

Chapter One

I am writing this introduction keeping you in view, who will be reading several poems for your course of English Literature. You would not have had much of a training in reading poetry; so you would come to read it with a handicap. As a teacher, I wish to offer some knowledge related to the discipline of reading and understanding poetry. If I sound pretentious, drop the word knowledge, and regard me as saying helpful things to you. I believe it is dangerous to read poetry for examinations in our circumstances without a sound view of poetry and its importance. You all know the spirit with which poetry is read now in our educational institutions. It is the spirit of having to read it for an academic purpose without a desire to read it. There is such a poor spirit for poetry, because there are so many other things to which we give far greater importance than to poetry – these other things matter most to us so that in the last one hundred years, roughly speaking, interest in poetry and a vital relation to it, which promote the habit of reading poetry, have all but disappeared. Now, take this general example: here is a student reading poetry for academic qualification, but his reading it amounts to reading it without a vital relation to it because the general style of living in our age has no relation whatsoever to poetry. To read a poem without the habit of seeing the vital relation between poetry and the general style of living is to misread it, no matter how much academic explanation supports one's reading.

We must be clear in stating the problem which will engage us hereafter. Poetry, music and philosophy were once the highest things in life; to be educated then was to grow with habits related to them. There was a vital relation between them and the general style of life, even though the fact is that only a few could have pursued them. We must recognize that the general style of life then was suffused by respect and veneration for them. One couldn't want anything worthwhile as a man of distinction without wanting them; habits related to them were natural. It was a time when things were learnt because they were meaningful to life. One lived religiously and culturally. I am not here conjuring up the glories of a past life, nor am I exaggerating the life of the past out of prejudice or enthusiasm. There is a point to be made about the life when it was religious and cultural, whatever limitations it may have had for our sense of the industrial and modern life. Well, I don't describe the past either dismissing it or being unaware of its limitation, but thought perceives its virtues no less than its limitations. We could never be too careful in understanding the past. It seems to me that in India we cannot at present avoid misunderstanding the past. As we advance in our argument this point will be better understood. Let me now return to the problem, in stating which, I said, we must be clear. Language could not then be misused, for the spirit of life was not false. There were, relatively speaking, purer conditions for creative work, which was directed by the natural power of mind. Life meant so many things inter-related vitally. Living was living meaningfully. One lived then by the cultural instinct; now, one lives by the psychological instinct. If my remarks have a chance of being interpreted as only glorifying the past, it is unfortunate, and I am not drawing a veil over the horrible things of the past. At the same time, I don't see the past as if to be condemned as a whole; nor

do I make a compromise implying that certain things of the past are good and desirable, and certain others, horrible and undesirable. This was so then, but it isn't so now: we have to give content to the formula. It requires us, therefore, to state that poetry, music and philosophy being the highest things desired by the mind and their power informing the habits of living, lost their hold on the mind; and I hold that it is stupid not to know how it has all come about. Here is a very complex matter to be stated accounting for the changes – the crucial changes that we have witnessed in our recent history. Unless we take care not to misunderstand what is stated here, we will misunderstand it. It is common and easy to misunderstand a complex matter which is exacting and think that we have understood it, taking offense at any suggestion that we have deceived ourselves. We resent any criticism of our opinions, but in a serious communication it is difficult to make a point without being offensive. Usually, we don't like intelligence that exposes our opinions and our interests. We don't like the knowledge that hurts us, while we welcome knowledge with open arms, proclaiming its benefits, if it doesn't oppose our interests and our opinions.

In this first part of our introduction we will have to center our attention on two questions, what has happened to us? and what must we do now?

Do remember that we are concerned with poetry: but then, we cannot talk of poetry alone meaningfully without touching upon related matters. Ours is not an academic procedure in which a poem is explained by offering the surface sense, by referring to the meanings of difficult words and of course, by bringing in seemingly related ideas or theories which academic literary criticism makes popular from time to time. We too explain a poem, as you see later, but we do it in terms of what is most closely related to poetry and life. We cannot talk of a poem without seeing its point of relevance to living. It must be pointed out that to relate poetry to entertainment is imbecility. Poetry is a serious art which must be distinguished from entertainment art. We must now answer the question, why is poetry not valued now? And also the cognate question, can poetry be understood and its power felt if it is not valued? Here is, of course, an important assumption that poetry and life are inseparably related and that today we have conditions in which no true relation exists between them, and that without such a relation, we cannot profit by reading poetry. Quite obviously, in our life-style now poetry isn't a value to us, but once there was a life-style in which it was a value, as I said earlier. The problem is this, that in order to feel the value of poetry we must acquire a true consciousness of the modern age with its life-style by a true sense of the life-style of the past in which poetry was a value. With the general educated man's consciousness of the modern age one can never realize the value of poetry. At the moment your consciousness of this age cannot possibly be different from that of the general educated man. There cannot be a better life for us unless we alter our consciousness; understanding poetry depends upon realizing the value of poetry, but, if we do not desire a better life by altering our consciousness, we cannot realize the value of poetry, and therefore, cannot also understand it in the deeper sense, I mean. This is the conclusion I come to; we have to change our modern life to be true readers of poetry.

