

WHAT HAPPENS IN THE CLASSROOM *

There are many English teachers in our universities who, without understanding a poem, can talk about it at length on the basis of knowing some opinions or of cooking up extravagant ideas about it.¹ Or they will lecture on it with the aid of what they seem to know of it, thinking it related to the poem. In explaining a poem if one fails to know what it is about, one still makes comments knowingly on it. To comment on a poem with borrowed phrases or to talk on idealism versus materialism, is a sure way, for the teacher in India, of impressing his claim to knowledge. But in the class room, a teacher is usually liable to any kind of fit. Suppose he is questioned by a student, he will either be offended or irritated because he does not know what to say in answer, though he is unaware of it, and because a question puts him off as he expects not to be treated with such an indignity. The teacher knows the subject too little to be at ease in facing questions from students or he 'knows' it superficially so that he feels himself to be put through his paces when someone gets up and asks him a question.

Unusually, the Indian teacher dislikes questions from students. He is so much opposed to them that the student is warned against the very attempt to put questions. A question works on the teacher's nerves. But he has a technique to silence the student who dare ask questions. He tries on the student the mean trick of giving a list of books, and asking him to read them so as to understand his point, or snubs him by sarcastic remarks. This authoritarian barbarism is more common nasty men who seize positions by corrupt means. Or, commonly, it is a matter of behavior, the teacher is rarely honest admitting his own limitations; a question therefore makes him revengeful in his dealings with the students. His behavior is such as shows a mind incapable of sympathy or even reflection of a common sort.

What the Indian teacher of the older generation makes of an English poem is to know it by rote at first, if it is a small one, and to go into raptures citing it or to dwell upon its apparent beauties trying to intoxicate the students. Moreover, he sees some brand of Indian spiritualism in it. If he is young, he shows off his knowledge of critical opinions about it, or tries to engage the students by gossip. An Indian teacher is shamefaced before a poem in English, being obliged to teach it but not knowing it.

A poem can only be truly understood by a mind which is preoccupied with certain experiences to which we have no access because of modern education and its

* The whole book deals with M. A. degree classes only and with research work

¹ I could have given any number of illustrations, but in this chapter, I shall not; what is done here is the unveiling of conditions, with inferences. You will find illustration in the chapter on research. Here, it is a Question of getting to know how a teacher fails in what he is expected to do-to teach well the texts in the syllabus to the students. Knowing his failure in a few details is not what is attempted here, but knowing his total failure with the conceptual implications of it. We must go as far as the topic allows without scruples about causing offence.

understanding depends entirely upon the kind of experiences which engage the mind. Nothing can be more true than Yeats' remark that a poem can be grasped only by a mind with a rich memory of the past. But under the Western impact, the teacher's mind is as a rule emptied of the memory of the past.

You will find anywhere in our universities a type of English teacher who cannot do anything except praise, in too bad a language for lack of command over the subject, every author he teaches, and, at the same time thinks happily that except himself there is none who can teach English Literature so well. There is an unbearable ignorance in him on the side of literature, and insufferable hypocrisy on the side of behavior. He is the teacher for whom Somerset Maugham's short stories and J.B. Priestley's plays are 'great literature', and great literature is not, certainly, more valuable for him. The most convenient and the habitual way for the teacher in dealing with a prose text is to praise it and its author in common 'idealistic' words or in phrases with 'spiritual' inflexions; which habit disables him from thinking to say anything worthwhile. First, he cannot fix the boundaries of the experience of the text on hand and secondly its nature eludes him because his command of the language, his mastery of literature itself, is too poor, or, more truly, there are no conventions established in our education in which he could have grasped the minutiae of the total, complex experience of the text. Confronted with the class, the teacher resorts to notes-dictation, and if called upon to explain the text, he resorts to subterfuges.

