets. Later, fiberglass pellets were introduced as they were invisible to the x-ray and thus harder and more painful to remove. It was not a war — it was a genocide!

American soldiers were systematically taught that the ‘gook’ (G.I. Slang for the Vietnamese) were simply not human, so killing them was not murder but rather a form of pest-control. The general attitude of the American soldier is well summed up in a army marching cadence:

‘I wanna go to Vietnam
I wanna kill a Viet Cong
With a knife or with a gun
Either way it will be good fun....’

Probably the best example of the barbaric way America fought the war was the ‘My Lai Massacre’. One day in March 1968, a platoon of American soldiers entered the village of My Lai, South Vietnam, and cold bloodedly killed the entire population of the village, raping the women before murdering them. The village was mostly inhabited by old men, women and children (since most of the young men were at war) and not a single shot was fired at the approaching platoon. The army systematically covered the whole thing up. Some soldiers later testified that the incidence was not unique but rather common place to the way America fought the war.

Despite all their military and technological superiority the Americans were fighting a losing battle. The NLF was gaining ground consistently, forcing the US army to a slow but steady retreat. The third world David was
winning over the mighty American Goliath. This eventually led to the American evacuation (1973) and ultimately the fall of Saigon (1975). Though lacking in arms and ammunition the Vietnamese had something which made them victorious — morale and patriotism. They were fighting for their own country, their own people where as the Americans were hired to fight. In Vietnam except some mercenaries and 'Quislings' the whole country rallied behind the Communist Party and its leader Ho Chi Minh. Herbert Aptheker, on a deputation to Vietnam, saw how the Vietnamese women ‘manned’ the factories and other essential services, while the men folk were fighting in the war. Tariq Ali, visiting Vietnam in 1967, writes how children (aged between 5 to 9) grumbled a lot to their teacher for not being allowed to help the militia.

**War against the War**

The American invasion of Vietnam gave rise to a great protest movement against the war, across the world. The student community took to the streets and expressed their solidarity with the national liberation movement in Vietnam. From Calcutta to London, the streets resounded with slogans like ‘Tomar naam, amar naam, Vietnam, Vietnam’ and ‘Win, win, Ho Chi Minh’. Demonstrations, often quite violent, outside the US Embassies became commonplace. In Britain the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign was formed to promote public resistance against the US policy of war and to mobilize support for Vietnamese struggle. The American aggression in Vietnam was unanimously condemned by all the progressive forces in the world.

The anti-war movement was also gaining momentum in America itself. This is probably for the first time its history, the general public of a country engaged in war, came up so strongly against the war. In April 1967, at least 400,000 protesters led by the radical pacifist A.J. Muste marched on the streets of New York demonstrating against the war. On the same day 75,000 anti-war demonstrators marched in San Francisco. One feature of the New York march was the public burning of draft cards, (conscription cards) that began in Boston 1964. Throughout 1968, 1969 and 1970 raids against the draft boards multiplied. The present President of U.S.A. is also supposed to have participated in anti-war demonstrations during his stay at Oxford. Yet it is the same Bill Clinton who ordered the recent bombings in Iraq.

The black America revolted against the war. Martin Luther King Jr. declared that the war in Vietnam was damnig the soul of America and would continue to do so for as long as the United States ‘destroys the deepest hope of men the world over’. Radical black groups raised the slogan, ‘The VietCong never called us nigger’, calling the brotherhood to fight the real enemy. Tariq Ali writes about two black American G.I.s, both Vietnam veterans, sang a song, commonplace in America those days, at the Vietnam Congress in Berlin (1968) —

‘I ain’t gonna go to Vietnam
Because Vietnam is where I am
Hell no! I ain’t gonna go!
Hell no! I ain’t gonna go!’

Muhammed Ali, World heavyweight boxing champion, refused to serve in this ‘white man’s war’ and was deprived of his championship by the World Boxing Association. In the fall of 1967, a booklet titled ‘Call to Resist Illegitimate Authority’, was published by a group of anti-war activists, inviting the ‘young men of america’ to refuse to serve in an ‘illegal, immoral and unconstitutional war’. The mightiest military power was being defeated both in the paddy fields of Vietnam and their homeland.
Peoples' Victory

In January 1968, the NLF and the North Vietnamese army struck a stunning blow to the Americans and the South Vietnamese army. In a reverse escalation simultaneously attacked 5 of the 6 largest cities of South Vietnam, 36 of the 44 provincial capitals and a large number of district towns. The city of saigon, the US Embassy there, were all attacked in a Viemons counter offensive. In this offensive, known as the ‘Tet Offensive’ nearly 6000 US soldiers were killed in the city of Hue alone. The primary objective of the Tet offensive was to show the extent of the popular support that the NLF enjoyed.

American reinforcement reached its peak during this period, but the end was nearing. In 1969, Ho Chi Minh died. The Americans and forces of the puppet South Vietnamese Govt. was being forced to a bloody retreat. In 1972 Hanoi (Capital of North Vietnam) launched the ‘spring offensive’. The American administration was forced to concede that the war could not be won and thereby decided to quit Vietnam. In March 1973, the last American soldiers left Vietnam. Ultimately in april 1975, the victorious army of the NLF occupied Saigon forcing the puppet South Vietnamese regime to surrender. Finally, after decades of struggle, Vietnam was independent and unified.

Epilogue

When Germany surrendered in 1945, at the end of the second World War, the allied forced tried the nazi war-criminals in Nuremburg. Many of them were executed and others sentenced to life imprisonment for their ‘crimes against humanity’. But no such thing happened to those Americans who committed worse crimes against the Vietnamese. They went scot free. Is this what democracy and freedom stands for? The war in Vietnam revealed the bankruptcy and hypocrisy of the so called liberal democracies all over the world. I shall end with the often quoted, but seldom understood saying of George Santayana, ‘those who forget the past are condemned to repeat it.’ A rather pessimistic ending though!

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ARTHUR – THE CONCEPT OF KINGSHIP

King Arthur occupies the place of honour in the national mythology of Britain. He is the exemplar of ideal kingship. Different works of literature about Arthur show the development in the concept of the ideal king. The change in this ideal can be seen if one considers the delineation of Arthur in three different works of literature. These are Sir Thomas Malory’s prose romance Le Morte d’Arthur (1485), Tennyson’s twelve blank verse poems Idylls of the King (1885) and T.H. White’s quartet of Arthurian novels The Once and Future King (1958).

Morte d’Arthur is a compilation of various French prose romances dealing with Arthurian legends. Writing in the latter half of fifteenth century against the backdrop of the War of the Roses and the gradual breakdown of medieval chivalry, Malory’s perception of Arthur’s age was shaped by these two concerns of his own age. Arthur preserves his country from civil war and frees it from Roman overlordship as well as establishing a stable order of chivalry and justice, as symbolized by his establishment of the Round Table.

Malory’s romance is entitled ‘The death of Arthur.’ The brisk succession of wars, tournaments, quests and lovemaking lies within the framework of the personal tragedy of Arthur. Arthur’s incest with his sister Morgan and his attempt to kill the son born of this union are directly responsible for his fate.

The presence of an unavoidable doom hovers over the romance. Merlin warns Arthur that his son Modred ‘shall be the destruction of all this realm’ and that ‘Guenever was not wholesome for him to take to wife, for... Launcelot should love her and she him again’. The medieval belief in the unchangeability of one’s destiny and the wheel of fortune is perhaps the reason for what seems to one the heroic Arthur’s strangely passive acceptance of his fate.

The multiple sources from which Malory derived his material combine to create certain internal contradictions in the character of Arthur. On the one hand ‘the king had a deeming’ about Guenever’s adultery and is ‘full loath thereto, that any noise should be upon Sir Launcelot and his queen.’ On the other hand, after Launcelot is discovered in the queen’s chamber and Gawaine counsels Arthur not to be ‘overhasty’ suggesting various innocent reason to explain Launcelot’s presence, Arthur is resolute in his decision to sentence Guenever to be burnt at stake. He resolves not to give the queen the chance to defend herself for Sir Launcelot ‘trusteth so much upon his hands and his might that he doubteth no man, and therefore for my queen he shall fight never more for she shall have the law.’ Guenever is accused of causing the death of thirteen knights and hence is to be punished. In actual fact, as Gawaine points
out, 'they are the causers of their death.' The
traditional hero of the epic takes on the bur­
den of the guilt of the community. Arthur
casts Guenever as the sacrificial figure to
prevent fulfilment of Gawaine's prediction
that because of Arthur permitting Modred
and Agravaine to carry out their plan 'the
fellowship of the Round Table shall be
disparply.' Saving the Round Table is more
important to Arthur 'for queens I might have
now but such a fellowship of good knights
shall never be together in no company.'

Arthur's dilemma, like Rama in the
Ramayana, lies in the relationship of public
life and private life. Rama has to agree to
repeated tests of his wife's chastity after her
captivity in Lanka because as a king he has to
be responsive to his subjects' wishes. How­
ever, his personal role as her husband de­
mands that he should defend her. Malory
clearly distinguishes between public life and
private life. Sir Launcelot, despite his adul­
terous love for the queen, is the 'best knight'
in the world, as is shown by his curing Urre's
wounds which only the best knight could
have done. Similarly, in spite of the Laun­
celot-Guenever relationship, Launcelot can pub­
icly assert that the queen is innocent after the
Pope sends his bulls to make peace between
Arthur and Launcelot. Arthur distinguishes
between the two when he allows the queen to
be tried, though personally convinced of her
innocence, after Sir Mador accuses her of
poisoning his kinsman and thus the stability
of the kingdom is not threatened. When he
allows personal emotions to shape his deci­
sions, as in his sentencing Guenever to death
without a trial, the kingdom begins to disin­
tegrate. For Malory, kingship means sacri­
ifice of personal emotions.

In Idylls of the King Tennyson gives Arthur
the one additional virtue not mentioned by
Malory — stainless chastity. He thus elimi­
nates the crucial element of the personal
tragedy of Arthur. By writing twelve sepa­
rate poems, which are episodic in nature, he
tries to reduce the contradictions in the char­
acter of Arthur. Arthur is seen as more than a
suppressor of anarchy. Before him there were
 petty kings waging perpetual war as well as
 invading 'heathen hosts.' The land belonged
to 'wild dog and wolf and boar and beast' and
'wolflike men' who were worse than beasts.
Among them Arthur «for a space ... made a
realm and reign'd.' In The Coming of Arthur
he asserts confidently that 'the old order
changeloth yielding place to new' and he re­
peats this desolately in The Passing of Arthur.
After Arthur's death lies the darkly indeter­
minate future, as suggested by the progress­
ive darkening of vision within the poem. His
civilization can only 'for a space' hold back
the resurgence of bestiality, though there is
an implicit reassurance in the structure of the
poem which corresponds to the cycle of the
seasons. The cyclic structure implies it will
renew itself, thus reinforcing Merlin's prophecy
that Arthur 'should come again/To rule once
more.'

Arthur's Round Table is no mere chivalric
order, Tennyson emphasizes its moral qual­
ity. The 'knights have heard / That God hath
told the King a secret word. 'The King will
follow Christ, and we the King.' Arthur is
seen as the moral arbiter who derives his
power from the Round Table : 'Arthur and
his knighthood ... Were all one will and thro'
that strength the King / Drew in all the petty
kingsoms.' His authority is absolute, the
knights giving him 'uttermost obedience.'
They seek to form themselves in the image of
Arthur 'from eye to eye thro' all their Order
flash / A momentary likeness of the King.'
The relation between the king and his knights
is not merely that of overlord and vassal, they
'reverence the King, as if he were / Their
conscience, and their conscience as their King.'

Arthur possesses god-like attributes in both Christian and non-Christian terms. He exemplifies Christian virtues like mercy, charity and chastity. He is Christ-like in his supernatural origin, as described by Bellicent and the novice in Almesbury, and in the promise of his return. His mission is to redeem civilization 'I waged His wars.' He speaks in the voice of Christ in his mercy 'Lo, I forgive thee, as Eternal God / Forgives' and in his suffering 'My God, thou hast foresaken me in my death.' Descriptions like 'Sun in heaven' and 'great Sun of Glory' are reminiscent of nature gods and emphasize Arthur's superhuman qualities and absolute power.

Tennyson suggests no conflict between public life and private life as the end of both is seen in moral terms. The belief in the divine right and divine functions of kings, discredited in the seventeenth century, is reasserted. Tennyson emphasizes internal godliness and conscience which the nineteenth century was substituting for the seventeenth century divinity. Arthur embodies the highest ideals of both public and private aspects of life. Tennyson's Arthur is reminiscent of Spenser's Prince Arthur in the Faerie Queene who embodies all moral qualities and whose marriage to Gloriana symbolizes the union of moral virtues to state power. Tennyson's fusion of public life and private life is emphasized by the knights oath to equate the King and their conscience. Tennyson visualizes the Round Table as a moral hegemony, analogous to Carlyle's concept of the hero class and Arnold's concept of the intellectual elite.

As there is no distinction between public life and private life, Guenever's act becomes a violation of personal relationships as well as a crime against the state which results in 'sword and fire, / Red ruin and the breaking up of laws.' As Arthur has no flaws, Guenever's adultery is shown as even more unforgivable, a perversity of the will arising from inability to appreciate her husband. 'He is all fault who hath no fault at all.' Her falseness is emphasized by young Arthur's deep longing for her, it is only with her that he will have 'power on this dead world to make it live.' But the Romantic appeal of the heroic young king is lost as he takes on the aura of divinity and becomes the 'highest creature' but despite Guenever's repentant assertion, not the 'most human.' The Romantic graces are transferred to Launcelot.

While adhering closely to the story of Morte d'Arthur, in The Once and Future King T.H. White emphasizes Arthur's human qualities. Mighty strength and grandeur of stature are replaced by simple goodness and honest endeavour. Arthur is a kind of Everyman and the story describes his rites of passage to become a noble king. Credit for his achievement is given to Merlin who teaches him how to think. Merlin's capacity to see the future is symptomatic of the inevitability of fate. Knowing his destiny and guilty about his youthful errors but striving to be worthy of his position in life, Arthur fulfils the modern concept of a hero. He is 'a plain man who has done his best.'

White infuses psychological interest into Malory's story and analyses the motives behind every action. Malory celebrates chivalry and valour. Using his story White turns its values inside out into an anti-wifediatribe. Arthur realises that living by for is wrong and constitutes the Round Table to harness Might for Right. Yet this is inadequate and the search for the Holy Grail is constituted to inculcate moral values to his knights. Malory's Arthur is grieved at the quest: 'Ye have nigh slain me with the avow (to find the Grail) ... for ye have bereft me of the fairest fellowship ... that ever were seen together in any realm.'
White’s Arthur is delighted as the quest will lead to the individual salvation of his knights. Only a few do achieve moral values and Arthur conceives the idea of impersonal justice: ‘Right as a criterion of its own ... which did not lean upon power.’ It is because of his deep belief the idea of impersonal justice, which does not make exceptions for even the queen, that Modred can force him to condemn her to be burnt at stake. Arthur knows and sympathises with Guenever’s love for Launcelot. He is delighted when Launcelot rescues her. Arthur himself is aware of the dichotomy between public duty and private feeling. By logical development of character White avoids the contradictions inherent in Malory’s Arthur and adds greater depth to the character of the king.

Arthur is unable to resolve the conflict of public and private interests. He does not see this as an impersonal problem but as something he deserves for his incest and attempt to drown Modred, ‘When I was young I did something which was not just, and from it has sprung the misery of my life. Do you think you can stop the consequences of a bad action by doing good ones afterwards? I don’t. I have been trying to stop it down with good actions ever since but it goes on in widening circles.’ He is torn between personal loyalty as a husband and his dedication to the abstract ideal of justice and his concept of duty. He is forced to accept that no reconciliation of the two is possible.

Arthur is an ideal king, Christian knight and hero. How this ideal is delineated in a particular work of literature is indicative of the value system and intellectual convictions of the age in which this work is written. The representation of Arthur in the three works considered shows the changes in the concept of ideal ruler and ideal man.
BEHIND THE BATON
AN INTRODUCTION TO THE WORLD OF THE CONDUCTOR

Before I start on my article I would like to stress that I have tried to exclude wherever possible technical terms, for this essay has no more ambition than to provide the reader with an interesting introduction to the world of the conductor.

Entering a music shop’s classical section in Calcutta, the purchaser is likely to be confronted with EMI’s double cassette set of Beethoven’s 9th symphony. Written in bold print the box cover proudly (if somewhat forbiddingly!) advertises its contents:

Beethoven: Symphony No. 9
The Philadelphia Orchestra
Conducted by Riccardo Muti.

To a sampler of classical music the name of the composer — Beethoven and the piece — his 9th symphony (arguably his greatest work) would be the obvious criteria for his decision to purchase the set. He would not think too much of the fact that it is played by the Philadelphia Orchestra. The name of the conductor — Riccardo Muti — however, could provide substance for further thought. For example, why should the cover of a piece by Beethoven have such an impressive portrait of a certain ‘Ricardo Muti’? Followed by how important is the conductor with reference to the composer? In the ensuing paragraphs I have attempted to answer these queries.

Before I proceed any further I wish to give the reader an idea (albeit a rough one) of the position of the various instruments of the orchestra along with the conductor’s podium. (see chart in next page)

Many individual conductors, however, modified this arrangement. A good example is the Philharmonia Orchestra of London under Otto Klemperer (from 1959 to 1973) which had its woodwinds brought forward and the violins divided on both sides.

My next step is to provide the reader with a definition of a ‘conductor’. The Groves Dictionary of Music and Musicians gives us the following definition: ‘The director of musical performance who by means of visible gestures tries to secure unanimity both of execution as well as interpretation.’ The words ‘unanimity both of execution and interpretation’ here are extremely important. Until as late as 1820’s the former aspect of conducting was considered the primary function of the conductor. Thus modern conducting is little more than a century old and though some sort of ‘leading’ was practiced previously it amounted to little more than the beating of time to keep a body of musicians together. Although there is no definite evidence there must have been somebody beating time for a Greek choir. Horace must have been doing that for maidens and youths in Roman times, and no doubt there were some time beating among the troubadours (wandering minstrels) of the middle ages. From the Renaissance period onwards we find from paintings and sculptures the existence of a time-beater. He had several methods: waving of a handkerchief or a roll of paper or stamping down with a heavy staff. The ‘audible’ methods of time beating must have been rather disconcerting for the musicians and had their share of casualties. Ac-
ccording to a famous story Jean Baptiste Lully (1632-1687), court composer of Louis XIV, died after a particularly inspired performance when he accidentally stumped his time beating staff on his foot! Contemporary sources say that it went right through resulting in a fatal gangrenous wound.

For most of the 18th century few conductors worked together with the orchestra. One was the violinist who was in charge of the orchestra, the other, known as a conductor, was in charge of the rhythmic function from the keyboard. This person set tempo (speed), orchestra and singers, beat time with one or both hands when not busy providing melodies or harmonies and was expected to save the day when things went wrong. Naturally, with this division of command, confusion was a real danger. There were several striking exceptions, however, a strong minded composer would dictate terms to the orchestra. As a composer his musical credentials would have to be impeccable and if he had a commanding personality he would hold unquestioned authority. Johann Sebastian Bach, Handel, Gluck, Mozart and Haydn were all good conductors, the majority preferring to conduct from the keyboard. Infact, the genre of composer-conductor in this century foreshadowed events of the 19th century when most of the top conductors were composers and vice-versa, reaching its climax in Gustav Mahler (1860-1911).