I seem to have made many statements which are baffling. But if you take them as one statement and work out the implications, you need not be baffled. We must acquire a

discipline to look at life and its achievements closely. That discipline is too impossible for us at present. In fact anything serious and good seems to be equally impossible for us now. Are we then in a degenerate state?

A sense of the past in which poetry was a value is clear, and we must keep it untouched by perverting or generalizing ideas. What we must strive for is to have a consciousness of our own age.

Of the educated, how many people want to read poetry today? Thought must begin with this question, for asking and answering it advances us in our consciousness. Obviously, none wants to read poetry. Or, which is the same, none have the habit of reading poetry. Relatively speaking there are yet quite a few people who listen to classical music, and soon they might decline to a negligible number. Then, what is this style of life in which no one has the habit of reading poetry?

We have to decide the whole question of poetry by the character of consciousness of the general educated man. We ask again, what is the complex matter involved here, which we have to master? It is the content of the change which has followed the Western impact on India that is really a complex matter for us. A true understanding of it promotes the true consciousness of our age. We must keep an eye on the difference between the general educated man's consciousness and the true consciousness of the age, as it alone empowers the mind to perceive the conditions hostile to the value of poetry. I must here ask you to be careful in understanding the manner in which I show the hostile conditions. You are now meeting something unfamiliar, and something which doesn't agree with your ideas, perhaps. But give it a trial before you recoil from it with indignation.

Suppose we ask, without appearing flimsy and abstract, what a man is, expecting to be answered as to where the human quality of man belongs. The answer is this, that a man's humanity is related to his civilization. I know this answer needs expansion, for it hasn't recognizable details so that we can be satisfied with it. For one thing, civilization is a difficult word, and many, not knowing what it stands for, entertain childish opinions, and demand a definition of it as though to test anyone who uses it. Definitions of such words are as a rule, false. One who asks for them stands guilty of hollowness and self-importance. Specific references in a statement can be demanded of a word like civilization. First, historically it stands for the division between peoples who lived without it and those who lived differently within it. Secondly, it stands for the great achievements that made human life possible, and it suggests continuity over a long stretch of time. Thirdly, it implies the unconscious mind-forming conditions. Fourthly it gives, therefore, form and content to human life, and we recognize human life by the distinction stamped on it by the civilization in which it acquires its characteristic qualities. Fifthly, it is in a civilization that the relation between mind and the achievements of the race are possible. What we call culture is related to this relation; culture consists in the habits that the mind forms in relation to past achievements. Sixthly, within civilization there might follow one after another different life-styles. History is the history of these life-styles. The last point I wish to make is this.

Civilization as a descriptive word must be distinguished from civilization as a concept word. As a concept word, it refers to the spirit and glory of the race, so that we are obliged to do everything possible to promote continuity and protect its interests. There need not be anything mystifying about it. We must have a concept of our own civilization as mind-forming, life-sustaining, and distinction-bestowing, so that we can feel our distinction as a race and know the true interests of our civilization, which are inseparable from our life. There are two things which require careful attention: 1. a civilization is an absolute, because what makes one civilization different from another is its unique quality. 2. We must take care not to make unwarranted comparisons between different civilizations. What one possesses, being born and grown up in one's own civilization is invaluable because it is irreplaceable. The danger with the use of 'civilization' is that we tend to use it either for sentiment's sake or with one or two fixed ideas of prejudice, and therefore quarrel with anyone who differs from us. Sociological 'civilization' and 'culture' haven't any meaning for me, for sociology offers only an academic knowledge of description from which you can have only opinions to call up or set aside according to convenience, but not meaningful, active consciousness of civilization and culture as directing forces on which life depends. My civilization is inseparable from my life; it shapes, directs and sustains my life; I am so-and-so because I belong to my civilization. I am, therefore, obliged, to defend it. There is no human life unless it has history within a civilization. What my statement is intended to suggest is that there are very subtle points here which cannot be stated by must be recognized by working up one's mind to sense them. I cannot presuppose being myself without presupposing the civilization in which I am grown up. Having suggested how civilization must be conceived, I must remove the deep-rooted prejudice that if I defend my civilization, I shut my eyes to anything bad and undesirable within it. There is no connection, let me affirm, between what I mean by one's relation to one's civilization and what one is likely to find as bad and undesirable within one's society. We will go wrong in making assumptions about society and civilization, confusing one with the other until and unless by the discipline of thinking, we accustom ourselves to the forces of change inherent in the society. Civilization must be conceived of on one plane and society on another; their relation is implied in the relation posited between the individual and his civilization. We assume that in such statements as I make, words like 'individual' and 'society' have many sides of reference and relation; if, in one statement one side of relation and reference is pointed out, it means that other sides are also implied. We must always evoke in the concept of civilization the sense that it gives form and content to human life, but with society we have to posit the forces of change. They must be distinguished from one another for locating values and specifying thought about the society. We locate values in the civilization, and we specify the forces of changes in the society. In this context the one thought that helps us is that changes within society could either continue the civilization by adding the forces of its values or threaten it with destruction. And the other thought, which is indispensable, is that life can be preserved only by preserving what must be preserved and opposing what must be opposed.