In a discussion in the classroom -- such a thing is rare, however -- the standard of questioning is very low for two reasons: one does not know what questions to ask, and one is afraid of being pointed at if one asks them at all. The first reason is far more common. But we find some one or other put ridiculous questions from naive self-importance, or for drawing attention to himself. When, if at all, a real question is asked, the teacher is so disturbed that he defends himself by the superior stance of petty ill-temper, or snubbing.

As I watch the students of English Literature in the classroom, I find that if the teacher is fluent, saying something with quotations, they are easily impressed by him, and feel that they have learnt something, when, of course, they have not learnt anything at all. They have their own egotism in their turn; they imagine they know so much, when there is no basis for it. For the students, the teacher must be noisy, throwing out big words, the reputed names of critics and authors, and theories. The student likes always to be confused impressively by the teacher. When an Indian teacher is liked or praised by his students, I am sure that he is liked for his other abilities than that of teaching or that he is liked for his alleged excellent teaching or scholarship. I know that the students are usually deceived. But for this education many teachers, who enjoy false reputation, will hardly be chosen for teaching. On account of the difficulties to master English and of its prestige among us, there is a lot of trafficking in the teaching of English Literature. Let me give an example. If a teacher praises J. B. Priestley as a dramatist it is not because he knows other things essential for a value-judgment, but because he has only a knowledge of a play or two of the author, and wants to show off.

What is usual with many teachers is that they know some grammar, and they can see what is wrong with the grammar of a sentence but they cannot write a sentence. Here is the trick. Because they know some grammar and can detect mistakes, they think they know English, claiming merit for such a feat. It is likely that a beggarly pride might set in, preventing them from being honest about their own command of English. Such teachers are more anxious to be impressive than to learn and teach.

No English teacher in India thinks that he is a teacher in a foreign language. Usually, he pretends to be like a British teacher in English. However, his inability breaks forth when he has to talk on an author; first he is not capable of being comprehensive; secondly, he will always speak only on one or two books of an author (look at the papers read at a conference); thirdly, he betrays a manner of imitative gestures, of borrowed ideas and expressions. So, teachers who are judged to be good have rarely been able to form a sentence according to thought, and to argue with consistency. The habit of being dishonest cannot be concealed, when the teacher quotes from dozens of critics in one paper and tries to string them with clever comments from a plausible point of view (a 'point of view' is often asserted by the Indian teacher as it is either mistaken for an opinion or as it serves as justification for what one cannot say) by a show of argument. If you look into what a university teacher says in a paper read at a seminar, you can never believe that he will be so ignorant, so foolishly imitative or so naively ludicrous, and so unself-consciously pretentious. He does not even acquire good skills, let alone do some thinking and express himself well. There are very few university teachers of English in India who deserve a higher teaching job than that of a secondary school teacher, since they all acquired job-qualifications and not ability qualifications (some of them got their phony doctorates in their forties or fifties just for the sake of promotion).

The Indian teacher in English, in order to be profound or incomprehensible for the sake of being mistaken to be profound, talks concerning the text of any book he teaches either in terms of superficial theories or in terms of theories which he understands superficially without having a good knowledge of the text, for if he knows the text he would talk (naturally) otherwise². He never makes serious attempts to improve his teaching; if he is a fashionable and perverse teacher, he may at the most take some pains to know about the text and the author rather than the text itself. He does not actually want to know the text,

² Here an important misunderstanding must be cleared up. When I began teaching fifteen years ago, I learnt about a university lecturer in his fifties who commanded respect for his grave manner and for being the only man in the 'department who can do the text well. I found that his reputation for dealing with the text rested on his confining to it and refusing to go outside it. No one saw through his false exposition of the text because no one asked what he did with the text and whether he understood it at all. And also if one mentions theories and critics in great number one is considered to be informative, without bothering to question whether the mere mention of theories and critics can be information. The criteria for information about the text are consistency, and usefulness, and the details offered must be the outcome of hard labor. I know no Indian teacher who satisfies these criteria when he is said to be informative.

but he wants to talk about it if possible impressively, and anything that lends itself to the intended effect is grist to his mill. The editor's introduction to a literary work has far more impact on the Indian teacher than the work itself, especially if it is the introduction by a Victorian editor. I am sure of one thing, you can never make him stop to think. What is shocking is that he asserts as if he thought about what he does. The bad teacher disguises himself as a good teacher by many pretences, affectations, and cheap evocations.