Beethoven, who was the colossal giant with one foot in the classical world and the other in the Romantic, bridged the music of the two centuries but was for obvious reasons, a bad conductor. Due to his deafness Beethoven conducted ‘within’ his mind and after the first performance of the monumental 9th symphony he had to be ‘shown’ the applause because the orchestra had finished playing while the composer was still conducting! As the contralto Caroline Unger asked the maestro to turn around and receive the ovation the audience stood up with the
sudden realization that Beethoven could not hear a bar of the music played and the great master was appearing in public for the last time.

A contemporary of Beethoven, the composer Louis Spohr (1784-1859) is credited with the first use of a baton in a concert, having previously wielded a violin and a roll of paper. Both the paper roll and the baton had the advantage of silence in execution and ‘why didn’t we think of it before?’ must have been the general reaction after the initial shock. This method proved so successful that Spohr wrote that since then no man was seen conducting from a piano and the triumph of the baton as a decisive time-beater was assured.

Spohr was followed by Carl Maria von Weber (1786-1826) and Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847) among others, both of whom were excellent conductors, although with markedly different styles. Weber was a man of the theatre and most of his conducting was in the opera house. He was a hard taskmaster, demanding the highest standards in Prague and Dresden. Quiet and undemonstrative with a clear and precise beat, Weber reorganised the orchestra’s position into something like the modern seating pattern. Mendelssohn’s conducting had much the same characteristics as his music; a light but essentially classical touch of a firm person who believed in friendliness and teamwork. Unfortunately, both Weber and Mendelssohn did not enjoy long lives and it was left to Berlioz and Wagner to lay down the principles of conducting many of which are still valid.

By the middle of the 19th century conducting had come a long way from simple time beating. Words that are so common today, Solti’s Wagner, Karajan’s Beethoven, Toscanini’s Brahms, came into vogue. The musical world began to accept the fact that there are more than one authentic way of interpreting music, each conductor’s vision, being essentially his own view of the work and hence, unique.

In the late 19th century a new brigade of conductors appeared on the scene complementing the traditional composer-conductor. Hans von Bülow was probably the first of this breed, the virtuoso conductor. and during his lifetime (1830-1894) he trained several others to follow him, the most notable being Richard Strauss and Hans Richter (1843-1916). During his own lifetime Mahler’s greatness as a conductor was unquestioned though most people thought his compositions a trifle neurotic to say the least. The purely interpretative conductors were beginning to dominate the scene by the turn of the century, Toscanini (1867-1957) being the greatest of them all. True, many of them like Felix Weingartner (1863-1942) and Otto Klemperer were also composers but they were exceptions and in any case their music has failed to establish itself in the permanent repertoire. From the time of von Bülow interpretative conducting has been on the rise and in this century has been raised to the level of a special art with a formal fundamental technique.

Now, fortified with a brief knowledge of the history of conducting I propose to guide the reader through the most important section of my essay, i.e. the art of modern conducting. Going back to the Groves Dictionary definition of the conductor, it is quite obvious that the fate of a particular piece of music lies in the hands of the conductor. His duty is to present to the listener the best aspects of the music, emphasizing its finer points, smoothing out the rough edges if any without spoiling the basic flow of music and keeping true (more or less) to the original ‘text’. In performing this Herculean task the conductor is concerned with three entities, namely the composer and his music, the particular ensemble of musicians (choral or orchestral) and his own character (both musical and general).

The composer is the first consideration of the conductor. As an interpreter he thoroughly studies the music of the composer :-

(a) He determines the mood of the music. This results from a combination of the rhythm,
melody, harmony, form, dynamics and general tone 'colour' of the composition.

(b) The style and the period in which the music was written is examined in detail along with a minute biography of the composer and comments of his contemporaries.

(c) He fathoms the real meaning and the emotional levels contained in the composition. After all, the composer's only means of communication is through a fixed set of symbols that can never convey fully the desires of the composer. The conductor thus, has to read between the lines.

(d) He studies and analyses the score, considering each phrase and voice part separately in relation to other parts, thus determining where the composer has best expressed himself and where he has placed particular emphasis.

Most modern conductors have a wide repertoire and their study of the music of various composers enables them to widen their inventories still further. There is of course, an opportunistic idea behind this study. For example, many a music critic has groaned at the prospect of reviewing yet another Beethoven cycle of symphonies, with such an abundance of good performances readily available. Record companies are reluctant for the same reason. For example, many a music critic has groaned at the prospect of reviewing yet another Beethoven cycle of symphonies, with such an abundance of good performances readily available. Record companies are reluctant for the same reason. Unusual pieces, therefore, has much to recommend for themselves. The musicians and the conductor can go through them like great voyages of discovery and the music companies can show greater willingness to record these works with fair market prospects. Having given the reader this 'shrewd' insight I go on to the next concern of the conductor, the orchestra.

Dealing with the members of an orchestra, is an exacting art, for human relationships are always tricky. Sometimes there are in the orchestra, one of more conductor baiters who love to test the conductor. Franz Strauss, father of the composer Richard Strauss was a supreme example of this breed. Herr Strauss a horn player in the orchestra summed up his philosophy in these memorable words: 'You conductors who are so proud of your power! When a new man faces the orchestra — from the way he walks up the steps of the podium and opens his score — before he even picks up his baton — we know whether he is the master or me!'

Here, the personality and the musicianships of the conductor along with a keen psychological insight into the minds of the musicians enables him to bend them to his will. Prof. Raymond Elliott has described the ideal conductor as a pleasant, patient yet firm person who inspires his musicians to give off their best. This is however, rarely the case. Many conductors are unpleasant people to work with, some of whom being downright sadistic. Handel, on one occasion grabbed the soprano Luzzoni and threatened to throw her out of the window (and we all know the height of baroque buildings to imagine the result) for refusing to sing an aria. Gluck (1714-1787) was much worse. He made his players repeat passages endlessly until he was satisfied and on one occasion, as the story goes, brought down a double bass player and his instrument on the floor by creeping upon him and administering a vicious pinch to his calf.

Anyhow after establishing a basic rapport with the orchestra, the conductor confirms his fundamental problems. His first task is to sustain the interest of his players in music which is often over-familiar to them. He has to communicate to the players his own ideas about a particular piece of music and through rehearsals to contrive an coherent expression. Sir Thomas Beecham was once rehearsing Tchaikovsky's 'Pathétique' symphony, a very familiar piece for his orchestra. He is supposed to have begun with 'Ah! the 'pathetique' let us see what we can do to cheer it up'. With such off the cuff remarks the conductor proceeded to work up the players to the concert level. It must be remembered that the members of the orchestra are after all human and repeated rehearsal will reduce actual performance to a drudgery.
Thus, during rehearsal, the conductor has to ‘tune’ the orchestra only so that it is ‘fresh’ and eager to take risks during actual performance.

Balancing the orchestra and others (the chorus and the soloists) is an important task for the conductor. The chorus in a performance is usually behind the orchestra and the soloists in front, adjacent to the conductor’s podium. Only if he can distinguish each note and voice part is the conductor satisfied. Leopold Stokowski (principal conductor of the Philadelphia 1912-1938) used to get around this problem by initially having his assistant conduct during rehearsals while he judged the sound from the back of the hall.

Having achieved optimum balance, the conductor can now enfold to the listener the hidden beauties of both the music and the orchestra, the former through sympathetic interpretation and the latter by drawing attention to its vital living personality. This brings me to the last of his concerns; his own character — musical and otherwise.

The modern conductor is usually familiar with the instruments of the orchestra and very usually a virtuoso player himself. Sir Georg Solti, Viladimir Ashkenazy, Daniel Barenboim (all pianists); Pablo Casals and Mstislav Rustrovich (both cellists) and Sir Yehudi Menuhin and Nevile Marriner (both violinists) are good examples. He is well versed in musical theory and history with a keen ear that distinguishes every note. His major weapon is the baton (the technique of which is beyond the scope of this essay) with which he indicates time. It is held in the right hand with the left controlling the dynamics of the sound produced by the ensemble. Its function is to illustrate crescendo11 and diminuendo12, to shape phases, to give leads to individuals or a group and if necessary to convey a warning or cancel a false entry.

Not every conductor uses a baton and stick technique is not all important. Hugh Magguire in 'Orchestra' is quoted as saying ‘one looks at the conductor, the whole man. The message comes from the balls of the feet, right through to the top of the head, not just what he does with his hands.’ Toscanini and Beecham had remarkable eyes, musicians saying that each of them imagined the maestro was looking at him. Gustav Mahler was once asked as to why he never grew a beard and replied that as a conductor he could not allow any foliage to come between his players and his musical (facial !) expression.

Ultimately I would like to give Professor Elliott’s definition of the conductor who (in one sentence) should be a musician a psychologist and an organiser possessing all of ‘those personal qualities that pleasantly cause others to do his will.

As a short epilogue I would like to return to Beethoven’s 9th symphony by Muti. One hopes in the future EMI and Music India will give us better interpretations from such acknowledged masters as Toscanini, Klemperer, Karajan, Bernstein and Giulini or ‘pediod’ performance by Hogwood or Harnoncourt. To use a familiar Hollywood parlance — ‘It would be a whole new ball game.’

NOTES

1. Beethoven’s 9th symphony — My reasons for choosing this piece are two fold. (a) It happens to be a personal favourite and (b) It is readily available in the city.
2. Time — fundamental rhythmical patterns of music eg. a waltz (3/4 time) = 3 4th notes to the bar.
3. Keyboard — the piano and its ancestors the harpsichord, clavichord etc.
4. Beethoven — Kept track of the music with the forte’s (loud notes) shouting ‘louder louder!’ as they were the only notes he could hear.
5. Contralto — the lowest of the range of female voices.
6. Tempo — speeds
7. Phase — short section of composition into which the music whether vocal or instrumental seems naturally to form. It is thus an inexact term.
8. Voice parts — several strands of music in harmony with each other.
10. Aria — Italian for air — lengthy and well developed vocal piece for soloist or group of soloists.
11. Crescendo — gradual increase in loudness
THE CHARTER, THE DECLARATION
AND THE GENDER QUESTION

The year 1975 should perhaps
be reckoned as a memorable
year since it happened to be the
International Women's Year as
well as the midpoint of the Sec­
ond U.N. Development Decade.
All governmental and private
agencies the world over were urged
by this august body to examine
the extent to which women have
been 'integrated in the total development' of
their own countries. The International Women's
Year likewise has been characterised by a
call for intensified action on the part of dif­
ferent nation-states to promote equality be­
tween men and women and to ensure at the
same time full integration of their women­
folk in the scheme of total national develop­
ment. They have been requested to take cog­
nizance of the importance of women's in­
creasing contribution towards the develop­
ment of the friendly states as much as coop­
eration among states and to ensure their in­
volvement in the strengthening of world peace.
All member-states and interested organisations
have been asked to adopt suitable steps for
the full realization of the rights of women and
their advancement on the basis of the Decla­
ration on the Elimination of Discrimination
Against Women.

Article 8 of the U.N. Charter does away
with all manner of sex discriminations in the
matter of women participating in its principal
and subsidiary organs. The U.N. however,
was not slow to recognize the dismal fact that
despite some progress hav­
ing been achieved by states in the business of legal equal­
ity of women, discrimina­
tory attitudes, belief and prac­
tices persist even now as a
way of life over a large slice
of the globe. In fact the In­
ternational Women's Year has
been observed to enthuse
states of the world to abolish all discriminatory laws and prejudices and to help women
to realise their full potential. The interna­
tional community could only hope to set a
model to be followed in this direction only if
men and women with education and initia­
tive rise to the challenge. As a matter of fact
a new era for women has dawned for fur­
thering the scope of their increasing participation
in the job of development of their country and
at once of creating a better world. It should,
however, be conceded that quite a number of
women-victims of age-old injustice and oppres­
sion—are largely unaware of the exist­
ence of all their rights in various parts of the
world.

The U.N. to be sure, is solemnly commit­
ted to the goal of equal rights of men and
women as per its proclamation in the U.N.
Charter and Declaration of Human Rights.
Through its numerous international instru­
ments it has urged universal recognition of
women's equal rights in law and fact as also
exploring all possible ways of offering them
equal opportunities for the exercise of their
genuine rights upon its member-states. These
member-states have in their turn pledged universal respect for and observance of human rights without distinction of race, sex and religion.

The Commission on the Status of Women in 1970 recommended to the General Assembly a programme of concerted international action for the advancement of women and adoption of general objectives and setting minimum targets for phased national action in this regard. The General Assembly in its turn adopted a strategy to integrate women in its total development effort through the unanimous adoption of the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women in November 1967, after four years of debate and drafting by the commission on the status of women. Such a Declaration was overdue in view of the fact that 'there continues to exist at present considerable discrimination against women for all the Charters and Declaration of Human Rights'.

The Preamble to the said declaration (a) reaffirms faith in the dignity and worth of human persons and in the equal rights of men and women, (b) views discrimination as incompatible with human dignity and welfare of the family and society, preventing female participation on equal terms with men, and finally reminds us about the great contributions made by women in social, economic and cultural life of people in the different countries of the world. The Preamble would seek to draw upon women's full services and talents for development work. It expresses the firm conviction that the full and complete development of a country, the welfare of the world and the cause of the world peace all urgently require the maximum participation of both the sexes in all fields of activity. Article I of the Declaration looks upon discrimination against women as an offence against human dignity itself. Article II urges nondiscrimination and equal legal rights of the sexes to be ensured through state constitutions and international instruments of the U.N. Article III stands for educating national opinion adequately towards the eradication of sex prejudice. Article IV ensures equal rights for women for voting in elections and referendums and holding public offices. Article V would accord the same right to women as men to acquire, change or retain nationality. Article VI speaks of equal marital status, free choice of spouse and equal legal property rights for women. It would prohibit child marriage and impress upon parents equal rights and duties in respect of children. It would not, however, speak of destroying the unity and harmony of the family as the unit of society. Article VII would like to do away with all previous discriminatory penal codes. Article VIII speaks of legislation to restrict all forms of traffic in women. Article IX would enjoin equal rights to education on both men and women. Article X envisages equal rights in the field of social and economic life whereas Article XI suggests timely implementation of the principles of the Charter and the Declaration of Human Rights on the part of all concerned states.

The Commission on the Status of Women, in order to achieve its broad objective, aims at spreading knowledge and understanding of the Declaration throughout the length and breadth of the world. It comes out with a call to those who are concerned for a speedy end to discriminatory laws and social norms.

It is useful to point out that the Commission on the status of Women at its eighth session in 1963 adopted a resolution which took account of 'the great importance of community development in stimulating the advancement of women.' The commission further requested the Secretary General of the U.N. to prepare a report on 'the participation
of women in community development and the possibility of increasing the scope and extent of their contribution. Participation of women included involvement in programmes of education and training, of economic development, of raising the level of living and social service by women. Suggested ways in which community development could add to the status of women included those aimed at raising their civic, political, economic, professional and social status. Particular attention should be focused on the role of women in relation to other members of the community. Formulation of the suitable policy at the national levels and appropriate action by government and non-government bodies are needed in order to ensure greater participation of women in meaningful community development. With this end in view we have to devise adequate programmes for enlisting the support and cooperation of women in such programmes directed towards their home, educational opportunities, leadership possibilities, economic development and cultural participation.

However the fact remains that only a few of the existing international instruments on Human Rights of the U.N. seem to be binding upon all the states, though the world forum is committed to the idea that equality of political rights of women is a complement to the similar equality in their social and cultural rights. In spite of the fact that the Commission on Women Status receives yearly report of conditions of women in different countries of the world, some of the U.N. covenants have not been ratified by some of the countries as yet (India not excepted). The U.N. as a matter of fact sought to launch in 1968 a long-range programme for the advancement of women as an integral part of the Decade of Development with special emphasis on educational and employment opportunities of women. It is interesting to observe in this connection that the Economic Charter of Human Rights has been adopted towards the close of 1974. The Declaration of Human Rights stipulates through article 16/1 that women are entitled to equal rights as to marriage and through article 23/2 that every one without discrimination has the right to equal pay for equal work. Article 8 of the Declaration reads, significantly enough—"every one has the right to an effective remedy for the competent national tribunal"—for trying out cases involving violation of rights given him, by law or the constitution. This stipulates unilateral reference to global tribunals as well as concerned national reference bodies of cases involving violation of Human Rights. This reinforces the case for constituting a regional court of Human Rights, say in Asia, as well.

The problem facing us is of closing the unfortunate gap between constitutional pledges and international instruments. The big question is what is the real and effective guarantee of the social rights of women in the relatively backward countries of the world and how to stabilise the universally accepted system of rights on the national plane. Really speaking the success of the U.N. efforts for improving the status of women will depend ultimately on the political atmosphere within the U.N. itself as much as on the relative effectiveness of the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights as a whole. A great deal will also hinge on the degree of excellence of performance of the functional agencies of the U.N. as well as of other independent agencies in the matter of realising legitimate rights of women. There is also the imperative need for speedily incorporating clauses of the Declaration into the respective Municipal Laws. We have to think hard in the matter of educating the people of the world and facilitating proper communi-
cation across the continents on this. Propa­
gating the cause of women's rights thorough
informal and private agencies effectively
throughout the length and breadth of the
universe is also called for. A thorough change
of priorities at the national levels is moreover
urgently needed if we mean to better the lot of
women folk. It is a pity that full potentialities
of national constitutions are not exploited
today to approximate to the goal of Human
Rights. We should realise that it is not quite
possible to reinforce democratic movements
in the world today without special efforts to
draw the mass of women into it. The fight
against social oppression of women and the
efforts at improving their social status (excep­
ting holding seminars and exhibitions)
should go hand in hand and all in the interest
of international peace and solidarity. In a
world which has grown smaller in dimen­
sion, we cannot conceive of women's progress
in isolation from world peace or the estab­
ishment of independence and socialism for
all people.

The theoretical foundations for positive
U.N. action in furtherance of the status of
women all over the world could really be said
to have been with the adoption of the U.N.
charter itself, in Sanfransisco, as early as 1945.
Of course it is true that there had been
nothing like a final or acceptable agreement
in the U.N. circular as regards some vexed
questions, such as the definition and a scope
of the rights of women. The U.N. Commissi­
on on Human Rights set up in 1946 with
Mrs. Elanor Roosevelt as its chairperson,
was therefore broadly committed to a
programme which included as its chief aims
(a) equal educational opportunities for women
at all levels (b) equal employment opportuni­
ities for the womenfolk the world over. There
were means to combine Women's responsi­
bilities of the family with those of the profes­
sion. Since its inception the Commission
undertook to work in a sustained manner to
ensure increasing participation on the part of
women in sphere of social and political ac­
tivities in all countries mainly as a matter of
duty. Actually a number of important inter­
national instruments have been created in
quick succession on the recommendation of
the U.N. Commission on Human Rights 1948
in order to do away with all kinds of irksome
disabilities and odious discriminations that
traditionally bedevilled the path of women in
different parts of the world. The most recent
instrument of some significance had been, of
course, the Declaration on the Elimination of
Discrimination against Women, approved by
the General Assembly on November 7, 1967.
Incidentally, the U.N.O. sought in 1968, in
persuance of the UNESCO proposal accepted
in 1966, an action-oriented effective
programme for the advancement of women
as an integral part of the Decade of Develop­
ment.