Many tragic events have overtaken the Indian civilization but it has continued in its vigour, though with ups and downs. Changes, some of which are disastrous, have affected it badly, but it has marched ahead, while suffering from this internal ailment and

from that foreign invasion, and while at times facing the danger of destruction – yes, it has marched ahead, never leaving the individual and never failing to be creative in values. But this great event, the most tragic that India has ever suffered, the Western impact on India, has snapped the umbilical cord between us and our civilization.

The general educated Indian would be furious to hear of such statements and dismiss them with the idea that I am beside myself. But he might also be upset by the point of what I said, as it is unsettling to have his cherished opinions controverted as in fact, they are controverted here.

Let us see the general educated Indian, being grown up in his home, being educated in educational institutions, and living as a money-making man. First, he grows up in a home of modern conditions so that he can accommodate himself to modern conditions outside home. Then, he has to fulfill the parental ambition. His parents want him to do well in English and Science; usually he must be a doctor or engineer, but in case he fails, he has the option of commerce. The point for observation is that the parents cannot even imagine the use of the mother tongue, Sanskrit, and music for their son at any stage. According to their spirit of ambition for the son, these have no values, and they are discarded without any fuss. Remember, for the son's great grand parents, they were the supreme values. Let us make note of this change which will be our constant reference, though we shall not draw any premature conclusions; but we must refer to it as an important change in the life-style. In a sense it is a shift from the cultural habits to the conditions of meeting the demands for success. The home-life is already for him the modern life-style, which has rejected the values of the mother-tongue, Sanskrit and music. Perhaps, religion continues for some of its rituals which have acquired social importance, or else it has lost its content in such home. It is tragic that values are shut out from living. The student, growing up in such a home, will naturally lose his contact with achievements in the past and remain a stranger to them. Here a false question is posed, "Are these values necessary for modern life?" and the general educated man discards them delighting in his enlightenment which informs him that they have no use in modern life and the subjects he has studied should alone count as useful. They don't seem to be relevant to his consciousness -- I mean the representative modern consciousness. Once such a question is raised, the modern consciousness can get hold of ideals easily in its defense. We will meet these ideas soon. This modern consciousness is born in a home which is estranged from the values of this civilization and which promotes actively the selfish spirit for careerism. Its drive is this: "my son must have a successful degree and get a career and social position. Nothing else is worth its while". This consciousness rejects the values of civilization as irrelevant to living: again, its dogma is, "my son could very well live without these values. I cannot see any connection between them and living. In any Indian home of the middle and upper class there is a special force hostile to these values as they are believed to be unconnected with success in modern education. Note carefully how they are so easily dismissed as non-contributory! There is a force hostile to them because there is a one-sided concentration on success in education. This concentration must be understood in terms of a mania among Indians for success at any cost. Success is the success of gaining an important position for oneself - a better position than the neighbors could get. The home-spirit I am at pains to describe is the

upshot of the Western impact on India. The British introduced the office of administration, and the modern education to serve its interests. A position in that office, even a small one, in the British period was the dream of every Indian. The upper class tried for big positions in it, and through a position of rank it was possible for any Indian to climb into the upper class. Almost anybody's ambition centered on the office of administration. If you could perceive why the modern home-spirit came into existence in India, you will have perceived one crucial condition of hostility to the value of poetry. Actually we have to make a qualification here, namely that the earlier two generations of modern education were not hostile to the values of civilization as such, but had ideas which anticipated hostility later. In the earlier phase of the British rule the administrative office did not estrange the Indian mind from the Indian civilization, but it had planted the spirit of antagonism to them, which grew up rapidly with the expansion of commercial industrialism in this century. If the estrangement from the values of the Indian civilization is due to the British rule and to the commercial industrialism, the question we have to answer is, what sort of ideas does this Indian, who has grown up in the modern home-style, have through his education, and as a careerist, later? One of the reasons why we have not estimated properly the Western impact is that we couldn't assess the worth of our ideas and couldn't think over the way our modern spirit works. It would be the most rewarding task to know how the modern Indian gets his ideas and how he expresses himself. It is the same task as drawing out the consequences of the Western impact. We cannot know why we don't have the habits of reading poetry, listening to classical music and studying serious books unless we *change* our consciousness and know the consequences of the Western impact. The reading and understanding of poetry is intimately bound up with the values of the civilization to which we belong. Why we are indifferent to the value of poetry clearly shows what has happened to the values of Indian civilization in the recent history through its changes. Conversely, if we know what has happened to them, we will know not only that we are indifferent by also why we are indifferent towards poetry. Young students of the university must attempt to know deeper things by patience, hard work, and passionate interest in knowledge. If you do that, it is the right preparation for living, for it offers you the great discipline of knowledge that can direct and enrich life. With this discipline, life need not be spent out any longer by psychological drives, by crude interests, by vanities, and by self-deception. You have to learn, as far as poetry and its relation to life are concerned, what you couldn't learn so far, and you must learn it to change yourselves. You may not change immediately, but you must see that you cannot read poetry with the result of its being understood and felt meaningfully unless you change. Our spirit and our ideas are against such a change; I think that a struggle to be intelligent is a struggle against them. Let us get our teeth into a true knowledge of them.