What we do, for instance, when we teach a poem, is to go to 'ideas' about it since we cannot grasp what the poem is about, and lecture on them as scholarly as we can pretend to be; for instance, Vedantic ideas in Walt Whitman are always at hand for any teacher.

What does a poem of Whitman say does not concern the teacher so much as 'ideas' of it. If the ideas the teacher attributes to the poem are really related to it, there is no danger, but the truth is that they are not at all relevant. There is hardly anywhere a resolute attempt among teachers, not to speak of students, to see what the words say to them when they read a poem or a novel. The teacher refers to, then, everything in terms of praise or of condemnation in the classroom. If a distinction is attempted it is once again for praise or condemnation. The plight of those who listen to such a teacher and admire him as a scholar is unimaginable. There is neither honesty nor grace in the Indian teacher.

To state the result of thought is quite different from asserting our opinion or expressing an idea; the first must be distinguished from the second just as the truth of what one actually knows must be distinguished from what one imagines to know. If the student does not follow the teacher and if the teacher does not know what he is doing in the classroom, it is mainly because of the confusion between the two, the idea, the opinion, and gossip on the one hand and the thoughtful experience of the text on the other. Again, because of this confusion, as regards English Literature, every one of us is handicapped for grasping the text of a classic we teach, in relation to our personal life. We do make all sorts of mistakes in teaching but disown them or 'credulously' offer make-believe excuses for them feeling happy that we are not exposed, which kind of dishonesty is true of an of us as it is a national taint in the present period.

I find that what an Indian research scholar is apt to do, or actually does, is to collect 'material' to which bibliography is fixed, and present it in a form of 'argument' without thought or logic by linking up citations drawn indiscriminately from countless authors, and pass it off as an original paper or, if bigger in volume as a scholarly treatise. In such an attempt there is something puerile and shameful, and it takes generations to be rid of the habits so formed!

Likewise, the habit of the Indian teacher is to read a book, not at all thoroughly, and keep a few 'points' in mind (right or wrong, more wrong than right) and lecture upon them to the students indefinitely, a capacity for which he is admired; it would have been something of value 'if the teacher had set forth the few points in his own words in an order, even if he had got them wrong or borrowed them from some critic, but this, writing on paper, you can never get him to do; he must harangue in an unfettered manner, unchecked by his own conscience or by a sense of injury inflicted upon the students. The thing is that he is disgustingly incapable of communicating through the written word. Ask him to speak, he will speak volumes. Ask him to put down on paper what he speaks, he

won't, because, he cannot. He will explain the text word by word -- that, is the standard Indian habit-but will not sit down to write anything of his own about the importance of it. What is comical and pitiable is that he claims big merit for his extempore lecturing and thinks very poorly of those who prepare for the class by writing their lecture³. What is obvious is that what he learns to say in the classroom is not worth saying in writing, even if it can be worked into some written form. This kind of teaching has been going on for several generations since the beginning of the modern education. As for the student, he never learns anything in the classroom or outside it but goes to some notes written by one of these incompetent teachers, which stands him in good stead in the examinations.

The Indian teacher in English literature will have no ability for value-judging an author, except that of praising him indiscriminately to the students in the classroom. When it comes to saying something about a passage in the lesson, he will want in a sense of its relative worth. A passage is good or bad according to his grammatical sense of it if he is of the old generation; knowledge of grammar being a valuable Indian possession, he tends to judge everyone by its light. As for the teacher of the present generation, who gives himself airs, he will dance around a passage, mentioning theories and critics and using psychological phrases and literary jargon, and say finally that it is good or bad according to his mood. If he is a dull teacher of the present generation, he will be quiet, and straightaway take up the subject by solemn dictation of notes lifted from some critics. The students, at times, imagine the last one to be the best teacher. But customarily the students yield to the charm of bad English fluently (speedily) spoken or to the mesmerism of either critics' names or of theories bandied about.