It is interesting to observe in passing that
1974 was declared by the UNESCO possibly
to focus world attention on the Women ques­
tion vis-à-vis peace, development and equality
as the 'International Women's year'. Of spe­
cial significance to those who seem con­
cerned is the Economic Charter of Human
Rights which was adopted towards the close
of this very year. It is thus only in the fitness
of things that we should try to analyse in
depth the role of the Declaration of Human
Rights in relation to the status of Women. It
is useful to keep track of the progress regis­
tered so far in this line since the setting up of
the U.N. Commission on the Status of Women
in February, 1947. Women's rights are how­
ever bound up with the larger issue of human
rights and this is the salutory lesson we learn
from a study of U.N. endeavours in this
direction so far.
It is interesting to point out that the preamble to the Declaration emphasises 'The recognition of the dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family as the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the World'. It also refers to 'equal rights of men and women' as also to the 'dignity and worth of the human person'. Articles I, II, III, VI, and VII guarantee together the enjoyment of civil rights including equal dignity, liberty, security of person and equality before law to all men and women. Articles IV and V, though negative ones, forbid that 'no person shall be held in slavery' and 'no one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment'. Articles VIII and XXVIII constitute remedial clauses like reference to 'competent national tribunals' and 'the right to social and international orders in which rights and freedoms can be fully realised'. Regarding the inviolability of private families, Articles XII and XVI appear to be effective safeguarding clause. Regarding economic rights, Articles XVII and XXIII prohibit deprivation of property and ensure the right to work. Besides Article XXII guarantees the right to social security and Article XXV, the standard of living for the well being of the family as also the right to security in the event of widowhood, old age, sickness or disability. Article XXV states that 'all children whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social position'. Also Article XXVII of the same Declaration ensures freedom of participation for all in the cultural life of the community whereas Article XXVI promises the right to free education for everyone. Finally, Article 29 significantly enjoins on all men or women, 'duties to the community' through which alone full and free development of one's personality seems possible.

The United Nations had tried to ensure for women folk their legitimate rights not merely through incorporating relevant provisions in the Charter and the Declaration, but also through enlisting the active assistance of a number of instrumentalities like U.N. Commission on Human Rights, different conventions, the UNESCO, the ILO and some other independent auxiliary agencies. Incidentally the I.L.O. today is in a position to render substantial assistance in the matter of promoting equal rights and opportunities for women in the economic sphere. Ensuring them a fair measure of social protection is, however, not deemed to be enough; at the moment; a vigorous process of socialisation of women, so it is felt keenly, should also be undertaken.

With regard to improving the status of women on a total scale mention must be made of the Convention for Recognition of the political Rights of Women ratified by a large proportion of governments set up by the General Assembly on December 20, 1952. In 1957, 29th January, the General Assembly adopted a Convention on the Nationality of Married Women — rather a ticklish issue, internationally speaking. It stipulated that women need not take the nationality of their husbands and in any case their nationality would not be affected either by divorce or their husbands changing their own. The U.N. convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age of Marriage, Registration of Marriage etc. adopted by the General Assembly was a significant one, in that it served as a way out for some of the most complicated familiar problems facing women in all parts of the globe. More than a mere casual reference should now be made to the Convention for the Suppression of Traffic in Women and Children and of Women Fullage concluded at Geneva in September 1921 and subsequently amended on 12th November, 1947. The con-
vention on the Suppression of Traffic in persons and Exploitation of Prostitutes, adopted on the 21st March, 1950 urgently calls for a detailed and serious study in view of social disorganisation and exploitation on a wide scale. The universal moral rights of women have indeed become a matter of serious international action. The Human Rights aspect of Family Planning is a thing well worth deserving our interest at present as an allied document. We should rather do well to remember in this connection that in 1964 a seminar was organised in Rome on the Status of Wife under Family Laws and in 1963 this subject was discussed at length at Bogota. It is perhaps pertinent to observe that in January, 1957 a U.N. Sub-Convention considered typical cases of the rights of people out of wedlock. The U.N. resolution on the Soviet Spouses of Foreign Nationals passed by the General Assembly in 1948 was, it should be pointed out in essence, a human rights demand. This resolution had in view the basic object of preserving the essential rights of those spouses unable to leave the Soviet Union and their foreign husbands and wives.

II

The conclusion that emerges inevitably from an analysis of the various conventions concluded by the U.N. and of some definite steps taken by it on matters relating to the meaningful freedom for women is that it concerns itself not merely with the political but also with the socio-cultural aspects of the problems concerning the fair sex. Evidently the U.N. seems committed to the idea that equality of political rights of women is the very pre-requisite for their equality in the sphere of social and cultural rights. The two have been generally recognised as complimentary objectives to be pursued progressively by this world forum.

It is appropriate to mention in this connection that the Women’s International Democratic Federation (born in Paris in 1946) at its Copenhagen Congress in 1953, formulated an earlier Declaration. It was a sort of rallying call for the suffering and struggling womenfolk in the world to establish their identities as human beings. This Declaration draw pointed attention of the delegates present to the grim fact that women happened to be the victims of a double exploitation—on the one hand, domestic drudgery and on the other labour in factories. It seems that the spontaneous adoption of such a Declaration on an unofficial level has its own distinct merits. This is not to belittle, however, the semi-legal impact the U.N. Declaration might have on the growing number of member-states in the world.

It is generally conceded by forward looking people that apart from holding seminars, conventions and exhibitions, the U.N. should dedicate this last quarter of the 20th Century to the cause of the emancipation of the human mind from false notions about sex, race, caste, colour, creed etc. Sexual differentiation, it should be remembered, transforms itself finally into an odious form of social classification. The failure of the recent Mexico conference is ascribed to the fact that primarily it is an upper-class affair. An in depth global campaign is thus necessary for harmonising and democratising public opinion in different countries in favour of fighting all forms of vested interests and exploitation. In fact we should realize that the whole issue is linked up with the conscious and positive elimination of coloniation and racialism. The principal means of bringing about harmony between the sexes and ensuring world peace at once is through effecting a human standard of living and a meaningful education—through building up of unity of action and under-
standing among all those concerned. Unless the proper objective climate is created by way of a removal of all kinds of political and economic restrictions on the initiative of women, the status due to women could never be adequately assured. What is needed now more than ever, appears to be a thorough rejection of a legalistic reformistic formal outlook on the part of people who really believe in Socialism, Democracy and Secularism. It is time indeed to understand that women’s progress is not possible in isolation from the furtherance of world peace or the establishment of independence. For all people women could gain their objective, particularly in today’s political and economic conditions not simply by an ‘anti-man’ tirade but by building broader unity with organisations and forces fighting for democracy, peace and friendship among people the world over. It is worth our while to bear in mind one of Lenin’s celebrated observations, in this connection: ‘If women are not drawn into public work, into political life, if women are in kitchen environment it will be impossible to guarantee real freedom, it will be impossible to build even democracy, let alone socialism’.
ELIOT'S PRUFROCK AND
TAGORE'S THAKURDA

If the spirit of the age moves through the works of art, the early poems of T.S. Eliot are those works through which the spirit of his time moves. The American-born poet's success lies in his authentic picture of the society he finds himself in. Prufrock, Sweeney or Sosostris are the typical products of this society. They are in the cul-de-sac. They are mostly anaemic. Courage has bade them farewell. They have lost the way of transcendence. Tagore starts right from this point where Eliot stops. In his dramatic masterpieces the Indian poet not only shows the horror and boredom, not only men and women 'sested in the sty of contentment' but way of salvation also. His Thakurda or Bisu Pagol stand contrasted with Eliotesque characters. They lead the way to heaven, hidden in this ugly society itself.

In one of his essays 'Baudlaire', Eliot says, 'so far we are human what we do must be either evil or good .... and it is better in a paradoxical way to do evil than to do nothing. At least, we exist' The characters of Eliot's early poems should be measured by this scale. Eliot picks up his remarkable and revolutionary character from the hundreds and thousands of Prufrocks he comes across everyday. A typical product of his society, Prufrock has lost the 'Courage to be.' He is acutely conscious of his middle aged appearance—

his baldness and thinness:

'Time to turn back and descend the stair
With a bold spot in the middle of my hair—He realizes that he lacks the necessary strength to force the moment to its crisis. Hence this recoil from decisive present action : 'so how should I presume?'

Tagore drew the picture of ever-present Thakurda well before Eliot arrived in this arena. In his dance dramas, such as

Achalayatan (অচলায়তন), Falguni (ফলুনী) or Sharodotsav (শারোদোৎসব) bonhomous Thakurda stands as an antithesis to the Eliotisque characters, discussed above. Unlike Prufrock he has learnt not to worry about age: as in Sharodotsav he says: 'তার ঠিক ওদের নাড়া পেলে আমার বয়সের হিসেব প্রায় পাষাণ পাষাণ বছরের পরিমিল হয় যায় !'.

While Prufrock recoils fatally from real experience, Thakurda with a nose for noise jumps into the fray sans a second thought. In

Arupratan (আরুপরতন) he shoulders the responsibility of awakening the youths: in his own words — 'নবীনকে ভাঙ দিতে বেরিয়েছি'.

Again in Achalayatan he turns the table by firstly moulding Panchak — a pupil of this dead institution — in his own shape and secondly by breaking down at the flag end of the drama the wall of that dark house, as he proudly says: 'ভয় নেই পাষাণ আচলায়তনে আর
Eliot’s poems centre upon the want of this ‘storm of strife’. In The Hollow Men we have some ‘stuffed men. Leaning together, Headpiece filled with straw.’ Their world is a dying world, doomed to extinction. Unlike Thakurda and his boys, who put their shoulders to the wheel to usher in a new era, those hollow men want to be left in their ‘cactus land’ — ‘behaving as the wind behaves’ — that is acted upon instead of acting.

II

In his Falguni, Tagore brings a character namely Jibon Sardar. He sets the ball of the boys’ enthusiasm rolling. They set out in quest of that old man, whom others are afraid of. In fact, Jibon Sardar is another facet of Thakurda, whose sole aim is to bring cheer to the dying ember. In Sabitri (1914) Tagore wrote: ‘এই লোকটার কাজ চালাইয়া লওয়া, পথ হইতে এ খেলে, লকা হইতে শক্তি ... কেন যে চূর্ণ করিয়া বসিয়া থাকিয়া সেটা তাহার অভিপ্রায় নয়।’

With his help the boys break out the shackles of society with a meaningful song on their lips: ‘হায় মানুষ নহে মোরা ভালমনুষ নহি।’ They claim themselves to be evil persons indulging in evil deeds. But this is not to be sneezed at either by Tagore or Eliot. This song exemplifies what Eliot says in his essay ‘Baudlaire’, quoted above.

III

The characters we come across in Prufrock, The Waste Land or The Hollow Men are the living dead in the world of everyday life, seen through — as Mr. Cleanth Brooks puts it — Eliot’s ‘pessimistic spectacles’. The images of these poems are equally ‘pessimistic’. Prufrock begins with the references to ‘ether’ and ‘patient’. The former is the deadener of man’s volition, and the later is what Prufrock identifies himself with. In The Waste Land there are continual references to ‘stony rubbish’, which is ‘cactus land’ in The Hollow Men. The poet laments for the want of bird’s song and water in ‘What the Thunder Said’:

‘If there were water
And no rock ...
If there were the sound of water only
Not the cicada.’

But in Tagore, the images of bird, rain or fountain share the same track with stone or desert image. In his dance dramas the images of stone and grass are ubiquitous. Though conventional, in his works they acquire a special significance. Here, grass and green leaf symbolize life; while stone and desert — death, living death. As in Achalayatan, about Panchak — life and courage incarnate — Upacharya says: ‘পাঠকের মধ্যে কি যাছ বেরোয়! এমন ছেলে আমাদের আয়তনে করে সত্বর হ’ল।’

Or Thakurda in Arupratan: ‘ওরে, পাকা পাতাই তো বরং সময় নিঃসন্দেহ পাতাকে অগ্নিয়ে দিয়ে যায়।’

Again, the King in Raktakarabi (রক্তকরাবী) says to Nandini, the damsel who leads the way to freedom at the fag end of the drama: ‘আমি এক ডাকাতি মনঃবৃক্ষি — তোমার মত একটি হেটে যাবার দিকে হাত বাড়িয়ে বসছি, আমি তুমি, আমি রিজ, আমি ক্ষণ।’

In Tagore’s dramas, the images of rain and bird’s song usher in a millennium — for which Eliot has to wail till Marine (1930). In Achalayatan Acharya says: ‘এই যে নেমে এল বৃষ্টি, পথিবীতের কতদিনের পথ চাওয়া বৃষ্টি।’

Or, a boy in the same drama: ‘পাথির ডাক এখান থেকেই শোনা যাচ্ছে।’

In one of his essays, The plays of R.N.
Tagore, Mr. Nirmal Mukherjea says: 'Tagore's symbols are vague ethereal, at times wooden ...' Whether this comment is tenable or not, let the readers judge.

In fact, Tagore never loses interest in life, neither in man. Far from being pessimistic, as Eliot is — according to Mr. Brooks — he is able to find heaven in the ugly society itself. As he says through his mouthpiece, Bisu Pagol, in Raktakarabi: ‘নরকেতে সুন্দর আছে। কিছু সুন্দরকে কেউ দেখানে বুঝতেই পারে না। সরকারীর সরচেয়ে বড়ো সাজা তাই।’

In fact, Tagore sees heaven and hell as the two sides of the same coin. In one of his letters to Manoranjan Banerjea he wrote: ‘Facts-এর দিকে দেখি জরা, মৃত্যু; Truth-এর দিকে দেখি অক্ষয় জীবন, যৌবন।’ His Thakurda is endowed with the responsibility of making us aware of this other side of the coin of life — almost the role of Lazarus which Prufrock recoils from.

Tagore’s dramas (discussed above) are written between 1908-1914, the great creative period when Tagore was supposed to have been at the height of his powers; as Mr. Ernest Ryes thinks — ‘(then) he was working with clarity of vision and complete self assurance.’ And it is in this period when he draws the character of Thakurda with elan, who is — in Tagore’s own words an abstract and brief chronicle of time. Through his eyes Tagore sees the dawn in the darkest hour. When Eliot only sees ‘dry sterile thunder without rain’ Tagore sees something more in it. He sees a silver lining. And, yes, it is at least a decade before Eliot.
The passage discusses the change in the status of Presidency College in Bangalore.

The author argues that while some may perceive a decline in the quality of education at Presidency College, it is not necessarily inferior to other institutions. They state that the college still holds a significant place in the educational landscape of Bangalore.

The author also mentions the difficulty of maintaining a positive outlook in life, especially in uncertain times. They believe that having a positive approach is essential if we want to do something meaningful.

In summary, the passage highlights the importance of maintaining a positive outlook and recognizing the value of institutions like Presidency College.


T.S. Eliot -

"Eat, drink and be happy, that was his way of life. So what’s wrong in it?"

— we Presidencians are sorrowfully running...
out of ideas, as a result of which we have to resort to various forms of literature to entertain ourselves. It seems that the present generation is losing touch with its past, with the result that the traditional values and beliefs are being eroded. The lack of cultural heritage and the absence of historical perspective are causing a decline in the quality of life. 

Decadence, stagnation, and lack of thought are the consequences of the Naxalite movement. We have long severed our roots in the past, and we are facing a consumerist society in which the Declinist school of historians, such as Paul Kennedy, is gaining strength. 

Decadence, stagnation, lack of thought – all these are acting as a catalyst for the decay of our culture. We must take steps to prevent this from happening, and to ensure that our culture remains vibrant and alive. Culture slowly becomes a relic. 

Culture slowly becomes a relic.
PLANNING THROUGH POPULAR PARTICIPATION

The Nehruvian model of developmental planning initiated the planning process in Indian body politic. But the success rate of these plans remained far from the desired target. This was mainly due to the phenomenon of lack of popular participation in implementing different plans. As a result, the concept of plan does not carry much relevance to the commoners, for whom, it is actually directed and initiated. Numerous endeavour in this regard like, Five Year plan, Ganga Action plan, Family Planning Programme, are of no exception. Understanding this, the social scientists have come forward to initiate the concept of materialising developmental planning through the common people, a formulation known as 'Bottomup Planning'. Ganga Action plan is one such realm, where, this aspect should be highlighted for proper and meaningful implementation.

The impact of river Ganga on the overall socio-economic life of Indians is enormous. Ganga is a part of the history, heritage, culture, civilisation, religion and lifestyle of the people of this country. Its impact on the material life of Indians is immense, as a large chunk of the Indian populace is solely dependent on the river, as far as their life and livelihood is concerned. Apart from the river's emotional impact, it is generally considered the lifeline of our country. It drains an area of 861,404 square Km. accounting for over 40 percent of the irrigated areas and sustains 37 percent of the country. Appreciating this relevance of the river for the life of people of India, the Union Government set about to relieve the tremendous pressure to which the Ganga has been subjected over the years. Most of its water in the upper reaches is diverted into canals. Untreated sewage and industrial effluents are dumped into the river at numerous places and the residues of pesticides and insecticides used in the farms are washed into it. The Government realized that the situation, already one of alarming proportions, has been further aggravated by deforestation, resulting in silting, floods and reduced navigational possibilities. Recognising the magnitude of this problem, and realising the importance of water quality as a cardinal element of river management, the Government of India, in February 1985 set up the Central Ganga Authority for the planning and execution of a timebound programme to prevent the pollution and erosion of the banks of the river. This holistic programme eventually came to be known as Ganga Action Plan (GAP) and was formally launched at Varanasi on 14 June 1986.

After over six years of formal launching of the Ganga Action plan, it is now necessary to assess the fruitfulness of this endeavour.
considering the huge expenditure already incurred. Suffice it to say, the plan is not paying the desired dividend as some very important avenues are not being given proper and desired attention. As a result, the need of the moment is to rethink the whole issue if proper return of the expenditure incurred is desired by the authorities concerned.

Before analysing the demerits of Ganga Action Plan, one should locate why the river assumed so much importance in the life of our countrymen.

Relevance of River Ganga: Firstly, the Ganga basin is home to more than 37 percent of the population of the country. Secondly, the Ganga basin waters and drains 8 states: Harayana, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and Delhi. Thirdly, the Ganga basin is extensively cultivated. About 47 percent of the total irrigated area in the country is in the Ganga basin. Fourthly, a variety of crops are raised in the basin: rice, wheat, sugar cane, cotton and jute. Fifthly, more than three-fourths of the annual rainfall in the Ganga basin occurs in the four months from June to September. Sixthly, the Ganga has been a major source of communications since ancient times.

Why Ganga Action Plan: Considering the magnitude of the river’s importance, the Government of India felt that level of pollution of the Ganga should be checked. But pollution is not the only problem faced by the river. Silting and erosion of the banks are equally serious problems and deserve urgent remedial action. The Government realised that in any river-quality management programme, the first step is to identify the sources of pollution. The Central Board for Prevention and Control of Water pollution identified such sources through its exhaustive study of the river basin published under the ‘River Basin Series’ in 1981. This was the first scientific document which formed the basis for the Ganga Action Plan. The Centre for Study of Man and Environment (C.S.M.E.), located in Presidency College, Calcutta, prepared the document based on data collected by the West Bengal Pollution Control Board. Statistical analyses of water quality data were carried out by the Indian Statistical Institute (I.S.I.), Calcutta.

The Ganga Action Plan comprises 262 schemes estimated to cost about Rs. 260 crores. These include: construction of electric crematoria, sewage treatment plants, lowcost sanitation, building embankments, river quality monitoring, etc. But in the whole scheme of endeavour, the social aspects of the plan are utterly neglected. The work that is undertaken is generally civil and structural engineering in nature. The goal of Ganga Action Plan among others, is to enhance the dwelling standard of the people residing on the two banks and its adjoining areas of the river. But in the total endeavour, the task of involving the common people to make the plan a long-lasting, viable and penetrative one, is totally ingored.