Any Indian who has his modern education will betray these qualities; admiration for the West, reformistic radicalism, vain love of English, a complaining and fault-finding attitude towards India, a very poor ability in writing skills, a capacity for holding leftist and popular scientific ideas, and talking unpleasantly with unselfconscious quirks, and an obsessively high self-estimate. Not all the educated are equal in sharing these characteristics of the modern stamp. But no one can escape from them for they are the inexorable effects of the modern home-spirit and the modern education.

Well, we have to learn, as a lesson, this point about our modern education: it has nothing Indian about it. It was introduced because there was the British administrative office. It underwent only one change, and that was not an important one. It has undergone this change, mostly in expansion and in the number of subjects for study, and in standards, to meet the demands of commercial industrialism. We know it as 'Indian' because of its poor quality, but it remains without being Indian as it was at the start – I use the word 'Indian' here in the sense that this education, which we have had ever since the British rule began in the 19th century, has not only nothing to do with the values of the Indian civilization but also it has the unmistakable effect of alienating the Indian mind from these values. In my sense, this modern education is anti-Indian, and what criticism it has, exposing its defects, and what thought it has received with plans or programs for its improvement are both from the mind which cannot realize that it anti-Indian. It is interesting to note here that many efforts, ever since our independence, have been made to change our education qualitatively, but they have all been in vain. Once, some year ago, I said that to make any substantive change in our education, so much has to be done that nothing would ever be done. We are all too familiar with impressive reports without substantial point and with tinkering changes that the advance of time brings in its train. It is necessary to steer clear of the usual cant on modern education and to keep firmly to its real points of relation to our mind in our purpose to know the spirit and consciousness of the general educated Indian.

Modern education exists for degrees and success without promoting cultural habits by which alone one belongs to one's civilization. Now to turn to the example of a general educated Indian. He comes, from the home-spirit I have described, to education to get a degree for success. The best school according to his parents is the one run by a Christian Missionary because it offers better chances of success than other schools. Such a school is very hostile to the values of the Indian civilization, but it seems, ironically, to do good to this Indian of our example. But recall his home-spirit. His consciousness of images and ideas takes on a form and he is our representative modern Indian with self-opinionatedness, humble postures, and cunning tactics but without cultural habits, modesty, and human qualities. For the first time in its long history the Indian forms his consciousness without cultural habits. It is a horror, but I don't think you could feel it, and feel it you must, if you wish to understand and assimilate the power of poetry.

The horror is that he is now himself a threat to the values of the Indian civilization. Such an opinion of him seems to be unwarranted, but wait till I draw him more completely, and you will feel the horror, I am sure. Let me tell you this. We are concerned here with something monstrous and unimaginable that has happened to India. Our representative educated Indian is a veritable monster, for he is the modern Indian of the administrative office and of the commercial industrialism. The West produced him in India against its civilization. We have to study him carefully since his consciousness is shared by all educated Indians and his spirit is the ruling spirit in India. In spite of his high self-estimate, his mind is chaotic except in practical affairs, in which he likes to be clever always trying to be one up. His interest in practical affairs is actually decisive, and his preoccupations there cannot allow for any improvement of his mind. Education can do

nothing to him except offering a bad or good degree. He didn't get any learning in the mastery of his subject or the values that are essential to the expansion of mind. Neither can the modern education give them to him for it was never intended to serve such a purpose. Learning, which becomes an unconscious force for thought and perception, is ruled out for him, first by the nature of our education, and secondly, by the spirit with which he comes to it. What he gets out of this education, is a matter of degrees and plenty of ideas. Understand him in the light of his education with the spirit with which he receives it. Our education is too bad, and this Indian isn't normal in this moment of the Indian history – he is not normal in the sense that he isn't a real human being of the Indian civilization. You could see how he is connected with the Indian history as a representative of the modern Indians following the great change that India suffered through the western impact. If you can notice the magnitude of this historical change, and sense the effects it has produced, you have come a long way in grasping what I am trying to communicate. That he ought to be Indian but he is not is what I wish to communicate. I refer to a great historical change, and my contention is that unless we understand its deeper implications, we cannot regain life, I mean, the mental energy for living meaningfully and sanely. Let us be explicit about the danger here. We are affected by the great change, and a life-style, quite different from the Indian life, has been accepted; moreover, we have ideas and views that we have benefited by this great change, singing praises of it. We accept as progressive the directions in which we are now going – the directions which are due to the Western impact and which I have called 'a great change in the Indian history'.

Let there not be any room for wishful thinking. We cannot undo what has happened. By this great change - the Western impact on India – India has entered the world-history of growing industrialization. It is a change in India, even if its effects have been harmful. The present Indian consciousness of this change is both false and wrong; but a different consciousness of it is true and sane, and I believe it is life-giving. The condition in which you read your poems is hostile to any meaningful relation to them. It can be changed by changing our view of the Western impact, and we can change the condition of reading poetry by changing our consciousness. The only way to change to a different level of mind is by the power of perception and thought. To be prepared for this power is to create the right condition for learning.