Why A Rethink is Needed: Experts believe that in order to realise the cherished aims of the plan, motivational awareness should be imparted to the people residing on the two sides of the river, so that they can transform their lifestyle, behavioral pattern, taboos, values, ethos, perceptions, and the like, which may not be conducive for furthering the aims of the Plan. Social Scientists believe that unless this can be ensured, the Plan cannot achieve its target.

What Is Needed: For this, audio-visual training camps should be set up to impart training to the inhabitants dwelling on the two sides of the river. Local clubs, representatives of mass organisations and elected
bodies like, panchayat and municipalities, should be involved so that they can ensure that what they learned at the training camps are practiced by the people in their daily life. As most of the people are illiterate or semiliterate, visual exposure is the most effective medium to make people conscious about the evil-effects of siltation, erosion and pollution of the river Ganga. In many cases, it has been found that the behavioural pattern of the people is such that it serves to pollute the river water further through washing clothes, dumping garbage, defecation on the banks of the river, throwing animal carcasses and half-burnt and unburnt corpses into the river, etc. the people have developed a habit which needs to be cured and for this, social aspects of the Ganga Action Plan should be properly strengthened. It may be mentioned that the various Five Year Plans, which were undertaken one after another, have paid poor dividends. This was mainly due to the lack of involvement of the common people, and as a result, these plans remained mere governmental endeavours minus peoples' participation. These lacunae has also been noticed in the case of Ganga Action Plan. It is now high time to involve the common people in the endeavour pertaining to Ganga Action Plan and thereby attach proper importance to the social aspects of the Plan so that it becomes more meaningful and effective.

**Importance of this Endeavour:** Considering the miserable economic scenario of our country, it is imperative that the huge expenditure being incurred in the name of Ganga Action Plan pays richest possible dividend. And for this matter, rethinking on the implementational pattern of Ganga Action Plan is urgently needed. Suffice it to say, CSME has started such an endeavour in the North 24 Parganas district of West Bengal for the last one year and more, and has been able to draw wide applause from the concerned quarters for its new type of approach of "planning through popular participation". The Ministry of Environment and Forests, as well as, the Minister Shri Kamal Nath himself, has praised this effort – which is vowed to open up new chapters in the annals of developmental planning in India.
I WILL ASK YOU TO TRY AGAIN WITH CLEAN HANDS

Arkaprabha Deb interviewed by Benjamin Zachariah

Arkaprabha Deb joined Presidency College in 1958, graduated in physics in 1962 and completed his M.Sc. in Physics from Calcutta University in 1964. Thereafter he began post-graduate training at the Saha Institute of Nuclear Physics, which he had to give up when the then director B.D. Nag Choudhuri didn’t allow him to work in the field of his choice — ‘he thought I was a Commie’ as he puts it. He then taught at Kalyani University from 1965 to 1967 when he joined the Indian Administrative Service.

His first response when I asked for an interview was ‘Why me?’ I have to confess I didn’t know the answer to that one — I had come to him less with a clear idea of what I wanted to know than out of a sense of curiosity mingled with a certain awe. Apart from having been considered one of the more brilliant students of Physics in a department where the embarrassment of riches ensured that that accolade was not easily won, he was also the guiding spirit behind Presidency College’s Left in the 1960’s. Legend has it that it was he who spent a whole evening engineering Asini Chatterjee’s crossover from the PCSO to the SF — it took a long time because she was reluctant to join a group of people who did not believe in God. ‘God is irrelevant, the point is to change the world.’

We live in unrevolutionary times; it is difficult for us to imagine a time when the engineering of a revolution could not only be conceived but almost achieved. We have perhaps learnt to pronounce ‘Naxalbari’ without the bitterness and anguish, fear and hatred, it still arouses in the generation preceding ours. The history of the movement has begun to be documented with the inevitable gaps and silences associated with the recording of events too powerful to be forgotten and too close to be recounted. To those whose living memory contains the events, reticence is the best self-defence. Arkaprabha Deb was there at the beginning of the beginning, he was elsewhere for the rest of the time. How far away was elsewhere? In 1943 if one were to have asked a Russian where he had been in 1917 he would probably have said ‘Petrograd’. It was possible for him to say so with pride. In 1944, no German could have said he had been with Eugen Levine in the Munich Soviet Republic.

I don’t think I succeeded in answering his question in the course of the interview. In quiet, measured tones Arkaprabha Deb gave me the reasons why I wanted to interview him. What follows speaks for itself...

Q : There are quite a few legends about you among your contemporaries; the fact that you were the first in the college to know and understand Marx, and to be able to communicate his ideas to others.

A : No, that’s an exaggeration. Students senior to me were also Marxists, but the first student’s Federation Union, i.e. the first communist union was formed by me. I was not certainly the first Marxist in Presidency College, I was only an epigone. There had been brilliant Marxists in the college before me but they didn’t care to organize a movement. And legends, you know, are invented by friends.

Q : How is it that earlier Marxists didn’t care to organize?

A : Here my answer would be slightly rhetorical. My personal experience, in a metaphorical way was, what Arthur Koestler wrote in ‘The God that Failed’; I saw my father hiding his frayed cuffs under the table. I saw swine being drowned while there were starving men to keep the prices up. That made me a rebel.

To paraphrase Marx, a moribund society creates its neurotic gravediggers. I was one of those neurotic gravediggers. Now I am not a gravedigger but I continue to be neurotic. I suppose those brilliant persons who had been
Marxists earlier didn’t have the personal experience of squalor which made me active as a rebel.

At that time — you’ll laugh at me if I say so — I thought that society could be reorganized on a rational basis, as Trotsky said. I also believed, as Marx said, that men could be made authentically human. I don’t believe that any more. Men cannot be made authentically human. Earlier there had been a theoretical sort of Marxism. People read the ‘Civil War in France’ or the ‘Gotha Programme’ or ‘What is to be Done’ by Lenin. What they read was confined to theory. In my case I had seen squalor.

Q: Would you talk a little about your experiences?

A: You see, I am a government servant. A public servant is not allowed any private opinions. So as far as particular incidents are concerned....

Q: You were supposed to have ‘indoctrinated’ a generation of Marxists — the term ‘indoctrination’ of course, has negative connotations....

A: No, No, I don’t think it has a negative connotation. Every society — every literate society — has an ideology of the ruling class. And the repressed should have an ideology also, sabotaging the ideology of the ruling class. It is not really ‘indoctrination’. You have only to tell a boy that the boy who comes by limousine does not care about you. His only advantage is that he was born in the elite. Your only disadvantage is that you were born in squalor. He sees it so easily that this kind of indoctrination needs no special effort.

Q: The term ‘Naxalite’ which was used for the movement which grew up later, was used as term of derision....

A: No, you see — সেই সময়ে আমাদের গান ছিল — আমাদের নয়, যাদের আমি মাস্ট তৈরি করেছিলাম — ‘নকশাল থেকে শ্রীকাশিলামে/লাল আগুন, যেন এর আগুন।’ Naxalbari to them (I am a government servant, so I have no private opinion) was, what Yenan was to Mao-Tse-Tung.

Q: What did you do after you left college?

A: I taught in a university. Then I joined what is called the I.A.S. The exact word should be ‘Indian Asinine Service’. So I joined this ‘Indian Asinine Service.’

Q: What were your experiences of teaching?

A: Teaching I enjoyed thoroughly, and I think my students, all of them are doing very well these days — will not say I was a bad teacher.

Q: Why did you stop?

A: I stopped — well that’s really a personal question. The point is that whatever is personal is also political. At that time I was associated with the broad spectrum of the student movement. I found that the line of individual annihilation would lead to not only incarceration but a lot of physical torture. And I don’t have the physical courage not to spill the beans. I thought that would be some sort of treachery.

Q: So when you were teaching, you were associated with the movement?

A: I have told you no personal questions. Ask no questions, you shall be told no lies.

Q: Was it difficult to be a member of the IAS when most of your friends were on the other side of the establishment?

A: Yes, it was difficult. It was emotionally painful. Not only friends but boys whom I had drawn into the fold of Marxism....
Q: How is it possible to reconcile active political campaigning with, say, family life?

A: The point is there is quite a lot of misunderstanding about this. Marx's basic assumption was that it is your being which determines your consciousness, not your consciousness which determines your being. Politics is only an epiphenomenon. Everything is political. The objective is to move society from a stage where everything is political to one where nothing is political. The State will wither away simply means that this society, where everything is political (because it is determined by the mode of production and the relations of production) can be transformed into a society where nothing will be political. Today the personal also is political. Today we are all either cogs in the wheel of repression or victims of repression. To paraphrase Marx, there will be a time when the contradictions between the mode of production and the relations of production will reach the stage where society will no longer be able to hold them; the integument will burst asunder and the expropriator will be expropriated.

Q: Do you think that Marx envisaged a stage where the withering away of the state was actually achieved and nothing would be political, or did he set it up as an impetus for change?

A: No, not at all, unfortunately these days people only read Marx's post-1848 writing. Read the younger Marx: the human essence is not in individual qualities, it is determined by production relations. 'Man will become authentically human' - it's almost a limp cliche now.

Q: Why is it a limp cliche?

A: You see, thieves, thugs, are quoting this and making money.

The ideology has failed to be implemented by a set of crooks. The ideology fell into the hands of men — whose hands were not clean. Parvus (the socialist theoretician) made a lot of money on the Berlin-Bagdad railway. After the revolution, Parvus said to Lenin, 'I want to join the Revolution'. Lenin said, 'Parvus, you have a brilliant mind, but the revolution needs clean hands, which you don't have.'

Q: Looking back, how would you explain the failure of Marxism in India?

A: India as a federal state is centrally ruled by non-Marxist parties. Powers relating to the basic tenets of Marxism — property rights — are vested in the central government therefore a communist cabinet in one or two particular states cannot implement even the basic tenets of Marxism — the abolition of private property.

If private property continues to exist the party that calls itself communist cannot transcend the relations of production engendered by private property.

I wouldn't say that Marxism has failed. I only object to these social-democratic parties being called Marxist.

Q: The Soviet Union seems to have failed to meet the aspirations of those who felt it was a viable alternative to capitalism. Sifting through the Soviet experience of 70-odd years many people now make the distinction between Stalinism and socialism. How far do you think Stalin was committed to socialism for its own sake, rather than as far as it suited his own purposes?

A: To say that Stalin didn't believe in socialism would be egregious. But the civil war and collectivisation perhaps made him decide that ruthlessness was necessary to safeguard socialism. He may have done things...
which we denigrate today. In my senescence I have an uneasy feeling that the basic assumption that men could be made human is not true. We are evil.

It is true that had Trotsky been around things could have been different. But history has its own conundrums. Giordano Bruno, like Trotsky, opted for martyrdom. Galileo did not. It is an irony of history that because of this comfort-loving and greedy Galileo, mankind has discovered a lot of physical laws that are called theoretical physics. It is stupid to make a historical judgement based on hindsight. Stalin after all saved the republic. In that sense he was a historical necessity.

It is difficult to believe that such an ascetic, spartan person acted for self-interest. Svetlana Alliluyeva (Stalin’s daughter) said that as a child she had no toys to play with ...

Q : About China’s programme of modernisation ...

A : China has taken the road of capitalism. All that the leadership wants to preserve is their own personal and political power. So the Chinese system is now a capitalist market economy with the state machinery being controlled by an elite. Such an arrangement has nothing to do with Marxism.

Q : Francis Fukuyama has written that the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union ...

A : ... means the end of history. This is rather silly, to say the least. History is about how men live, love, struggle, suffer and die. The end of the Cold War has meant neither the end of squalor nor the end of the obscene opulence of a very small minority. This contradiction will certainly reach a stage at which the present social order will be unable to resolve it.

Try again. You are my son’s age. I will ask you to try again. With clean hands.
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40
TWENTIETH CENTURY BALLAD

O look at the Sun, dear Mother, Mother,  
With its heart of fire so bright.  
Why that's just a gaseous mass, dear heart,  
Now tell me, what's the speed of light?

But look at the Moon, dear Mother, Mother,  
Laughing in her silver nightgown.  
The Moon is a satellite of the earth, dear heart,  
That circles the sun around.

I saw a firefly high up there Mother,  
But my hand, it couldn't quite reach.  
Now that's a star, another gaseous body,  
I wonder, in your school, what do they teach?

The sea he came to me last night, Mother, Mother,  
And he whispered a secret true.  
Whatever can you mean, you foolish little thing,  
Be quiet or I'll take a rod to you.

Ah, but I'm your own dear child, O Mother, Mother,  
Your heart's tender with love for me.  
Why it's only my hormones do that, dear heart,  
The doctor explained it most cleverly.

My heart is heavy, dear Mother, Mother,  
I weep for you in fear.  
Grey around you and grey before  
Swallowing your soul so dear.

I see your bars, dear Mother, Mother,  
And the chains you clasp so tight.  
It's joy and sadness wear the same face,  
And the people march in the night.

I see the dried up wells of love.  
And the blind, blind darkened eyes,  
And the lost screams of the circling vultures  
As you look through the new sun rise.

You rave in your fever, my daughter,  
Your cheek lies thin and white.  
Don't cry for me, my mother dear,  
I'm going with the sea of fight.

They'll not catch me now, O Mother, Mother,  
I'll be a sun you'll never see.  
They'll dissect my molecular structure,  
But they'll never, no, they'll never find me.  
When the purple moon sang

FLASHES

Stars fingers touched, a tangled web  
Grass talking to stones  
And the tide began to ebb.  
Water was hard and still,  
Screams into screams into screams  
In the huge mountain sparkling black  
Soul burying deep her dreams  
Petal soft snake was crying  
But laughter came bubbling slow,  
Shadows lay down and died  
Heart saw the red pain glow  
Apples were red, apples were strong  
Water greened and drifted away  
She picked up her skirts and she ran  
She ran from everyday  
Moon threw up her hands  
Footprints in clouds shone  
Sunlight slid along the floor  
Stood up slow, the staring dawn.
TRIVIAL PURSUIT (Presi Style)
14th December '92 In College —

'Hi' 'Lovely seeing you',
'No trouble I hoped...'
'Nah — Sat at home and moped'
'No trouble' 'not me'
'Didn't it sound like Diwali ?'
'Did you get the B.B.C.'
'Usual classes' 'thank goodness'
'I'm sick of this mess'
'Can we catch a movie
this afternoon ?'
'Folks at home may, worry'
'Yeah, its too soon'
'A shame', 'but an internal affair'
'How can they point a finger ?'
'Come on, there's a class now'
'Did you practise how
to scan', 'no' (obviously)
(that's a joke; no ? Sorry)
'Is poetry relevant
to contemporary society'
'Subject for essay, lacking originality'
'Has anything new happened
in the past thousand
years' 'same old love and
Hate and lust 'Medieval reasons
For nuclear treasons ..'
'Not a bad line'
'Don't pinch it, mine'
General laughter.
'Seriously yaar,
In a world of murder
Can poetry be relevant ?'
'Please understand
Nothing is'
'What bout peace ?'
'There's coffee in the canteen'

'Let's go' 'haven't been in
There for ages'
And we
Proceeded to exchange views,
And plan peace marches
And clean up self images
Tarnished at home
When things were truly fearsome
And we felt rather lonesome
Under the onslaught of news.
'No ?'

FINDING FUTURES

Finding futures in a face
Luscious eyes - lissom grace
Finding futures on the notice board
Finding futures underscored
Finding futures in clamouring queues
Or long drawn empty avenues
Finding futures piling high
Stake a number, reach the sky
Finding futures in envelopes
Grimms' tales, Television soaps
Immaculate empty corridors
The mock turtles love — needing more
Finding futures in yesterday's song
A mescal in dream, or an obtuse wrong
Finding futures speeding away
A spot of glory, a cracked up day
Finding futures in Dali's clocks
Cracked tea cups, worn out socks
Finding futures in a baby's eye
A trembling smile, a fragile lie
A silent scream as passion pales
Finding futures in painted nails.
MADHUBAN MITRA  IIIrd yr. English

This Our 'Make-Break' selves

I need eyes to light me to my self
In the milkman's eyes, I come to be.
The night dissolves me —
Throwing me round
With the dead lamp, the flowered quilt,
Distills me, into handfuls of darkness.
I become the lamp, the quilt.
Writhing in agony on the lilac dawn
I hear the milkman at the door,
I wait to be born.

The name I rub off
(Out of) my shoes, each night
On the door-mat,
Rises shroud-like in the dim light,
Possesses me. The milkman's change
Ringing in my hands,
I move widow-wise
Eyes across the air-shaft
Greet this coming to life.

The lamp, the quilt, shed
Their dark-identity, dissociate
In the hot sun, float—
Hiding my darkness in them,
Dusty, in a shaft of light.

I come to life
In the cold acquittal
Of the day-maid's eyes,
She must be aware of
My nightly-joints
Or, why does she hasten her self
After dusk?

The mirror volleying my darkness
Across the bed at night,
Innocently hands back my day-light self,
The Rays, Mundras, Chatterjees,
Ghosh', Alis, Mitras, Devs,
Recognize this shrouded 'me'
At the market, the movie-hall, the glade.
Tacitly admitting my coming to life
With the jostlings in the crowded bus,
The conductor hands me the change.

The college with its vibrant life
Piecing my self-sparks
Into a bright being,
Glowings with fleeting life.

The chewed-off self of the day
Is a decline in identity —
The tracings back to the dark inanimate
Lamp, quilt, and the mirror volleying dark­ness,
The door-mat with the rubbed-off name.
The eyes that gave me life
Retreat into their own secrets,
Their lamps, and mirrors and nameless selves.

This juggling, endless and vain,
The night grinding the finite shrouds
To dust, on door-mats —
To dust, swirling in shafts of light,
The day scatters
The intense being-s of the night.

TINA COLAH III yr History

Rejection

Rejection.
Pain, like a searing arrow
Sweeps through,
And I am caught in the eternal darkness of
the everlasting hollow void
Which is that bottomless pit —
My heart.

PARVEZ SHARMA IIIrd yr. English

'INTO THE DUSTBIN OF ETERNITY'

The fingers of a mind grope
in the darkness of triviality.
Thoughts die,
often prematurely
The poetry of life perishes
unwilling,
to be bound by form.
Existence is supreme —
Let the impotent silence scream.
The promise of youth, like
the thirsty flower, wilts.
শান্ত্র তাকতবী
তৃতীয় বর্ষ ইতিহাস
হিটা

কখনো হিটাট তুমি, এই পথ ধরে।
একা একা হিটা নদী, লোকের পথ ধরে,
নয়া কাদে বাগ রূপায় কল্পে বীরের পথে পথে।

হিটা মানে রাসুলারের হিটা,
জনপদের সাথে পায়ে পা মিলিয়া
মানুষ তি আজ হিটে ভুলে গেছে?