We have to consider the effects of this great change; I think they are better perceived by focusing on the consciousness of our general educated Indian, whom we have been describing to get at the conditions which are hostile to the values of the Indian civilization, and to know why the modern Indian doesn't belong to his own civilization. What is all important is to master the crucial details and achieve clarity; so that what is said about him (the general educated Indian) isn't a matter of argument, or of mere opinions or of generalizations, but it is a serious matter of finding out where the Indian civilization is rejected and opposed in modern India. We will find it manageable to take up first, his spirit and will, secondly, his views, and thirdly his abilities.

There could not have been the Western impact if the West had not impressed itself on the Indian, (whom we are considering), by its domination in the world, by its industrial and

scientific advance, and by its liberal democracy. This image of the West is overwhelming to the Indian. And it is received as a great and novel experience. It has affected the very structure of his mind. So, his spirit and will are no longer Indian; the Indian character of his being is only outward. His spirit and will are the spirit and the will of the administrative office and the commercial industrialism in which the West is the best model for him. His admiration for the west is indeed great, so great that any articulation from him is grounded in it; that is to say, he cannot speak on any matter without starting from a point in his idea of the West, and advancing to another point, once again in the west. He is seeped in the idea and admiration of the west, and is psychologically conditioned by the persistent image of the West. His spirit is out and out for changing Indian along the lines of the advancement of the West, but his will is out and out for doing well for himself. I said a while ago that he isn't a normal being of the Indian civilization. The admiration for the West has told upon him. One of his major fixations, in consequence, is on the backwardness of the Indian society. To describe him linguistically, he loves the word 'society', and he cannot mention it but to attack the Indian society. To his mind, 'society' is nothing but a collective noun for social evils, and he falls to attack it all round as a Giant falls upon his breakfast. 'Society' crops up everywhere in any Indian discourse of list of complaints. Public speakers, newspaper articles, modern fiction, the cinema, the lovers, the politician, the business man and anyone gone awry is all up in arms against the Indian society. There is no problem but the social problem, according to him, in India. The West roused him, first, to the social problems; here, he is utterly convinced of the superiority of the West, prostrating himself before America, which turns him into a maniac with a blustering habit against India, and he can blind himself by large-scale ideas of liberalism for social reform. His mind is arrested in its growth, but it is emotional fervour which sets him in motion. He has become a false man, with the 'healing' image of the West, the hateful backwardness of the Indian society and the reformistic program of changes, as the levers of his thinking. However, he considers himself as progressive and superior. When he attacks the Indian society from his idea of the West, he feels superior, and puts himself into a prophet's relation to other Indians. He puts on the air of not being self-considering. But his will is, actually, to be an officer in the administrative office, or an industrialist or a leader of the people at least. If he fails, he talks like a martyr giving himself airs.

In this conversion to the spirit of commercial industrialism on the Western lines, he has gone so far that everything Indian seems outmoded to the him and that 'the need of the hour' (he repeats this phrase often) is to introduce Westernising reforms on every front. He now has the settled habit of invoking all the miseries that he finds in the Indian society, and of making the Indian poverty, illiteracy and the caste-system the only issues in public discussion. The other habit of his which is equally settled is the habit of making sentimental appeals and announcing ideals. Privately, he is a different being, an individualist, and behaves according to his will – according to his self-interests. As a public figure, he favors reformist changes for the society, eulogizing the West and its achievements, but privately he is ruthless in seeking self-interests, which are represented in his will. In talking he is vociferous, but in writing he is a cipher. We saw him growing up in his home and being educated in the Missionary school, and logically, later, in the University, without cultural habits; now it is impossible for him to see any connection

between the values of the Indian civilization and the life-style he prefers in modern India. For him the most important subjects of study in education are science, technology, and commerce, and of course, English, and the important things in living are exclusively a big job in commercial industrialism, newspapers, clubs, entertainment, luxuries and social parties, with a certain amount of wealth and social prestige. Given these, it is difficult not to be happy, and he is very satisfied. This Indian with education and with his spirit and will is openly against the values of the Indian civilization, especially when he characteristically feels that science and its importance invalidate their claims. At the most he may have sentiments to spare for them, if he is not atheist. If he is an atheist he displays a savage temper against them. But if we insist on the relevance, he blusters like a war lord, "what rubbish you speak, when millions of people in India are starving, they are values of the past, they are outmoded". He wants to give up the whole past of India and plans to introduce something – the Western modernism or commercial industrialism. His concern is to change India for his own interest, but never in the interests of life. His habits of living exclude the values which we hold to be indispensable for our living. They are such habits as he contracts, having gone through the modern home-spirit, the modern school, and the university education, and being settled in the office of commercial industrialism. He loves programs and plans, and loves more to discuss them in his English and with gestures of self-importance. But they are plans and programs worked out for changing India in terms of the ideas he has formed of the West and they do not arise from a true sense of life. Of course, he is scientific down to the root and very critical of those who are not scientific, being never tired of appealing for the scientific spirit in every body. India for him isn't a nation of its own life and civilization, but a backward country, hundreds of years behind the advanced West, which requires Westernization in place of its own life.