পথ তো তারা হিটে অনন্তকাল থেকে।
পথ হিটে তারা মোসেস-এর সাথে
এমনকি ইহাদিগের আদালত পরিচালনে।
পথ তো তারা হিটে অনন্তকাল ধরে।

কিন্তু কথাটা যে মানুষ পেয়েছে
পায়ের ঢাকে তাঁকে দাবিয়ে ডিতে।

অন্য চাঁদাপাথায়
রসোর, তৃতীয় বর্ষ
নিরাপদে

সময়ের চেন্টা ধরার জন্য,
জীবনের প্রভাতে,
বলে ছিল এক অন্যান্য নামনাম সোহনে।
তাকে রন্ধনল, নে প্রতিশোধ এসে আলোলো,
কিছু কবরলতা।

তারপর কথা না তারা খোলাম মাথা রেখে—
যুদ্ধে পন্তেছিলাম,
বাড়ি নেই।
বেচায় তোবেছিলাম,
না বলে তাঁত।
নে এসে গেছে।

খাদ্যাবস্যাম টেস্ট এলা,
এবং কোণায় চেয়ে চলেও গেলা
আবার একথা ফেলে।

জীবনের অপরাধে হোলা নিম্নাড়, 
একটা শুষ্ক কিছু স্পন্ধ।
দেখি, সে নেই।

খালি বেঁধে বুথ আছ।
আর ‘আরেক’ তাকে দেখি উদো দিকের প্লাটফর্মে,
আরেকটা বেঁধে,
‘আরেক’ আর সড়ে,
সেখানে কখনো প্রভাত।

রাজী যুদ্ধাপাখায়
রাসুলের পথে বর্ষ ইতিহাস
মুকিয়া পোষ্ট্রিট পথে

আজ হিমল হাওয়া:
দু’একটা বরফের সলাম:
নিন্মকে একি বয় তাকতবী।
পাহাড়ী পথে শায়িত আলো পথচেতা
সবক আর মুসর গ্যায়েয় স্থির।
চতুর্দিকে শূন্য নিকটতরদের দৃষি
মাঝে মাঝে পাতার মুখ্য যোলায় বর্ষ কিছু কেস্মনান।
নর্তক জারায়াতে দুইয়ে পাড়া লামার সাথে
তিঙ্গতী লেপচর পাকার, অত্যন্ত
পরম করিয়া ফ্রাঙ্ক, চিপস আর পোর্টার
সাথে কিছু মেঢ়াড়োড়া কলোপখনক
— সবকিছু কেস্মন নিষ্কাশনে ফেলে
আর নির্জন জীপের আগ্রাসী আলোয়
চরা দেয়— নিশ্চিতেই।

পারমিয়া সেন দিতীয় বর্ষ,
রাশিবিজ্ঞান
সীমানার শেষে

জীবন কি এভাবেই ফুটায়,
রতিন ফান্স কিছু উঠিয়া—
শিখা বিকল্প ফুটায়,
মুধাতে যায় সব জ্বালিয়ে।

সীমানা বিজ্ঞান যত চিহ্ন
করে যায় যায় জীবনটা,
এন্দোল সেমে যে যায় চূড়া,
সময়ের বায়ুতে পোষ্ট্রিয়ে।

জীবন কি রবে সেই বর্ষ?
যেখানে জীবনটাই নিশ্চিত।
কত প্রতিক্ষ্যি আর দেবে আমাকে
থেকে আছে এইখানে থাকতে;
বুঝি যে চিরিড়িনহ রয়ে যাবে তার
দেব সব ঘুরিতে গড়িয়ে।

অর্কণদেব বেশমর্মী কৃতীয় রথ, বাংলা গ্রন্থ

আমরে বাজার জামের বারার
গড়ে হোলা তুমের মতন
তাই মেলে মৃত্যু ধরে,
সঞ্চিত পাপের লাদ জেলাতি।

আসলে এক হয়মতি

এরই এক নেতার মনে
জানের উপর নীলচ মাথি
পাহাৰের কুটায় করিতা
মাঝি তানায় কষ্ঠ হইতে কীবেব

আসলে এক হয়মতি

আসলে ঐ নাওরে তালে
লালন ফিরি কোথায় তুমি
দেখে বর্ণ এল ডেয়ে
পৌর পৌরী সুকোম অতি

আসলে এক হয়মতি

রায়ের পৌর্যয় তাজমখলে
গোমেরপুরি বিষমে পড়ে
নাখ চেয়েত নিবাত দেব
শামল মায়া ডুকেই চলে

আসলে কী হয়মতি?

শীর্ষস্থ শেখর গায়েন ফিতায়া রথ পরাধিকায়

ইন্টারভিউ

যেদিন আমার চাক্ষীর প্রথম ইন্টারভিউ এল
শীর্ষের গোঁড়লা – আমিরের আত্মরত্ন কিন্তু
বিষয় বুলের আকাশের দিকে
তাকালাম, বুক বুকে নিলাম বুঝিতে নির্বাহস ;
চিহ্নিতে দূতার চূড়া ঘোষে ছুটে গেলাম, বসর মুখের
চায়ের সোকারে।

সঞ্জ্যী অভিনন্দন টানাল বয়ৃতার, উপর আমাকে
এক কাপ নোমাতা কাল গাম তরের বিন্ধয়ে।
বিলাম প্রতিক্ষ্ণি তানারকে দুলে না দাওয়ার, তারপর
ছুটে এলাম শেষ শয়ত শাহিন বাবাের বিকাসনার।
চারিদিকে ভীড় করল ছেট ভাইবেনোরা
তাদের ছোট মনের সংলিপি উঠতা সাথে নিয়ে, শতগজি
রীতি কান্ত কেলেটাকে
কোনমতে গায়ে অভিীড়ে হোসেল থেকে নেরিয়ে এলেন
মা;
হাতে চিরিটা অভাঙের তালিকা, কিন্তু আমারের সুর
হয়েচা না আনাগত অনানাদিত এক ভাবিতের
কাননার।

দীর্ঘ রাতের প্রতিকার শেখে ফুটল ভোরের আলো,
বেরিয়ে পড়লাম ঘর থেকে, সেখানে মিমোল হাওয়া়
পড়ে–

একটু অন্যরকম সোনিয়ার থেকে, যেদিন রাতে বাহী
ফিরে
শুনেছিলাম বাবার কারখানায় লখ-আউটের কথা ; মনে
পড়চে
সেই সিনটিকে, যেদিন বাহীরওয়ালা, পাড়ার মানবাঙের
নিয়ে
আমারের টেনে হিচেড়া যার করে দিয়েছিল বাহীর
বাজার

বিলামের থেকে দুলস্ব নিদিত নীতিতে মুখ মনে পড়লে,
পড়লে টাকা ঢেকে না হওয়া যার নিয়ে সাথে যার
দেবী.

dেয়ে এল ছোট ভাইটার কথা ছেলে; যাকে বাচাতে
পালিরং–

অপরূপ রক্তমুখাত করাল হাতন্ত থেকে।
যেোল শরত
হয়ে এল
উষ্ণ নিখাতের তালে তানে–এবার প্রতিক্ষার পাল্লা
২২ বছরের হীরের পর্বমত পরীক্ষার। বাল্য থেকে
েবারলো
বাবার পুরুলে একজন সত্য ঢুকে, বোঝাড়া হল ঘড়ি
আর টাই।

শিশুকালে আমারা দেখে, দুবুক বুকে
মা ভাই বোনের কষ্মান্ত দিয়েয়ে পিছনে ফেলে, আমি
এদিয়ে চললাম-পড়বো স্থলের চারাকে তোলা টাকটিকারা।

'কাম ইন'- ছেরালা গলার আওয়াজ আমাকে চমকে দিল।
কর্ককে আভিজাত্যে মোড়া টেবিল, চেয়ারে আর আসবারের পাশে
কেমন হয়ে, টুকর পড়লাম বিষয়বস্তুর বিষয়বস্তুর
বাটুটায়।

বারোতলার একটা খুব ঘরে—

'ছেলেটিস ইওর নেমু?'—বেলাব্যাট্রেকার কপোলে তাঁর দিকে।
পরে সাফারী সুতু, চেয়ে সোনার শেমা, মাথায় আর চুল।
কেলে চিকিরিকে আয়েজোজ দুটি ভাষ রক্ত—
বাড়ির দিলাম বি-কম, এম-কম, ব্যারেক্টার আর খেলার
তত সাংক্রামণ ছিল, কিন্তু অতুল একবার হাত
সেলাবোকে দুটি সঠিক দিয়ে ৫৫৫-এর ছাতি বাড়লো
শেষ পাঁথীর মায়াতিতে। একবারের জন্য খুবুলো
আয়েজোজ দুটি চেখ, ইন্দ্র করলা পাশের গলার
পাঁজারাজে—

'প্রে বয় থেকে মুখ না ঠোঁটোত তিনি অশ করেন,
এনি রেকমেনেশন? '—ঢেকার মত গা নাড়লাম,
প্রাক্তন।

মুখ তুলে, ভাবলেখানি ভাষ, রুক্ষ একটুও না রুক্ষকে
চেয়ের পাতা একটুও না বাঁচিয়ে, দুধুগোতার সুরে
বললেন 'অলমাইট ফেনের্মানেন—বী থুত সেটার'
যার মানোটা আমার জানা ছিল।

চাহ হত পা ঠাউতা হতে এল, যেন বাড়া হতে এল
বিশায়।

কেননাতে সাংক্রামিকগুলো তুলে নিয়ে, কেনে নম্বার
না জানিয়ে; দেহ ব্যাক্রান্ত আসিয়ে গিয়ে
সর্বশেষ একটা চেয়ারে। পড়ে সরে যেতে,
কশিকের জন্য কাঁপতে যায় একটা কাংকার আয়নায়—

শেখাম বেরিয়ে যেতে তথ্য নিজের মুখ
ধুত বসে যাওয়া ঠোঁটের দোন্তা থাক, দিব্য মরের,
ভাইটার
ভানাকাতে মুখ আমাকে ফিরিয়ে দিয়ে গোল পড়ে যায়।
হাতের কাঁপলগুলো দুর্দূর মুখের নূদুদু সূতের মুখের
উপর
ছুঁড়ে দিয়ে, প্রচন্ড সুখীয় হতে হতে সেলাম পেটিটাই উপড়ে
এনে,
খুব হিটটিয়ে দিলাম পাশের রাহুলমায়কের ছবিতে;
জাপানী ওয়ালককে সুতেলা আওয়াজে বারোটা বাজার
সাথে
সাফারী সুতের বেল বাড়িয়ে দানোরামনের ডাকার
আওয়াজ।

তারপর উদিপিরা করেকান লেন যখন আমাকে
টেনে হিটড়ে বার করে দিয়ে যাত্রি ছিল, তখন
ক্ষিকের জন্য পিছন থেকে ভেতে চেয়ে দুটি গলাগাল
'সন্দ অফ এ বী' আর 'আনাকা চারাড রুকুত'
বাইরে, উঠল সুরবালাকে আলোকিত, বাংলা বিষয়বস্তুর
রাখায় বাড়িতে—

একস্থায় বাড়িতে রইলাম একটা পুরোনো স্লাম্পার্টার
থেকে,
যেখানে সরকার রাজধানীর রান মার্কের ইলেকট্রসিয়ন
হাতের লাডিটি দিয়ে ধূঁশিয়ে কেয়েটে বিস্তিত
একটা মা-কাজের মূর্তকে তিলিয়ে বেনানো বাড়া।
আর কাস্টার আ-না দেখায় চেয়ে ডেকে ডাঁপ ডাঁপ
বললে
আমার বিষয়বস্তু মুখে ফুটে উঠল হাসি, তীব্র ও বাদলকে
চেয়ারের সামনে অবস্থায় প্রতিবিষ্কিত হতে দেখে—
যার মধ্যে কী হয়েছিল আমার জীবনের
থর্ম ও শেষ চাকরীর ইকটারিক-এর ইতিহাস।
Short Stories

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একটি মেন বাঁধালো। আর পাখি এর পাখা কুল রতনের প্রতি গল্প একটা আলোগ টান জেনে গেল।

এই টান কখন তাঁতা ভালোমায় বলে গেলেও গেল গেল না গল।

মৈদান বলে গলা জন্মই রতনের মতভাব ফিরেছে।

মন্দ যদিও এখনও সমন্বয় চালায়। মাঝে মাঝে গলা রতন দুোগুনই।

রতন কখনও শাপিতে বিচিত্র করা কথা যাকেও আমি করতেছি।

গলা ও অভিযোগ করতে আমি কোনো না।

দুোবার মিছিল একসাথা থেকে ভালো হোয়। একটা বলিশ মাথা গেল শুরু হোয়।

মৈস্কা একটা সিংহ গিয়েছে। গত বছর যখন রতন তিনিদের জন্য তোলা গেল, যার আঁকা গলা চর্চার কোনো ভালু নিয়ে নির্দেশ — কিন্তু আসনির তো তো তো না।

শুয়ারত গলা বলছে। সাদুক একবার এই কথা উঠেছিল।

তিনি মাঝে রতন ফিরে আসার খুবীতে দুোগুনই নেই কথা হলে গেল।

'-ৱাই করলে কি দেখছিস? কাজ যাবার ইচ্ছাগ নাই বুঝি।'

'-ীয়ের গলা! আজ বাপ। আজ আর ভালো লাগছে না। শান্তিতা দুোগুন।}

'-পাঞ্চ রুপ করিবে কি বাড়িয়ে কি? কাজ সকল যখন পেট টান পাড়ে রুপ হবে রুপ হবে পাল্লায় শুধু রুপ।

কথাও কথা হারান না। গলা শুধু চমক হবে।

'-বলে গলা চষাট বহিষ্ণু চেয়ে উঠ কাপড়া শুরু করে বলে বিল। বৈষ্ণব মাঝার উত্তর থেকে দুোটা বান্দা সামিয়া আনন।

রতন রোডে উঠান হয়ে গলা দিকে তায়ন।

'-আকর্ষণ করে যাতে দেখিয়ে না। কাজ বাঘে।'

'-পাঞ্চ রুপ করিবে কি বাড়িয়ে কি? কাজ করার যখন পেট টান পাড়ে রুপ হবে রুপ হবে পাল্লায় শুধু রুপ।

পাঞ্চ রুপ করিবে কি বাড়িয়ে কি?
রাতের অক্ষরে গলুয়া এক নারী এক পুরুষ বেরিয়া পড়ল। বাড়ির পিছনের মায়ে পেরিয়ে দেখলেন গলুয়া গলুয়া। পড়লে দেখলে কিছুই মায়ের হয় যেন কিছুই দেখলেন। পড়লে দেখলে কিছুই মায়ের হয় যেন কিছুই দেখলেন।

মন চায় না, শরীর চায় না কিভু তঁতুও নিজের মনকে রেখে নিয়ে রেখে তাই করে। গলুয়া কিছুতেও লেখা দেখে না কিছুই দেখলেন কিছুই দেখলেন। পড়লে দেখলে কিছুই মায়ের হয় যেন কিছুই দেখলেন।
“আল্মন” চারজন আছে। এখন দুটি টেল হচ্ছে। দুটি কেবল দুইমাস। আমি দেখি এখান।

পালিতে পর বলল হয়!—বলল মহীশূন্য। মালাগার যে একুশ জগতের মধ্যে থাকে। মহীশূন্য আবার ফাঁকা দেখায় বলল রতন এখানে যায়। একটিটা লেখে হয়তো এড়ায় করে ওঠে। ওয়াৰু এগিয়ে দেখা হয়।

“ভূকেটাই কী বলল রতন। মহীশূন্য কিছুটা এদিয়ে যায়। ইশায়া বক্র। রতনের অনুরূপ দেখায় কিছুটা মানুষ তাহে পালাবী। দুর থেকে মহীশূন্য পালাবী আবার অধিকলা নূতন শাখা যায়।— এই শাখা পূর্ব বুতুরগুলো। মা গাল বন্ধ মাতৃদেবীর হাতে ঘোষ গলায়। ওয়াৰু থেকে যায়। এখান থেকে পূর্ব কাপড় দেখায় যায়। অজুন দেখা। দুঃ-জনজাতের শরীর অজুন ধিক ধাতুর দেখায় যায়।

ওয়াৰুয়া ইয়াঁ এর শেষ হচ্ছে। এখান থেকে অংশটা তিন-চার জগত দুটি ওয়াৰুয়া দেখা।

’বস্ত থেকে যায়তি দেখায় কঠিন রতন আর মহীশূন্য পূর্ব ওয়াৰুয়া কাজে দেখায় যায়। গালা লীহার মারে শুরু পড়ে নাবা রাখি ওয়াৰু পালাবীয়ের হাতে নামাকাম শুরু হয়।

হিংসা মহীশূন্য তাহে তাঁকে দেখা যায়। আর পালাবী মুন্টীয়ে সমুৰু ফেলতে হয়। শেষ না করে কাজ করে নামাকাম শেষী লাগে।

প্রিয়বান্ত তাতটা সংক্রিয় দুঃখ করত আর মহীশূন্য আর আর রতন পালাবী শীঘ্র উদ্দেশ্য হয়। বুড়িয়ে পালাবী মানুষ মানুষের মধ্যে ওয়াৰুয়া ভাবে। যে করত থেকে। মহীশূন্যের হিংসা অবসান দেখা যায়।

পালাবী দেখা যায়। তবে হয় মহীশূন্য আর আর রতন পালাবী শীঘ্র উদ্দেশ্য হয়। আজাদের বুড়িয়ে পালাবী হাতে পড়ল না, হিংসা শেষ হয়।

রলায়শন দুপলাশে বুড়িয়ে হতে থেকে কিছুকে দেখায় একটা শেষ শেষ হচ্ছে। কিনে পালাবী কে জানা। মালাগার ইতিমধ্যে পালাবী দুই মারাত্মক রাইফেলদারী সেন্সরা গলা দেখে আসে। শীঘ্রের তীৰ্থতা বুড়িয়ে থাকে।

কুমাশা মনে আরও ধন থাকে থাকে।

বিশ বশিষ্ঠ গরু দুরে কাঁচার ঠাকুর হয় না।

রাজিশ্বরের নিদ্রা শেষ আর গচ্ছের চাইছি হিম ধরায় নূতন বুড়িয়ে থাকে।

তিনজন মানুষ তথা হয় পালাবী কে জানাতে করালে।

মালাগার ইতিমধ্যে পালাবী দুই মারাত্মক রাইফেলদারী সেন্সরা গলা থাকে থাকে।

এক একটা মিনিট কোটা যায়।

গান্ধার আছে এক একটা মিনিট এক এক বেগমের মতো লাগে। অনাম আশায় বুড়িয়ে থাকে।

কোন কোন দুই টাটা আলাদার বলকানি আনারাম করার জন্য। দূরুটা চাটাত হয় এটির তূতো মুখোর পথছে সরে যায়।

এই রোমান্টিক অনুভূতি পথে যেয়ে যায়। পরিপূর্ণ কথা তাতে না। এই মুখোর তূতো সরে যায়।

ভালোতা প্রায় শুষ্ক রতন করা তাত।

তিন তৌকে বলত। তাত মানুষের পূজিত পথে যেয়ে যায়।

এই মুখোর তূতো সরে যায়।
পাগলের মতো নিজের মাথা চাপাটুতে থাকে। রতনের শৌলকিতে সংহিত ফিরে গেল। আবার কোনমতে মাল টাকায় শুধু কর। রাত বেলায় থাকে থাকে। রীতির তলায় আসান। ওখানেই আসে হীরালালের লঙ্ঘ। আমাদের বোধ যায় একে দুজন। নিপ্পলক দুটিতে তাকিয়ে যায় মাটির দিকে। হীরালালের লঙ্ঘ এখনো যেখান। অন্যান্য এমন হয় না। রতন উঠে পড়ে।

—হীরালাল এলে হিসেব করে নির্দোষ। আমাদের দরদিদ নয়। যা বলে দিতে হয়।’ এপারা রকম হয় যে সব। হীরালাল শুধু করে গেল দিকে। আবার থেকে প্রায়সের দিকে হীরালাল শুধু করে এলেন পরিভাষিত মানুষ। বীর পদানির।

মালাগৌরী ওয়াগাদের তত্ত্বর তৃন, অটল, রাকাত দুটিতে কাজ করে কোনমতে উঠে গেল গলা।

মুখে তার মন হলী। কাপড়টাকে গেল জড়িয়ে নেয়। দুটি শুধুমাত্র বাঁচ পড়ে পড়ে মুখেয়। আর দুটি কোথায় কে জানে। দুটির আলায়া পা রাখে গলা—পিতার হিমায়া থেকে নেমে আসার মতো মালাগৌরীর অশক্ত থেকে নেমে আসে। মুখে বাঁচা হাওয়ার বাঁটা লাগে। চোলে ওঠে শীতে। খাটায় হীরালালের চেয়ে কঠিন হয়। পরেরা করে না। রতনের মুখটা চেয়ে যায় মনে ওঠে মনে নেও।

তাঁকাদের সেখানে এক মার, বাদ নিয়েক অন্যান্তর কথা থেকে আসান করে মহল। দুটি মিলে রেল হলক ধরে টানায় টানায় নিয়ে দেয় করতালী। বারাবর পিঁদা ফিরে দেয়।

পুলিশ কাপড়ের মিশ্রায় আসুন অন্যের মাঝে বল মনে হয়। আরও দুটি দলবটি দেখান ওকে বুলিয়া ধাড়া।

রাইন ধরে নিয়ে দেয় দুজনেই সহিমিন থেকে যায়। কাজ চককর করে মহলের শেষে। হীরে থালাল হয় গলার কথা।

—ভারতীকাজো দেখি না কেন?—জিজিমায় কর।

—কথা চলে গেছে।’ রতনের মনে দেয়। মহলের বিরহস হয় না।

—বাঁধক করে বল রতন—কাঠার করে জিজিমা করে আবার। রতন জয় দেয়। মহলের জিজিমা শেষে নিয়েপড়নো এসে কটে। রতনের জমিতে শুধুমাত্র তার আমানিত চাপাটুতে কর। মহলের অস্থির করে বলে উঠে—(হামা আয়াহ)’ লাইমের উপর বসে পড়ে।
There are miles of crucified sidewalk, yet to walk

Like Musical instruments, Abandoned
In a lush green field
Dark clouds and the swirling sky above: parts of your feelings.
Pure conversion of life into art seems true
My cut glass interior, I realize cannot harmonize
with the whimsical tunes
of warped musical instruments left out in the rain

seeking solace,
of a lost tune
which can wipe away blood.

In the hours of darkness, that before dawn, Marsilius made resolutions shaped dreams. In the evening, humming fading twilight tunes, built sand castles. Late at night, the unbridled arrogance of the sea staked its claim upon these miniature edifices. His resolutions too, dissolved in the nascent mist which swirled with the ebb and flow of the tide. It was precisely at this time, the midnight hour, when the world slept, that Marsilius, stripped of self-respect lacking decisiveness and direction sat on the shores of his own private ocean and fell in tune with the world. Ashamed that it should be this way, feeling little respect for his rubber soul. Yet, something remained. A piquant perfume pervaded the air. Resilient and resurgent, in harmony with the hour, when his existence proved fathomable as he sat on shifting sands on the brink of the vast ocean.

The Revolution. Personal and Political. A struggle between the moral and immoral. Predefined, atavistic perceptions of honesty and nobility clouded judgement, honed confusion. Stolid afternoons crawling on the sunburnt tarred roads of the city induced an acute lethargy. Within self, an insistent spark called for action, demanded blood to quench its thirst. But then ..., there had been blood. All over his footsteps, all across his tracks.

A choice remained. Perhaps if he stood with faceless millions in Esplanade East and fell satisfied that he had just been able to usher in an era of peace, tranquility, prosperity and honesty that afternoon his craving could be fulfilled. Or perhaps, if he posed with pen and paper and drowned himself in a mirage of self-conceived aesthetic productivity, it would suffice. Conviction, he realised was essential. A blind faith to steer him past desolation. East of it perhaps. 'East of desolation', it did have a nice ring to it.

What was to be believed? Human gods strutted across the land, with pompous breaths and hordes of puppies which snapped and snarled amongst themselves for bread crumbs. Human gods cut ribbons, broke domes, discarded history, destroyed the future. Defined and defied the goodness of god.

The goodness of god? 'What was god?', he asked himself something of cosmic significance, omnipresent, inherent and inert. An organic manifestation of the goodness of the human creed, floating silently, patiently, remotely, somewhere there in space.
Yet the death of children by snipers' bullets and the sight of withered bodies, the deliverance of two milk bottles to his doorstep every morning and the existence of the neighbourhood pop@@si-fountain defied logic.

The Revolution lay cradled in its mothers arms. Breathed lightly, stirred gently but was yet to open its eyes.

Somewhere in the world a new Hitler appeared. Silver hair, bulldog face. Raved and ranted with his people, demanded and decreed. Begged for money from the rich. Gold plated the taps of his shower.

There was something different that night. Something in the air .... made the mind yearn for more, to develop thought, provide answers. Marsilius heard the colour of his dreams as he struck a match to light his cigarette. The glow from the dancing flame bathed his face and was soothing to his eyes. And then .... there was music, drifting, deep and slow, at times spritely, vivacious and light. Dragon clouds floated in the night sky. The stars were in bloom, fireflies and dreams .... Summer had arrived.

I looked into the sky. The vastness scared me. A sea of azure blue and the clouds hitting invisible reefs, hidden obstacles and transforming themselves into a myriad fetid bubbles like foam : so high.

And as you, the real you, caress the sky, rub the tips of your fingers gently over the soaring silhouettes, the thunder moans in contentment. A deep roar, of confidence, of satisfaction, gathers momentum, deepens, travels the path etched out by the mad glint in your eyes. Penetrating obstacles, tearing barriers, travels through to the limits of your mind. Rebounding and echoing through all the gaps, all the crevasses in your knowledge and in your memories. The echo swirls with the mist in your mind, searching every nook and corner, every twist and plane, till it again finds you. Alone, sitting on a pebble staring into the sky, sitting on a pebble staring into the sky, staring, just staring .......

Marsilius climbed on stage, snatched away the microphone from the thin frail man who held it. 'The prophet lies', he screamed. 'The prophet', smiled weakly and signalled frantically for someone to drag away the intruder. Marsilius felt someone approach from behind. A hand reached out to grasp his. He swirled around and flung a punch, a full blow to his assailent's mouth. A look of surprise filled the mans face, questioning the severity and the savageness of the action. Suddenly blood splurted out. The look of surprise deteriorated into complex convoluted muscles of agony. He sank to his knees, clasping his face with both his hands. Blood flowed through his fingers, ran down his hand, soaked his shirt, some formed drops on the floor. The crowd roared. Marsilius just stood there, on stage, calm and impassive, a hand outstreached holding the mike, looking down at the man bent double by his feet. The moments drew on, as if hours. The man shivered uncontrollably.

A hand went round his throat, someone caught his arms. He did not resist. As they carried him away he kept looking at the man who still held his face in his hands, either in extreme pain or extreme sorrow. He was kicked and beaten backstage.

It was carnival time in the city. The schools and colleges had long closed. Children made elaborate plans, marking the countdown in their exercise books. A grotesque splash of gawdy colours suddenly invaded his world. Raunchy film tunes tore into his ears, made mockery of the solitude and privacy of his world. Various manifestations of the goddess found place at streetcorners and parks. Money was spent, as
if there were to be no tomorrow.

And the music never stopped. Little children in pickled colours with little apple motifs, water bottles slung over their shoulders, men in bold stripes and pungent shades, women in rustling new sarees with a hint of gold trudged along the streets. The nights seemed endless.

It all ended as suddenly as it had begun. Fairgrounds deserted, littered with empty cigarette packets, ice cream sticks and paper. The children lost their new play house's just when they were getting used to them.

The nights were growing longer and the days shorter.

A gentle chill wafted through the city. Touching hearts, tainting life. The days were warm, clear blue skies, circus clouds. Afternoons spent lazing on the college field. Splintered sunlight left a sprinkling of golden warmth enmeshed in his hair. The day grew old, evening fell rapidly in hushed tones. The street lamps awoke and in street corners and teastalls gathered shawl draped, long haired youths with their hands crossed across their chests and their legs shaking in time to some unconscious rhythm as they discussed cricket scores.

Late at night, Marsilius sat by his window. Mescal dreams drifted with a winter night's wind through the fog, in the haze, tiptoed across the sidewalk under the diffused light of sodium vapour lamps.

Marsilius sat at his window, looking out onto the lonely street while the world slept, huddled under the warmth of its winter shroud.

The Revolution lay cradled in its mothers arms. Breathed lightly, stirred gently. The warmth of its mothers bosom and the tender rocking motion of her arms had cocooned it to sleep.
ময়না-তদন্ত
মুনাফ সাদাল রবীন্দ্রনাথ ভাঙ্গা

তেল
মুনাফ দুম্বটা ডেঙে যেতেই নিতাই মলত বড়ড় করে উঠে বসল। মনার মা এর মাথায় অপন দিয়ে দিয়েছে, সেটা হেসেছে পালকপথের দিমিত্রা আছে। নিতাই গায়ের চারটা ভরা করে মজা আঁকে এবং মাথা হেলে বড়ড় করে নেরালা কুয়াশামধ্যে ভরালালের বন্ধানকে দেন অনুরাগম মনা হয়।

বাবা চুপ চুপ। নিতাই গাড়িতা নিয়ে ধাটে গেল।

‘এই মনা উঠ-উঠ’। মনার ধামায় মনাকে উঠ সেসব। মন পড়লে আজ তার যাবে কন্ঠ কলকাতায়। মনার বাড়ি এতে দীর্ঘরাখ।

‘বাবুরের বাড়ির কাপড়খানায় পইরায় যায়’, কতক বাবুর অস্তিত্বে আঁকে।

মনার মনের দিকে তাকায়, মুনাফ জাপড় পরাক, রোগা, হুঁড় বে, স্ত্রাহে দোকানটি নোতু। রেজ মালতা পায়ে ডানে ডানে দিয়ে শিয়লদায় যায় না। চাল বেঙ্গ। অবশ্য মা একার না। এই বিধার শেষতলী, রোগা, কলার মনারও। যায়। বাঁলী বাণিজ্যবুদ্ধি নিয়ে মুনাফাদের ঘরে সামনে দিয়েছে মনার কলকাতায় গেল। কলকাতায় আঁকে তার উঠ-উঠ করে।

মনার ধারাপ বাণিজ্যবুদ্ধি। কেন যে এত তদন্তড় নূন্তায় হরে সামনে। সবাই মন ও দিকেই তাকিয়ে আঁকে হঠা করে। শেষতলী, রোগা, কলার মনারও। যায়। বাণিজ্যবুদ্ধি নিয়ে মুনাফাদের ঘরে সামনে দিয়েছে মনার কলকাতায় গেল। কলকাতায় আঁকে তার উঠ-উঠ করে।

‘এই মনা, তোরা কন্ঠ মলি রে?’ তুলুর মা জিজ্ঞাসা করল। মনার চোর স্বীকার করে মুনাফ হাড়িতা বলেই ঘরে উঠে এল, বাবা এর ঘরে যেতে দেখল। মনার ঘর থেকে শত্রু, জ্ঞান, শেষ হয় আলা একুশটারা সবার নিয়ে পুলিসের গেলে, আজ একটু সাজে হলে তাকে।

ঈক এড়ালেই মনার সাজাতে যখন স্বপ্ন দেখতো বাপীনা জন্য। উকিলবাবুর হেলে বাপীনা। সবাই বলে একটা মিঠা উত্তর দেয়তে। এ পড়ার সব থেকে বাপীনা নাম শুনে চাল পড়ত। বাপীনা বাড়ি চালকি করে। স্ত্রীর চালিয়ে ছুড়ে বেড়াত। মনার মন্ত্রী উকিলবাবুর বাড়ি কাজ করতে দুর্দম, তখন নিনের মধ্যে একবার বাপীনাকে না দেখে মনা খারাপ হয়ে যেতো ওর। সেখানীদের সাধে বেজ বাপীনা পড়তো। শেষতলী অমন কাজতে বাপীনার সদে শার আছে ওপোড়ার খুব দিয়ে। খুব চলাচলি। মনার বিষয়ে করেনি। যা হিসেবে শেষতলীটা!

প্রথম প্রথম বাপীনা তার দিকে তাকাতেই না, কথাটা বলতে না, একদিন সড়কশোলা কাজ সেতে বাড়ি ফেরার সময় চাকরির বাপীনার সামনে পড়তো দিয়েছিল ও। বাপীনা বলেছিল এই চিত্রা, না মনার--আমাকে এক কাপ চা করে দে তো।’

মনার প্রথমে কিছু নূন্তায় পড়তে নি। তারপর বুঝতে পারে তার উঠ-উঠ চাল পিয়েছিলো। রামজানর। তার জীবনের এই থেকে নদী রেখেছে কিছু চাইতে ছিল না।

বাপীনা বলেছিল ‘ইতোত শুধু মূখদূর। এরকম নেওয়ায় বাড়ি পড়ে থাকবি না, রুকেছিল আর মাথার উঁচু পাপাবি।’

মনার ধারাপ হেলেছিল। বাপীনা তোকে একটা শত্রু বিচলিত নিয়েছিল। মনার তারপরে থেকে সড়কে মেয়ে মেয়ে কাজ করতো। মনার জীবন সেখানে। মনার মায়ের উদ্দিন বাড়িতে বাটে মেয়েতে। মনার মায়ের মনা ম'ও।

দিনে বাপীনা রাখ উঠে এল মনার। মুনাফ কে কে খিরে শত্রু ঘাড়ল। এই খোলা বলে কেননা যে বাপীনা,.... গলের মধ্যেও মনার গায়ে কাটা ছিল।

নিতাই মলত দুম্বটায় বাসে একটা বিড়ি ধরেছিল।

কিছুক্ষণ পরেই মনাকে নিয়ে ট্রেণে উঠে সে। বিচ্ছিন্ন-এ যাতে মেয়েতে নিয়ে। বাবুরাগার বাসে দিয়েছেন।

'কাইলকেতের কুষ্ঠায় যাবে গো ?' মনার মা জিজ্ঞাসা
ক্রমমাক্তি। বর্তমান স্থলে নিজেটি। 'বিনিয়োগের মাধ্যমে। নাম
শুনুন?'

'বি-বি-পে-দড়?'

'হ। এখন চুপ বোধ করি।'

'আমার ভয় করবেন না?

'কারণ? ভয়ের কিছু নিজের জন্য?'

মায়ারা চুপ করে চুপ থাকে। 'কি করলে বানরের জন্য কিছুই মহিষাসূত্র দিচ্ছি। আর বিয়া নিজের কামনায়।'

নিতাই বীণাকর করে চুপ থাকে। 'চুপ দে হারামাজালি, চুপ থাকে।'

মায়ারা চুপ করে গলায় কাঁদে। নিতাই-এর মধ্যে দাঁড় দাঁড়। তিনিই আঙ্গে পাড়ার নেতা ধোকাবু এমন একপ্রকার তাকে মিঠেয়ে দেখে। সঙ্গে মনার বস্তু। তাকে দেখতে নেই। এই অংশের কথা সহায় জানার করে। নিতাই অবশ্য বলেছিল — 'সকলে অর দাখিল এ বিষয় নিজে কামনায়?'

গোবিন্দ বীণাকর করে ঘুমাতে। তাকে বাঁকা অর হয়।

পাটি ধোকায় ফেলতে পাটি হয় মায়ার বিষয় জন্য।

নিতাই চুপ থাকে।

এই প্রথম মায়া কলকাতায় যাচ্ছে। বামীদাটি তাকে নিয়ে যাবার পক্ষে দেখিয়েছিল। বামীদাটি কোথা হেরিয়ে যায়, মায়া মনে মনে করেন। রামার করেন, দুটি কোলে মেলায় নাওয়াই, মাথায়, চুপ করে, সন্তানে হাড়ে কাঁদি বলাকে আরেক করে। মায়া জানাতে এ সকল সত্য হলে বস্তু সত্যই তাকে হিসাব করে। মায়া মায়া তার শুরুর সঙ্গে চাঁদে। মায়ারা চুপ থাকে। নিতাই চুপ থাকে বুঝিয়ে দেয়।

মায়ারা কাঁদে কাঁদে। বামীদাটি পাড়ার তাকে করে পাড়াতে শুইয়ে ফেলে একটি জেলার। মায়ারা মায়ারা মায়ারা।

বামীদাটি সেনায় নিজেকে চাহিয়ে বাজারে রেখেছিল। হোটেল থেকে পাটি দিয়েছে। বামীদাটি দিয়ে যায়। তার তার পর কোনো পাঠ্য থেকে তিনজন লোক তাকে টেনে নিয়ে দিয়েছিল।

চাহিয়ে আর বিশ্ব কাছে লোকে। নিতাই দুঃখ হেরিয়ে চলে। বামীদাটি কোথায় দেখেছিলেন মায়ারা এসে বসে। তারা মায়ারা মায়ারা মায়ারা যেতে, তার তার ফেলে যেতে হাজার করে। মায়ারা সাজাকে সাজাকে এসে বসানো নিতাই বামীদাটি।

ক্রমে ক্রমে চুপ হয়ে পড়ে, নিতাই দেখলে মায়ারা মায়ারা মায়ারা। বিশালসিংহ করে মায়ারা বললে নিতাই 'দুঃখ নামক ভাবে তারা।'

মাইকে গম্ভীর করে উদাহরণে — 'দুঃখ আপনারা জানেন, সমতল রাক্তে অজ আপনারা তামাকার।

নিয়ন্ত্রণ করাচুপি থেকে মুখ করে অনেক অভ্যাস তারা অনেক মায়ারা থেকে চলাচলে। সবার মায়া চুপ, মধ্যমের সংখ্যা কত হবে পড়ে তারা একটি হিসাব আপনার দেব।' এর মধ্যেই মায়ারা সঙ্গে আলাপ হতেছে একটি মেয়ের — 'জনারাই।' কেন্দ্রীয় প্রামাণ্য থেকে এসছে। তার বাবার মতে শুনেছে অনেক
পাটির চেলার। জলার বাচাকেও আজ এখানে দেখানো হবে।

বদ্ধপন্থ, এবার আমার আপনাদের সামনে নিয়ে আসি। হিজরপুর ইসমের একটি মেয়েকে। তাকে জন্মের মতো ধরণ করছে ঐ পাটির চেলার। মায়া মারুল, তুলি উঠে এসে। মায়া আসে আসে মায়ার উপর উঠে মায়া নীড় করে দাড়িলাম। হোসুবু তার পিঠ হাত বুলিয়ে বলেন— 'কোন ভয় নেই, সবইকে বলা সেদিন কি হচ্ছিল।' মানিক এগোন দিলেন তার সামনে। মায়া কিছুই না বলে হাতে কেঁদে উঠলো। নিতাইকে একত্র বিজেলের কলালাম— 'তোমার মেয়ে নাকি?'

'আইজা হ।'

পেছনে যা কোনেকটা হেলের মধ্যে একত্র বলে 'কি মাল মাইরি! যদিও যেখানেসি?'