He might be very impressive, raising hopes in us, but we must be careful not to be misled by him or by his modernism. First however useful he might be, he is ruinous to Indian life. He has snapped all relations with the values of the Indian civilization; he is the species of commercial industrialism, following the West in subordination to it as though this modern change is inexorable. It is therefore, impossible to retain the Indian identity without destroying him. Many Britishers were, during their rule, more sympathetic to the Indian past than this modern Indian. Why should India be served by men like him and be led the way they lead it to an industrialized nation without its civilization and without its identity but with so many speaking English and following the West and being deprived of the vital life of values? Cannot an Indian be unlike him? Should the Indian civilization be sacrificed for the commercial industrialism? Are we not then in the same predicament as the West, in which there are forces which control the human beings but which the human beings cannot control? India struggled successfully to liberate from Imperialism but I wonder it can ever liberate its civilization from its own enemies!

This educated Indian to whom we have devoted so much space, is, I think, quite a capable man, but unfortunately he concerns himself with any thing only by a program. He cannot be concerned with it as a man. By his spirit and will he has killed life and possibilities for thought, in him. He is an empty fellow full of Western ideas and Western manners, but he could as well be without Western manners, if he had not been

schooled in a Missionary institution, and might well be boorish. But what distinguishes him is the number of, what are familiarly called, progressive ideas, which he holds without any probability of changing them. He has these views or opinions with a consciousness that he is not only right, but that everything will be set right if every one holds them. He is proud, assertive, and zealous, for they are, he claims, scientific, and promote social justice. That they are against the old social customs and conventions gives him the security of being in the right, and they make him self-important. You will notice that gets a kick out of abusing the Indian society, and trails his coat airing his (progressive) views everywhere. He cannot help being loud-mouthed and rhetorical. To test him do this; ask him to read the Bhagavad-Gita and listen to him. He will blurt out these assertive remarks: "it promotes the caste-system. It belongs to a society when no one thought of social justice. In fact it perpetuates social injustice. In this age of science and technology, I can only look upon it as irrelevant. At the most I may have a sentiment or two for it". He passes this judgment on its value without batting an eyelid. It seems that the substance of it, as he understands it, has no relevance either to his ideas – his progressive views – or to the practical affairs in which he is involved and that, logically speaking, he has nothing to learn from it, (this expression is common with him, when he is spiteful). That the Bhagavad-Gita should appear irrelevant and pointless, and that it could not disclose to him its power of affecting the mind deepest feelings, the marvel of its poetry, and the energy of setting reader's mind as the Mind which comprehends the universe – and that he takes it to be a book of outmoded ideas and nothing more, can only be explained by the effects of the Western impact on the Indian mind. Of course, you cannot reason with him any more than you can reason with the Indian atheists or rationalists. A matter of perception and a matter to be felt by sensibility are not matters of importance for him so much as the data of observation and progressive views. It is not surprising that he is as nauseating as a communist who dismisses the Bhagavad-Gita because it is bourgeois for him. If, by my account of this general educated Indian, it is shocking to learn that the Indian mind is now so degenerate as to deny the relevance of the values that endow the mind with its power and that give to living, strength and point, what I want you to perceive is the set of conditions brought into existence by the recent history under the Western impact – the set of conditions in which any Indian anxiously and selfishly preparing himself for a career will be most inclined to accept progressive views and to believe only in the importance of practical affairs, losing balance, becoming modern, and rejecting the values of poetry, music and philosophy. He will be firm in his belief that he is enlightened by his progressive views and by his opposition to the values. My agony is that the Indian I am describing is going along a route in which his mind is denied the experience of the great Indian achievements, which would make his mind perceptive and enrich his sensibility for access to powerful feelings and he is estranged from the Indian past, and becomes something less than a man of civilization with his education, his English, and his gumption in practical affairs and with his ideas against the Indian society, and with admiration for the West, - yes, with all that, he becomes something less than a man of his civilization because he has no real grounding in his language, no cultural habits, and no power of mind, and he fails in identifying himself.

This Indian as a careerist of the administrative office in commercial industrialism concentrates on his success, and it is both natural and inevitable for him to isolate himself