নিতাই দেখেন মায়া কাঁদছে। হোসুবু তার হাত তুলে ধরে বলে ইংরেন— 'দেখুন, ভালো করে দেখুন আপনার।'

পেছন থেকে আর একটা হেলে বললে— 'নেমে এসা মাইরি, ভালো করে মেয়ে বসে।'

হোসুবু বললে— 'মেয়েটি যে এত অত্যাচারের বেঁচে আছে এটি তো আমাদের।'

নিতাই-এর হাতে মনে হলে বারু ঠিক বলবতন না।

মায়া বেঁচে নেই। লক্ষ লক্ষ লোডি চোখের সামনে এইমাত মরে পেছে। হোসুবুর যে হাত মায়ার পিঠ, ঘুড়ে ঘুড়ে বেঁচে সে হাত যে মায়া মারোল নিয়ে চায় মায়ার শরীর থেকে। সবাই যেমন চোখ দিয়ে চাটছে মায়াকে。

হোসুবু বললেন— 'মায়ার যাপায়ে তদ্দৃষ্টি চাই আমার।' নিতাই দেখতে পাচ্ছে মায়ার গায়ে কিছু নেই। একত্রে উল্লেখ হয়ে গেছে মেয়েটী।

নিতাই হাতে বিকট যোগাযোগ করে মনে উঠে পড়লো। হোসুবুর পা জড়িয়ে ধরে কাঁপকাঁপ বললো— 'মাইরাডার ছাড়লাম আম গো পাচু। কে এখানে হয়ে গাছে পেযো।'

হোসুবু শব্দে বলে উঠলেন— 'ঠিক আছে, ঠিক আছে। এখানে তীক্ষ কোন না। নেমে যাও।'

মায়ার হাত ধরে নেমে আসতে গিয়ে নিতাই শুনলে আর একত্র নাথু হোসুবুকে বললেন— 'লোকটি তো পাগল। আপনাকে দিয়ে যদি কোন কাজ হয়। বিল কো সব হচ্ছে? কোথায় যে এইসব পাগল যাগল কোটি নগল।...দূঢ়বল।'

মায়াকে নিয়ে নিতাই যখন রাস্তায় নামলে তখন মনে জলার হাতকাটা বাড়া তার কারা হতে দেখালে।

হাড় ফিরামারে লোকটাকে চেঁছে সবাই তখন বায়া সবে আনা খবরের পুঁজী খুলতে।

নিতাই হতে কোনে পা চালালো।
দ্বিতীয় বোতাম এবং
মুখল্লী কাফি দান অক্তির বর্ষ গাথিত

বোতামটার পুর আজ অনেক আরোপণ হচ্ছে।
অনেকঁওঁ ধরে। গ্রাম পর্যায়ের মিনিট।
কলারের দিক থেকে হিসেব করলে যে বোতামটা দ্বিতীয়, সেই অপার-দ্বিতীয়, শাদা রঙের, প্লাস্টিকের বোতামটার পুর। শান্ত শোলার সময়, বেঁধে আছি আজ অথবা কোনটি এটি পরিচালনা, ওই বোতামটার পুর হ্রাস করে যায় প্রথম। এর তথা রঙ দুটি বিলিয়ে, ঘরে দেখা। শান্ত সুমধুর গয়না হাত পড়ে ওই বোতামটারই, অলপ হয়ে কুলে এল বোতামটা আর তখনই একমাত্র পরিচালনা, নির্দেশ বাতাসের মত আজকের সহায়তা কাটাসা দিয়ে গেল চোখে-মুখে। বোতামটা হতে নিয়ে দেওয়া রিলিয়ন পাকা উদ্বোধন করেও ভালো পালান নিয়ে মনে ভালো ওড়ে বোতামটা।

শেষে যেদিন গিয়েছিলাম, তারিখটা পরিচয় কর্মসংগঠন বলতে যে মনে হচ্ছে, তা নয়। যেদিনও অন্যািন্তর অ্যাক্সেস কেটেছিল সেখানে, তবে আজকের মত কি?

আজ ১৪ই ফেব্রুয়ারি, রবিবার। একবার বিনাশকাল কত অন্যায়বাদ, কত নতুন যে মনে হচ্ছিল।

মাসা আটেক আগে, নাটকের প্রথম দিনের দেখতে গিয়েছিলাম ওঠে, অপর প্রথাজীবন। কোর্সে উঠেছিল করে। কোকে ওকে আরও সুপরিপূর্ণ চর্চার। তবে আজ অথবা কোনোদিন বলিন দেখায়, কারণ আমি জানি, যদি রাখা যায় না। কিছুতেই রাখা যায় না। যদি। বাস-মার্কে ওয়ায় গোষ্ঠীর নাম অর্নত যাচ্ছে একটা মুক্তিগততায়। সংবাদবিত্তায় আমি কোনোদিন তাকি নি ওই নাম। সেই প্রথম দিন থেকে মিনিট, মিনিট।

মিনিট একটা নাম, নিশ্চিত দুই তুলনা যাওয়া যায়। মিনিটের একটি কেবল দিন, কিন্তু যেখানে এক লুব্ধ তাকিয়ে থাকে - কোন পাপ নেই, জীবনে নেই, শুধু পিপাসার আরোপে পুরুষ।

চাও ঘটা নেই, রহস্য নেই, শুধু দিকের কাজে পুরুষ।

চাও ঘটা হসে ওটে মিনিট। এ হাসি মিনিট। নিজে,
একসময় নিকেট। এ হাসির কোনো মানে আছে। আমি পাই তুলেছি, মিনিটের এই হাসি, ওর দুইটির এই ক্ষুদ্র – তাকিয়ে নেই, চলান নেই, কেঁদেছি।

কোনো তবে শুধু নিজের কারণে হতে ওঠে। এই মানে শুধু ও-ই জানা। তাও জানে কী? আমি জিজ্ঞাসা করিনি কোনোদিন। জানি, উত্তর পাও না।

আজ সদয় মিনিট একটা আকাশী রঙের পোষাক পরেছি।

আজ সেখানে মিনিট দুর্মুখিন, পােল শুরুর, একটা বড়মান টেবিল বিয়ার, প্রায় আমি ওকে আগের দিন দিয়েছিলাম।

আজ সদয় মিনিটে আমি দুম থেকে বলি।

আজ সদয় মিনিটে দুম থেকে তুলে আমি বুকে জোতে ধরি। মিনিট তখন কোনোদিন।

আজ সদয় মিনিটের চেয়ে জল আর কাজের বিষয় গিয়েছিল।

ফিয়ারের মিনিট বলি কোনোটি একটা কেন।

আমি তোর হেঁসে পড়ে মিনিটের সত্যবাদ তুলে নিয়ে বুকে ওপর।

কাজকর্মের একটি কোনোদিন তথা আমার মুখের দিকে তাকিয়ে থাকে মিনিট, তারপর তার বাসায় কবর থেকে জেল আসলে দিবালিকীর বোতামের।

একটা বোতামটার দিকে তাকিয়ে থাকে মিনিট। নন্দ দিয়ে বাচারা অনেকতা, বোতামটা খুলে আসে হেঁসে কেন।

তারপর নীতি বসায়। বোতাম ঘরের চারপাশের মিনিটের কাল্পনিক ভিত্তি ওটে।

শেষ পর্যন্ত বোতামটার পুরোপুরি তুলে আনতে না পেরে মিনিট, আমার সিদ্ধান্ত তর্ক সাঙ্গ আর্টাগারের কন্যাসন্তান, আমার একটী ভালীর কুকুরে ওটে ওটে।

আমি আরামের বুকে জোটে আরাম, বোতামের, গান থেকে তার বাসা থামাই, দুম পাড়াই এবং দিয়ে নাট্যের থেকে সেনার আসে দুমের মিনিটের কাল্পনিক একটি হোটে চুবো একে আসাতে বলি না।

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FATHER AND SON
Debraj Bhattacharya 1st Yr. M.A. Modern History

(I)

Meanwhile in former East Germany several towns witnessed violent neo-Nazi demonstrations — serious clashes with the Police — about twenty-four dead and fifty injured — the scenes were reminiscent of the dark days of Germany under Hitler's rule. — The news reader on TV continued her report in a dull mechanical tone.

'Father, who's Hitler?' Soumyo asked. Bidyut wasn't listening to the news attentively partly because he was busy eating his dinner and partly because he did not need to. He was after all an expert on Nazism. He knew everything that could be known on the topic, including its recent resurrection in Germany. Although he was by profession a professor of Indian Economic History, yet, Nazism has been his special preoccupation since childhood. More than half of his library was devoted to the subject.

The rather awkward question took Bidyut a little by surprise. But he felt happy that at last his son was showing some interest in his field of study. He wanted to start a lecture immediately, but stopped. Mallika never liked anyone to think about anything in the dining table except the dinner. Mallika died when Soumyo was born. But still nothing happens in the house which she didn't like. 'Finish off your dinner, and then come to my study.' Bidyut told his son.

'I can take a look at this book.' said Bidyut as he pulled out an album on Hitler. There are lots of pictures in it, you can see how Hitler looked like, how some of his close friends looked like, here's a picture of a famous rally at Nuremberg, here's the typical nazi salute, here's the swastika ...' Bidyut said as he showed the pictures to his ten year old son. Soumyo took the album and slowly thumbed through the pages. He stopped at a photograph of Hitler giving a speech, his eyes intense, his face agitated, his fist in the air, Soumyo closed the book.

'Do you have any other book on Hitler?' he asked. 'Yes', said Bidyut with a smile. 'But you can't understand them now. When you become older you will be able to read them' he told his son in a polite tone so as not to destroy his enthusiasm. Soumyo didn't say anything. He surveyed the books on the shelves. Then he turned towards his father and asked, 'Can I take this book?' pointing towards the album. 'Yes, of course,' Bidyut said, 'but take care, its very costly.' Soumyo's face brightened. He turned towards the door. He walked a few steps and abruptly stopped and turned back. 'What do these books say about Hitler. was he a good man or a bad man?' he asked. The question was too simplistic for Bidyut. But realizing that his son wouldn't understand a complicated answer. 'Bad man, bad man.' he said Soumyo thought something for a while. Then he asked, 'What do you think?' Bidyut said 'I think so too, although he was not the only one.' Soumyo didn't say any-
thing, turned around and left the room.

(III)

Bidyut was pleased, if not delighted with his son's inquisitiveness. Every father wants his son to pick up his field of study and Bidyut was no exception. He, however, didn't pick up his father's obsession — Botany. Bidyut's father never succeeded in appreciating Bidyut's interest in the Third Reich. 'Why are you wasting your time and money on a bunch of monsters?' he would ask. Bidyut usually found the question rather offensive, but when he could keep his cool he would reply, 'In order to prevent history from repeating itself.' His father never argued any further, but Bidyut understood that he was never convinced. This disappointed him but not disheartened.

It all started with William Shirer's 'Rise and Fall of the Third Reich', almost thirty years ago. Then gradually he became obsessed with the subject, he read everything on the subject that he could get hold of, but always keeping the Indian context in mind, always looking for the germs of nazism in India, writing articles in various magazines and journals, giving lectures and attending seminars. In the process Bidyut Sengupta became an authority on the subject. And also in the process his library kept expanding. Each book in his library was a small part of his heart. He derived his inspiration from them. And, of course, from Mallika.

Once Mallika asked him, 'What would you do if one day you came back from college and saw Adlaf Hitler waiting for you in the drawing room?' Bidyut smiled and replied, 'Oh! like the perfect host I would say, what would you like to have, tea or coffee?' That was a month before they got married.

Then, after five years, one fine morning all of a sudden Mallika died. Bidyut realized that he had to stay alive — he had a son to take care of and perhaps another fifty papers to write. His old aunt came and took charge of the kitchen as well as the child. Although Bidyut realized that his son was missing his mother, yet he could never get married again. He could not even think about it. Mallika was there around him all the time, when Soumyo became slightly older, ready for school, Bidyut realized that it would be best for him if he went to a boarding school, although that certainly would make his father very lonely. But Bidyut managed to have enough strength to cope with it. He immersed himself in his study, but when Soumyo came back during the holidays he felt a lot younger. They would play carrom together, go to the zoo or occasionally even play football. And occasionally they went to see Bidyut's old aunt who had decided to spent his last days in Santiniketan.

Bidyut wondered how Mallika would have reacted to Soumyo's sudden inquisitiveness on Hitler. Probably she would have pretended to be extremely angry, and then with a gentle smile would have shown her approval. Bidyut missed her smile.

(IV)

Soumyo went to his room, threw himself on the bed and opened the book once again. Hitler's mother — 'What did she find in the rotten scum Alois?'.... Hitler's half sister Angela — His school He loved to play cowboy and Indians by the Danube meadows.... August Kubizek — 'Gustl' .... They loved to stroll along the landstrasse .... cheering the declaration of the first world war .... Iron Cross .... His room in the landsberg prison where he wrote Mein Kampf .... Goring .... Hess .... Hindenburg .... Rohm .... Brown shirts .... Rally at Nuremberg .... Chamberlain — 'What a fool!' .... Anschluss ....
Speech to the new SA cadets after the invasion of Russia — 'Managed to stitch the button right in time ..... Paris ..... Blondi ..... His trousers after the blast ..... His x-ray report ..... His wedding certificate ..... Eva Braun ..... 

The images were becoming clearer and clearer. Soumyo closed the book. He didn't need to see it anymore. A small teardrop rolled down his eyes. The windows of the dark room were opening one by one and rays of light came from all directions ..... the photographs all of a sudden sprang to life in front of his eyes.

He jumped off the bed, went to his father's study, took out the book he was looking for and proceeded towards the kitchen.

(V)

The acrid smoke woke up Bidyut. He put on his glasses (he was blind without them), switched on the light and tried to figure out from where the smoke was coming. He came outside his room and realized that the smoke was coming from his study. His heart beat doubled.

His books were on fire. And in the adjoining verandah stood his son. Or was he? A cold shiver ran down Bidyut's spine. The body was his son's all right, but whose were the eyes? Bidyut has seen those eyes before, in thousands of photographs and films. Soumyo stood there tightly holding on to the photo album in one hand and Mein Kampf in the other. The eyes were bright, very bright, brighter than the fire in the room. The eyes surveyed Bidyut for a moment and then he said with a slightly comic smile 'I am back.' And before Bidyut could absorb the shock his son ran towards him and gave him a harsh push. Bidyut fell on the floor, his glasses came off his eyes. Soumyo kicked the glasses to another corner of the room, opened the door, closed it behind him, went to his room and fell asleep.

Bidyut felt a sharp pain in his heart, and died even before the fire could consume him.

(VI)

No one understood why Bidyut Sengupta committed suicide. His old aunt cried and cried, for Bidyut certainly, but even more for his poor son. She didn't know how to console him. He was so shocked that he didn't even cry. After sometime he went back to his boarding school.

Bidyut's old aunt, however, at last stopped worrying about Soumyo when she received a letter from him informing her that he has won the first prize in an elocution contest.
Where do we go from here, Comrade? Zoltan stared into the outer darkness as the stars faded into the dawn sky. Zildjan made no reply as he relentlessly chewed on the toothpick of Creation. The journey had begun in October with great hope and enthusiasm and an Irish terrier named Gandhi. But now the dog was dead, October was far behind and they had run out of Diet pepsi.

The two friends were heading west-wards in search of that essential something of the spirit which seems to be beyond the fading remnants of the resting iron sky. They dreamed of reaching the Beyond where angels sang under festive awnings and people feasted under a big M. But the dream had soured like fresh cream left in a stable. Now it seemed that they would have to turn back.

The sun rose from beneath her sheets and slid seductively out of her night garb. Gently drowning the day in her sweet odours. Zildjan contemplatively stirred the brown earth with a broken plectrum and said nothing.

The road back was infinitely more depressing in the morning sunlight than it had been when they first felt its comforting opulence under Reebok Soles in those great October days. What had then seemed a glorious path to tread was now only a reminder of the orange peels and apple-cores of their futile search. The beer cans of their ideals were twisted and crumpled beyond recognition, leaving even the brand name unrecognisable.

They were going back. Back to where it all began on another October day, in red and green. With blood and a little man with a pointed beard. It was not for them to judge. The journey was over. The pale line of consciousness was gently dissolving leaving behind an undefined border of caramel. They no longer recognised the difference. Night’s curtain threw its shadow over the blanket of existence.

II

The other day I rediscovered one of my old scribbles at the bottom of my drawer. I hadn’t been through it for a couple of years and rummaging around in it produced the repeated joy of sentiments reborn and feeling resurrected. The gentle warmth of nostalgia hidden in inconsequential trifles which a more systematic person might long ago have thrown away.

Re-reading the half page of clumsy typing (I had then just acquired my mother’s old type writer — it had been my aunt’s before that) I began to feel quite pleased with myself. It seemed to gently but firmly put forward my credentials as a prophet of sorts. The story was a whimsical fantasy, a testing of early process with words. I now gave it the benefit of my own interpretation to make it seem even more prophetic. The parable of juxtaposed began as a premonition of chaos, a chaos which swiftly materialised and decided to stay on. I wrote of a journey abandoned, a turning back, a loss of direction, confusion. The travellers in search of a new October had lost the old one. One October is very much like another, unless you know what you are looking for.

It was written in the infancy of my politi-
cal consciousness when I had just encountered the word ‘Marxist’ as a term of disparagement used against my arguments by the professor of the Jesuit-run college I attended. I was not yet aware that the use of the term absolved respectable people from the need to reply to or refute an argument so labelled. I discovered, though, that I wasn’t universally considered ‘Marxist’. I remember being asked by another professor ‘why are you so cynical’ I didn’t think of myself as a cynical person so it took me a few moments before I answered that cynicism was ‘the only functional ethical theory’ which sounded good and I discovered later that I had for the first time stated a general principle when called upon to do so. I grew quite fond of the rhythm and accents of this little phrase.

The trouble was that I was a romantic. For me cynicism was no more a functional ethical theory than Zionism was for Adolf Hitler. I carried the phrase around with me for a while, but it ceased to function as a creed before it had begun. I was beginning to discover my politics in my profound aversion to the Reader’s Digest and an admiration for Bob Dylan.

That same year I discovered Karl Marx. The authoritative precise and well directed anger of this bearded Old Testament figure stirred my imagination. My everyday observations were set out by him in an ordered whole; he explained what I saw, he had seen it before me and I began to believe in his future — or at least some form of it. In London that summer I posed reverently before the best-maintained grave in Highgate Cemetery, my apologetic stoop spoiling the picture. We had a long walk across Hamstead Heath that day, and I sat down on a crumbling tombstone, a grave or two away in the row opposite. The name on it was Herbert Spencer, the man whose triumphal exaltation of Victorian optimism and arrogance in his survival of the fittest mantra had provided the war cry for successive generation’s participation in the class war from above. The spokesman of the European bourgeoisie’s finest hour lay almost side by side with the prophet of its destruction, and the latter had proved the fitter to survive. No one came to Highgate Cemetery looking for Spencer’s grave. I had found it by accident.

III

All this might seem now to be wishful thinking. That year there was no bread in Soviet Union. But there was a Soviet Union. It may have been a parody of the Soviet Union as it was conceived. But human beings seem to be rather good at parody and even better at cruelty. We have not come to the end of the unfinished parable; parables are out of fashion anyway. The men of wisdom and the men of power (who are actually the same men) are telling us now that the old bearded prophet has been banished to the dustbin of history.