from human relations and give weight to his impulses and drives, looking for opportunities for satisfying them. Such a phenomenon we call individualism; which in its extreme development – which hasn't yet taken place in India – reaches one kind of insanity or other. If all of us are individualists, the consequence is that our very life is at the mercy of the forces which control us but which we cannot control – it is this predicament that we have landed ourselves on account of the Western impact, whatever claims we make, by argument or otherwise, to progress. We leave off this subject, and now turn to individualism. The Indian as a careerist and as an individualist gives more weight to his impulses and drives than, I say, to human relations, even if it is true that he expresses much concern for others. We have seen that he has no cultural habits; so with his impulses and drives, living for him is almost meeting his own psychological demands. In a way, he has been abstracted from human relations and he acts to satisfy his impulses and drives. The only checks on his impulses and drives are his social habits without which he cannot survive. What happens is that he can be irresponsible but he can also pretend to be responsible. Such a condition has its disastrous effect on communication. In his expressions meant for the public, he will try to appear sincere and impressive, but he will be hollow, although one cannot easily see through him. That is to say, if he has progressive views or ideas, he may believe in them, but there are other conditions of his belief which render him irresponsible. A life-style in which cultural habits are fostered is one in which more weight is given to human relations than to one's impulses and drives. But living by satisfying one's impulses and drives to which far more weight is given than to human relations, and that too, by caring for one's position in social relations – this living is the modern life-style which does not even recognize values as values but dismisses them as irrelevant or as the concern of old, orthodox people. This Indian lives today with a mind which has lost contact with the vital principles of living embodied in the form of the Indian life, which is the work of centuries of the Indian civilization. New things have swept him off his feet, and what makes him so sure of them is his individualism, which he feels as a pleasant release from the restraints of the other life-style in which human relations are held most important. I will now give a fair sample of his progressive views or ideas, more or less in his own language, as if he were talking to us.

1. Religion is a personal affair.
2. Superstitions have made the people gullible – they must be removed.
3. The priests exploit the people – they are responsible for our sacred books.
4. There should not be any differences or divisions among people. I believe in the equality of the people.
5. Caste-system is the curse of the Indian society.
6. The Indian society is most backward and rotten.
7. What is culture when millions are starving?

8. I believe in the Western democracy.
 9. I believe in the dignity of labour.
 10. Education is the gateway to progress, and it is a panacea for all our social evils.
 11. What is the use of Sanskrit? It is a dead language.
 12. What is this classical music? Who wants it? We want something kicking and pleasant. After all music is not an important factor in life. Cinema songs are good music for us. I like Western pop music; it is so thrilling.
 13. There is no need to learn one's mother tongue, because we speak it at home.
 14. But for English, we would never have progressed. English is a beautiful language. It is a window on the world. How can you get a job in other states if you don't learn English? The latest books are written in it. We have to keep English for ever. Some of our Indians can write beautiful English, for instance.....
 15. I believe in the scientific knowledge, scientific ideas, scientific spirit and scientific methods; which can remove our social evils and superstitions.
 16. Only science, technology and commerce, and of course, English are the subjects we should study. What is the earthly use of other subjects like Literature, for example!
 17. I believe in the equality between men and women. For centuries women have been exploited by men.
 18. I believe in individual liberty and I hate totalitarianism.
 19. I believe that the West is superior to India. We must adopt everything American, even in our homes.
 20. India is very backward, hundreds of years behind the West. Indians have no civic sense; they spit everywhere.
 21. America is the real heaven on earth today.
- “I believe that holding these progressive views I am an enlightened man, and that I am superior, knowing all the answers” – that is the self-estimated of this Indian. The only great thing about him is his crude egotism.

Actually holding these ideas one can be very silly and nasty. A different set of ideas wouldn't have a different effect on the mind. As ideas without content they are all the same. The terrible effect of these ideas on the mind is to be seen in its characteristic

inability to go deep into any question, to feel for the values of civilization, to know history as the mind's content of self-knowledge, and to make statements thoughtfully. This Indian exposes himself to ridicule for these ideas have no content and cannot bear scrutiny. Even if some of them appear to have some point, they are invalid, being held by him. He cannot be precise, relevant and thought-catching in his discourse, for his mind is chaotic by its ideas. If he is successful in practical affairs, he is like a mad man trained to be successful with his whole energy concentrated on his own interests. His level of understanding is too poor for him to hold any important idea. Some of them he proudly calls Western ideas, making himself more important. By holding these ideas and by believing that he is enlightened in holding them, he can never be disciplined and whatever he reads, he translates it into such ideas. Not being disciplined, and never feeling the power of true learning, he imagines that he has a wide knowledge, because he has so many ideas. If you confront him with intelligence, he notices secretly that he cannot carry his point, and he will use any strategy to save face; for instance, he may say "We differ here", or "That is your point of view". At times, he may quarrel or bluster or withdraw. Often he makes insinuations against you behind your back. If he thinks that he has to yield a point to you, he will not be ashamed of using this mean trick of retorting with a show of confidence; "That is what I am saying to you, well, you don't understand me. He shows irritation at your failing to understand him! If he had ever the practice of stating an argument when he wanted to say something about a matter, he would have learnt about the poverty of his ideas. Earlier I pointed out that he can talk his head off but cannot put two sentences together. When someone says that Western ideas have influenced modern Indians, he wouldn't mean what I mean, but he would be like this Indian under consideration. No doubt, they are influenced by Western ideas, but they are all influenced like this Indian, who admires the West because of a false relation to it. It is never possible for him to grasp any of the best artistic achievements of the West for the reason that a discipline for understanding cannot be presupposed in him.

In his position which I have attempted to make clear to you, he can praise or condemn something or some one in a partisan spirit, but he can never make intelligent discriminations and qualifications. He has no perception to state, so he cannot make a subtle point. Notice that in the list of ideas he is unable to express himself on the question of civilization, and he treats culture with animus as a high-brow affair. Obviously, he is the democratic citizen of India who can read and understand newspapers but cannot rise to a richer concept of civilization. He is guilty of having no conceptual standards for comprehending terms like 'civilization', 'culture', 'education', and so on. And remember, there is no higher level of understanding and thinking than that at which his mind operates. At this level, he and other Indians feel that they are faring well, but confronted by the work of superior understanding and thinking from the West, they would grudgingly accept that they are not up to the mark and complain of India and other Indians, to evade the issue. They cannot see that the issue involved here is very crucial; they go on talking in slogans, accusations, large-scale ideas, top-level assertions, appealing sentiments and ideals, failing to see that the language of their communication excludes perception and thought. Well, the truth is that they communicate in a very poor language without discipline for perception and thought, but they are so self-confident and convinced in the rightness of their ideas, ideals, and plans for progress, so resistant,

therefore, to the appeal of perception and thought, they quarrel in any argument and avoid arguing while blaming their opponents self-righteously. You can never make them see that their position which they have taken after the Western impact and its effects is anything but right in the interests of the Indian mind and life. Their position, in which they are sure of their ideas being unquestionable, is such that they would rather see the Indian civilization ruined than their interests being discussed and threatened by intelligence, and they would stake their all on commercial industrialism, admiring and following the West but with animus against the Indian past, and with aversion to the mother tongue, Sanskrit and classical music – their position is the greatest force in history, of a threat to India. I am driving at this point; in their admiration of the West, in their animus against India, in their belief that their progressive views are right, they are false, and utterly blind to the real consequences of the Western impact, and they cannot know them unless it dawns on them that the consequences are there in what has happened to them – in their spirit, in their will, in their progressive views, in their poverty of thought, and in the absence of responsibility in them towards the values of the Indian civilization. They operate only, and that is the whole point, at the level of the administrative off in commercial industrialism.

The general educated Indian will be misunderstood or my account of him will be, if I cannot show what his abilities are. If his abilities had been excellent, we would have been proud of him rather than have reason to discuss him at length. A true understanding of him is the true understanding of our modern history – that is my conviction, which prompted me to consider him with so much attention. To know his abilities, we begin with the possibilities for acquiring them. First, our education has no possibility for acquiring true learning; it is essentially degree-oriented education. The utmost he could achieve in it is the best rank, and he could cash it, of course. And by his will and spirit the instinct for learning is still-born in him. Our education is so crude and blunting that he cannot imagine anything important beyond a degree for obtaining which he would work selfishly. He would make no further efforts voluntarily, after his degree, to acquire a standing in his field with abilities to think. Although English, unless we overcome many limitations in mastering it, is a severe restraint placed on learning a subject, he doesn't like to acknowledge it for fear of exposing his poor command of it. He has an education, which is never intended to refine his mind and to make a man of him. Here, we have to use a word, which isn't familiar to you, for him. Hereafter he shall be known as a philistine: the Indian education is a second hand Western machine in India to produce philistines; it has been doing its job with diametrical progress, and without a break. The productivity of our education is phenomenal, like population growth. There is an all round satisfaction about our education and for a stimulant, there has been lot of tickling self-important criticism directed against it, well, from whom do you think? Why, of course, from the philistines it has produced. Learning is impossible for the Indian with education, thinking and feeling equally so. He can only be a brilliant or mediocre careerist, no matter what subject he chooses, and what profession he takes up. There are no conditions suitable for him to grow up into a man with a powerful mind and live passionately as a real man; and distinguish himself in his feeling, thinking, perceiving and acting as a human being belonging to the great civilization of India. He is the philistine produced by the second-hand Western machine, and he could only be a great

boss in the administrative office in the commercial industrialism. In this position, the most important and inalienable character of his by which we often recognize him is his being ideological and snooty, even as he might behave as a polished man, speaking English falsely and impressively. He has reached the summit of his career with a consciousness, the character of which we have described, coming to an end in the ideology of the commercial industrialism and in the self-importance of his position. No change is possible for him, except that he might become an admirer of J.Krishnamoorthy or a worshipper of a Saibaba, in his middle age. Otherwise, he assumes the avatar of Americanism wholly, and in this role, he chooses only one life-style, which is a threat to the values of the Indian civilization. By drawing out the educated Indian's consciousness of his age, I have tried to demonstrate the hostile conditions to poetry. That the educated Indian is a philistine favouring what he thinks the West stands for and opposing India, because he thinks it is backward, and that he is essentially a self-blind careerist, carried away by his own ideas with very crude formulations against the values of the Indian civilization, informed by his own opinions about the west than by its best achievements, and emotionally transformed into an individualist and into a nervous man of psychological drives without the sensibility of cultural habits for a fuller and meaningful life, exposes the hollowness of his vaunted progressive views, and hold up his so-called enlightenment to mockery and laughs to scorn his ridiculous high self-estimate.