But ‘History does nothing, it possesses no immense wealth, fights no battles. It is rather man, real living man, who does everything, who possesses and fights’. The bearded man still speaks from the dustbin. And he may well find an audience, for there are still very many real living men and women whose poverty forces them to rummage in dustbins.
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The Cambridge Approach to Indian Nationalism

The essence of the approach that C.A. Bayly has adopted to study the political developments in Allahabad is embodied in the writings of other historians of the Cambridge school of Indian history also. This view holds that the rise and growth of the 'national movement' or sub-continental politics stemmed from the structures and dynamics of local politics. Local politics comprised networks of patron-client relationships in which the patron exercised control in the neighbourhood or mohulla level through a variety of social and economic controls. With the government intervening in wider areas of Indian society, these groups were subject to pressure and forced to interact more extensively with the government through a series of new institutions which were created to facilitate administration and recruit collaborators — municipalities, district boards etc. This stimulated the growth of alliances transcending the purely local or mohulla level and the competing factionalism of these networks gradually attained a provincial dimension. Similarly, provincial politics responded to identical stimuli from the colonial government to produce the fabric of national politics. Underlying this approach was the assumption that the constitutional initiatives undertaken from time to time had been the chief spur to sub-continental political activity and that the direction and volume of this activity had been determined by the inspirations and ambitions of interest groups who have sought to exploit every constitutional advance to fulfil their short-term objectives at the expense of others. Ideological convictions, linguistic or cultural traditions and ethnic or class identities are at best only of peripheral interest.

C.A. Bayly studies the growth of local political traditions in Allahabad during 1880-1920 within this larger matrix. The book, however does not concern itself exclusively with the politics of the cluster of townships that made up the Allahabad Municipality but rather goes on to depict the trend of public life in Northern India in general and the United Provinces in particular during the last decades of the 19th and the early decades of the 20th century. Allahabad has been chosen as a focus of study because it brings out in sharp relief the contours of local political systems and the influence of local notables which are the basic tools and units of analysis utilised in this book.

Bayly starts by giving a general outline of the administration and the judicial and educational systems of late 19th century Allahabad. Bayly believed that the most important factor working in favour of the colonial government in controlling local dissidence was that administrative patronage (or the lack of it) fuelled political activity; such an approach would necessarily involve a detailed examination of the administrative structure. The growth in the volume of litigation also had important political implications as the pleaders constituted an important strand in the political leadership of the province. As for education, not only was the Allahabad Uni-
versity senate an important representative forum for political aspirants, but the university itself acted as a focus of discussion among the educated.

From here the focus of the study shifts to the locus of power at the mohulla or neighbourhood level. The author tried to assess the role of both the local neighbourhood leaderships and the town leadership. At the neighbourhood level, leadership was often provided by indigenous groups or corporate bodies both of a religious and a secular character. These groups or bodies often worked through the patronage of banking and trading magnates who formed alliances across the neighbourhoods and provided leadership to the towns. The traditional Mughal service gentry families and the landholding classes also competed for power and influence with these commercial magnates and sought to project their provincial contacts and connections back to the locality through religious patronage and property ownership. At the beginning of the period under study, a new class had emerged in the form of the Westernized, largely English-educated Indians. These were late entrants in the quest for power and patronage. But Bayly's study shows how the power of the old town, 'notable,' declined throughout the later decades of the 19th and the early decades of the 20th century and how these liberal professional classes gradually attained eminence. One reason for this was the gradually widening area of political activity as the government conceded larger powers to local self-governing bodies as well as to provincial legislative assemblies. Local notables had derived their former importance from their status as intermediaries between neighbourhood dissidents and local representatives of authority. Now this role had been usurped by the professional or the publicist (who had by now liberated himself from the patronage of the notable). With their access to regional associations and the organs of the Congress, these men could forge links between locality, region and province and bring neighbourhood dissidences into direct contact with the larger national movement thereby undermining the position of the local notable. To a certain extent this process had been facilitated by the greater urbanization and commercialisation of Allahabad with new imigrant entrepreneurial groups setting themselves up. Financial and administrative devolution to the municipalities also aided this process.

At another level Bayly tries to examine the evolution and growth of local interest groups which he believed formed a central feature of political life in Allahabad in the period under study. These interest groups had been formed to extend and protect local interests and had developed somewhat independently of local factional politics. Neither did they represent an attempt by the provincial politicians to project their power back into the localities. Bayly distinguishes these groups as having more 'sectional, regional and local aims' than the Congress and holds that these groups merged into the Congress organisation in certain periods. According to him these represented the peaks and troughs of Congress activism and organisation. Their attitude towards the Congress would be influenced by their attitude towards and relationship with the colonial authorities as well as by the fissures and dissidences within the movements of social reform and revival from which these were generated. It is here that Bayly's analysis runs into serious difficulties for he has not cared to explain why these movements would be willing to merge themselves with the Congress or seek a broader constituency. Merely to say that these groups joined the Congress because they were frustrated in their design to secure recognition and power does not help when we remember the risk of physical harm and economic ruin courted by participants of mass movements against colonial power. And if protection and patronage was what they were seriously seeking, it would have made more sense for these interest groups to align themselves with the liber-
als and moderates who actively collaborated with the colonial government.

The Cambridge School approach is at its weakest when it seeks to uncover the motives of the masses who took to the streets under the Congress banner and challenged the Raj in series of confrontations during the early decades of the 20th century culminating with the massive Civil Disobedience Movement and the Khilafat agitation. Bayly's thesis that the Khilafat agitation was largely the result of the replacement of the classes which had traditionally provided leadership to the Muslim communities by younger, professional radicals does not explain the participation of the masses. Even if we accept that the intensity and direction of political activity were decided merely by the short-term objectives of the 'elites', the realisation that the sources of patronage were limited and that only a microscopic minority were equipped with the necessary skills for officeholding should have deterred the masses from directing their agitations to those points of the administrative structure where patronage and executive power had gathered. If material self-interest was the sole motive, then the objective should rather have been to destroy the institutions of colonial authority so that fresh power structures could accommodate the wider political aspirations of divergent groups and classes. More importantly, the end of the period under study witnessed a marked tendency on the part of the government to centralise executive power in its own hands and render the elective element in the municipalities and provincial legislatures politically impotent. Even under dyarchy, Indian ministers remained subordinate to appointed British officers and the provincial government could withdraw grants from municipalities at will. This should logically have led to a curtailing of enthusiasm for political activities, but this period actually witnessed a mass surge in political activity. If as Bayly contends, 'The more spectacular non-cooperation, Khilafat and peasant's movement were squalls which temporarily blew the political leaders of course' one is tempted to ask what was the course that was being steered. Even if we accept that the constitutional initiatives undertaken by the government were the basic stimuli to political action, Bayly's approach does not explain why the elite leaderships would jockey for power and status in the short-term in a structure which had little to offer to the masses, and thus risk losing their credibility in the long run. Indeed, it does not even explain how they retained their hold over their masses when they did. As later researches show, levels of public enthusiasm and commitment to the Congress fell off whenever their leaders lobbied for the 'loaves and fishes' of office. The undisputed leaders of the nationalist movement at later stage—Nehru and Gandhi never had the slightest interest in officeholding and a large number of nationalists participated in elections only to strengthen their organisations and demonstrate their strength.

While Bayly's work is valuable because it emphasizes the value of networks as strands of continuities in a period of political change the pre-occupation with this aspect to the virtual exclusion of all other factors needed greater historical justification. This attempt to see the political developments under the Raj as solely a response to constitutional innovations to the exclusion of other tensions and forces, particularly colonial economic exploitation is an unsatisfactory analytical tool. The author's preoccupation with 'politics' as opposed to 'nationalism' fails to explain the fact that the largest sacrifices in the freedom struggle were made by those who had the least to gain from Independence.
ON 'NOSTALGIA'

There was this enterprising guy in college who used to sell t-shirt with 'Presidency' written across it. It made excellent business-sense; we, Presidencians, who (have been made to) believe that we are among the Chosen Few, studying, as we do, in what is supposed to be the best college in the city ('if not in the country'), like to stand out in the crowd. Apart from wearing t-shirts with 'Presidency' written on them, there are not too many ways to impress upon your fellow-commuters on public-buses and the people on the streets and in the restaurants and the movies that you are from Presidency, are there? And you do need to flaunt it, don’t you? It’s more likely that most people don’t give a shit—why should they?—but there are scores of proud owners wallowing in happy self-delusions and strutting around in that piece of rag.

The T-shirt, predictably, was a big hit in college, and I believe there will be quite a few narcissists and exhibitionists in the college who would be willing to buy 'Nostalgia' as well; paying Rs. 120 to bask in the glory reflected off the eighteen famous faces featured on the cover of the 175th Anniversary Volume is, I believe, no big deal. Of course, one could buy it for other reasons—for an account of the history of the college, which was pretty well-chronicled, or for the mostly-hackneyed-but-sometimes-interesting nostalgia-trips of the land’s cultural-academic-political glitterati who were associated with the college, for instance, as a souvenir—but those of us who were not drunk when we thunderingly applauded the Principal when he said something as embarrassingly absurd as 'Presidency is Bengal, Bengal is presidency' during the 175th Anniversary function’ would, I suspect, buy it for the same reason as one buys the Presidency T-shirt for.

If the 175th Anniversary Volume was an exercise designed to titilate the Presidency ego, it was a job very well done. Although, of course, after the entire line-up of our glorious alumni has been dealt with, we are told that 'investing the alma-mater with a near-mystic halo is also a form of self-glorification.' (p. 224)

After the alumni-induced high, we are taken on a long, meandering, introspective trip; we are told just what exactly is wrong with us Presidencians-of-today and why and—worse—what we should be doing to set things right. In the process, we are told just about everything we would want to know about our college. Who, for instance, wouldn’t like to know that the 'female students' of the Department of Zoology 'almost always' wear salwar-kameez and those in the English Department wear salwar-kameez 'less frequently'. Valuable piece of information, that; now, if any of you guys are feeling horny and have a fetish for legs, you know what to do—hang out around the English Department and hope...
it is one of those 'less frequent' days.

And, after regaling us with a whole table-load of information regarding who-wears-what, we are told that, we 'should not fail to correlate the socio-economic relevance of dressing patterns to the class of students of the individual departments.' (p. 241) Only four pages, the same people who had rendered that advice — a sickeningly holier-than-thou bunch calling itself 'The Survey Guild' — had found it 'perplexing' that 'many of the students view these superficial aspects of dress and manners to be an index of values and other more serious things.' Confusing, isn't it?

Interspersed with philosophical observations and moral prescriptions, the survey-report made interesting-reading. Check this one out, it is really profound:

It is no longer love which makes the world go round, it is money. (p. 246)

Or this:
The Indian women's attitude towards sex must change — sex is not a painful obligation that she owes to the man she loves. (p. 249)

Ergo, sex is fun. I got a sneaking suspicion that this particular prescription is the product of the embittered mind of someone who had not been 'obliged' by some heartless 'Lady Presidency'. (By the way, interesting term, that.)

Extremely profound, too, are the quotes chosen to begin certain chapters with — one couldn't have chosen, for instance, something more appropriately esoteric than 'Yo Ho Ho and a bottle of Rum' for the section on alcoholism and drug-addiction in college. And then there was the brilliant 'And God created women' opening in the chapter titled 'Presidency's Second Sex'. (That 'second sex' label, by the way, is sure to please the 17.63% of the women students who actually enjoy a male-dominated society.)

One can't help marveling at the way the members of the Survey Guild kept getting shocked and amazed and distressed about everything — shocked at the 'cultural insularity' of the students of the Bengali Department, dismayed at the 'appallingly' low level of drug-awareness among Presidencians, shocked that most Presidencians are ignorant of the Indian cultural scene, distressed at the fact that only 30.86% of the students know that the dome on top of the main building was originally an observatory, amazed that 84.14% of the students — hopeless ignoramuses, all — could not say how many water-coolers are there in the college, dismayed that we are merely 'interested in the vulgar activity of living life', shocked that we spend our time 'gossipping like lazy housewives' and so on. In fact, the only thing that seemed to have 'heartened' 'them' was the fact that 'the parental educational status' had 'improved considerably compared to the last survey' — now, ain't that something that should make us Presidencians proud?

The other day, a friend of mine who had bought 'Nostalgia' told me excitedly, 'Did you know Rabindranath studied in our college? Only for a day, but still...' No, I didn't. Now that I do, tra-la-la-la-la!
Grasping at the past: History, Mythology and 'Nostalgia'

Nostalgia' - 'a sentimental yearning for the past', as the O.E.D. so aptly puts it, — is both the basis and the title for the '175th Anniversary Volume' that has sold so well. The book, in its alternative or descriptive title, claims to be 'An Illustrated History of Hindu-Presidency College.' One suspects that the strange compound name came into existence essentially to provide the excuse to celebrate an anniversary, but there seems to be little point in saying that now, after the festivities are over and done with, and we have all partaken of its delights.

To return to the book itself — nostalgia is a poor basis for a history, and a cursory glance at the contents is enough to show that the history part is sustained for only the first forty-two pages, and then abandoned. The rest of the book comprises mainly anecdotes and reminiscences, of and/or by various renowned Presidencians we have all, or should have all, heard of — apart from the long statistical section. Surely this cannot claim to be a history of the College. Not even the most consciously archaic or generous view of what constitutes a history can grant the use of the term to a collection of tales best told to one's grandchildren, if one has any.

One of the irresistible urges of all Presidencians, which they probably share with anyone else who can claim a part of an age-old tradition as his or her own, is the tendency to mythologise. In our case, and particularly on the occasion of an anniversary, this degenerates into an often absurd ancestor-worship, verging on idolatry. This increases in proportion to the distance in time from the men and events described. It would appear that the virtue of self-criticism in the Presidencian emerges only in his own time; the past acquires an aura of sanctity, and contradictions are either covered up or remain unmentioned.

However, as long as the book makes no claim to historical scholarship, all this is not only forgivable, but rather pleasant. An anniversary is a time for celebration, and a self-congratulatory tone enters even into Subodh Chandra Sengupta's account of the College's past (reprinted from the Centenary Volume; the forty-two pages which comprise the strictly historical section contain no original work, only reprints.) The only piece of historical importance, and of the highest quality, is the excerpt from John Berwick's Ph.D. dissertation to the University of Sydney — what exactly it was about, we are not told, and perhaps it would be quite meaningless to say something conclusive about it without reading the whole thesis. But the advantage of an outsider's viewpoint is immediately clear; he provides an excellent account of the educational ambience of an age, from around the time the College came into being (as Hindu College) until the 1870s. The piece
contains some gems, such as the comment on Keshab Chandra Sen's description of his first love in his memoirs:

'His description is unusual in that the writers of most autobiographies of this and later periods simply seem to acquire wives and children without any emotional disturbance...'

Most of the contributors to this volume are rather good writers, lending the charm of the narrator to the most commonplace of events. It is this charm which will most likely make it the source of a great many more of the anecdotes which float around as part of the College folklore. The suspicion that many of the stories have suffered in accuracy cannot, however, be dispelled. Saugata Roy's account of the College in the mid-1960s, for instance, makes pleasant reading in the tradition of the old school-stories which British public-schoolboys used to be so fond of before they switched to rugby songs and pornography in a less innocent age. The only problem is, we are not British public-schoolboys, and he is writing of an age not quite so innocent. The tone of the article is at times quite annoying, and full of polemical tricks which in a better writer would be less visible - 'indoctrinated into Marxism', 'Hindu Hostel became an armed fortress for Naxalites', and so on. Stylistically speaking these outbursts of bile are unwarranted intrusions into an account that pretends to good-humoured liberal tolerance.

The mythologisation process is seen hard at work in the late '60s, a period of its history the College has far from come to terms with yet. The conflicts are so alive that the fear of Red devils still haunts the minds of the student movement's erstwhile opponents; and a prominent position in this mythology is occupied by the Hindu Hostel. A case in point is Rajat Kanta Roy's memoirs. His account of a debate on politics in the course of which he entered Hindu Hostel despite possible danger to his life, and faced, instead of the civilised debate he expected, the tragic blow of abuse directed at his father (who was Home Secretary) is a splendid tale of a heroic and principled, if quixotic, stand. In the light of other contemporary (non-'communist') testimonies, the dangers of the situation seem to have been more imagined than real, and the antipathy he experienced more personal than ideological.

It appears that the peculiar fate of the intellectual in an erstwhile colony was to play out the Cold War game in miniature - although there seem, fortunately enough, to have been enough people who resisted the temptation to oversimplify their Weltanschauung to a simple good-versus-evil equation. It is a pity Ashim Chatterjee, has consciously confined himself to personal reminiscences, because had he taken the Anniversary Volume's claim to being a history seriously, he might have been able to provide a different perspective, which would at least have helped neutralise some myths with counter-myths. Nevertheless, he is a marvellous and compelling writer, and his contribution is one of the high points of the book.

Since the book comprises mostly personal essays it provides a number of interesting and often revealing personal glimpses - Asok Mitra's confession that he had for a while had Fascist sympathies, Dipak Benerjee's description of the,'Do you follow that' stakes (read his excellent piece to decipher that reference). Aparna Sen's incomplete B.A. (she got married). Dilipda, appropriately, has the privilege of the last word. Future generations who are denied his inestimable assistance cannot begin to understand the esteem in which we hold him.

Several among the more famous
Presidencians have been interviewed, since they probably hadn't the time to write an article. The interviewers somewhat formalised set of questions was quite disappointing, and led to the interesting situation of a verbal tussle with Satyajit Ray while trying to get him to say the obligatory nice things about the important influence the College had had on his life and work — which he succeeded in not saying. Principal Amal Mukhopadhyay was also interviewed, placing him in illustrious company; the interview illustrates how smoothly this remarkable man accomplished his transition from teacher to civil servant.

The statistical section presents an alarming picture of the present Presidencian as an insular, ill-informed, somewhat stupid, complacent, conformist who rides around in his (or more frequently, her) father's car and wants to grow up and be rich. The only thing in the above list which isn't negative is probably being rich, but it can hardly, by any standard, be considered a virtue in itself. A significant percentage, if the survey is to be believed, believe in the continuance or revival of caste distinction and arranged marriage, and most women are against abortion rights. The sexual revolution has by and large reached Presidency in a confused and distorted form, if it has at all, and women are unaware of their post-feminism rights and status. Or so we are told.

It is tempting to ignore the results of this dismal survey, claiming a distorted sample or the invalidity of statistics as a science, or something like that, but the ostrich approach is unsuitable. The surveyors have done an excellent job within their limitations, and remarkably, the section reads rather well. But more alarmingly, the results of the survey are quite visible to the naked eye, or if you prefer it, the naked intellect. Personally, I shall be extremely glad if I can claim to be an absolutely atypical Presidencian, or take refuge in the fact that I was not part of the sample group.

The question one may, of course, ask, is whether all the virtues one traditionally associates with Presidency College and are now vanishing, are at all relevant to our age. Some, perhaps, are not—they are the luxuries allowed to a world of greater leisure. A student of English need not be able to speak Sanskrit like a member of the Gupta court. But a minimum of intellectual alertness is a demand made of any college student, indeed, any human being, and we seem to be in danger of losing even that. Of course, the survey is already three years old, so perhaps things have marginally improved. But it doesn't yet show up on the naked-eye test.

On the basis of this book, Presidency College appears to be in the final stages of decay. Averages are deceptive, and the occasional brilliant student might always slip in and out almost undetected. The tragedy gains in intensity when one realises that Presidency is still probably the best college in Eastern India. In the land of the blind, the one-eyed man is king.

But it remains true that behind all the mythology and self-exaltation involved in the Presidency ethos, there was a core of intellectual excellence on which to build it all. The need to excavate the glories of the past is never so great as when the present is bleak and the future uncertain. Without this core, we can only continue through inertia of motion, await or create the next anniversary and comfort ourselves with another dose of nostalgia.
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