One is tired of these teachers who have nothing to say but say something as if they are original by displaying sham scholarship or tricks or witticisms or clever and displaying spurious analysis⁴, or mock-serious statements. They wear out one's patience by promise at the outset and by failure later. Such is the case with academic teachers who have introduced so many falsities in literal y discussion that a young student cannot go fresh to the study of literature with cultural sensibility, Those who care for literature will have to care for what is said about it but today the English teacher relies too much upon false academic and journalistic literary criticism and fashionable vocabulary for his success.

³ Equally, the outcome of those who do some preparation is nothing else but notes of borrowings; so, both types are hopeless, of course.

⁴ 'Analytical approach'. 'critical analysis' and 'scientific analysis' have so great a fascination for us that we assert immodestly we are analyzing the work on hand and call it critical or scientific, and accuse others of being unable to do like us, This is a native gambit very common to the university teachers. Now, they are bent on seeing 'quest for identity' and 'personal exploration' in every novel, poem and drama. 'Structural' 'texture' 'archetypal', 'mythmaking' and such like words have come into their own in our departments. Often a crude, moffusil buffoon of a teacher repeats 'innate, critical faculty' untiringly.

With teachers such as these, who dominate the English departments in our universities, the possibility for the student experiencing the significance of a literary text is absolutely limited, unless he is a rare student who works on his own, independent of his teachers. Muddledom, sheer mockery of literary criticism, and cant on modern authors reign supreme in our faculties of English Literature, and the result is favorable to the Head of the Department, because the student learns to praise any author, and any critic, and also his Head. No one has a reason to change this tradition!

Where, in literature, it is essential for a true judgment that the teacher should render the experience of the given work, of all its minute details in their subtle emphases and nuances, his previous habits and self-interests prevent him from holding, in the first place, in vivid memory the totality of such experience. Then, unable to make an effort to possess such experience, he, once again because of the previous habits and interests, either makes amiss generalizations from a partial experience or accepts such generalizations made by others as suit him. We always forget the fact that we do not remember enough, and that we are not informed by all the important points of the text before we judge it.

If a lecturer in English is successful, it is because he is a juggler with words, or a punster in a cheap sort of way, or a quotation-monger, or worse still, a theory-monger⁵. He is successful with the students, but like many, though successful, he has done nothing successful which gets any notice outside his own students. Most of his students imagine themselves to be well-versed in English, already with a touch of egotism. The usual habit with them is to regard that English as good which they hear from someone who can appeal to them in a rhetorical mode though saying nothing to the point, or from someone who can baffle them by highfalutin language or by high-sounding theories. But, often, there is a type of student in M.A. degree class, who will judge his teacher by testing him whether he knows a word like 'zeitgeist', which he has learnt recently or whether he can talk about theories about which he thinks he can.

In the present age, every subject has its own cant and the new subjects have a great deal more of it and most people learn the cant part of it first when they learn, but do not go deeper into it. There is enough of unimportant work in any subject to madden one who pursues it intelligently. Those who cannot pursue it intelligently are apt to mistake the cant for the true knowledge of the subject. This is what happened to my generation, whereas the previous generation learnt the text-book knowledge of the subject, which it made its own for the sake of pedantry and rhetoric. We have now only a false relation to the subject, while their relation to it was sterile.

⁵ One must not ignore the Indian jokes. Once I visited a Catholic women's college, when I was shown round by a nun, with another Professor. I paid a compliment, by saying to her "I take my hat off to your organization". But soon I heard the other Professor remarking that he had no hat to take off. Apart from the poor quality of our mind, our lack of freedom with English reduces us to plebeianism as we replace our mother tongue by it.

It is very interesting to note that when teachers talk day in and day out about low standards, blaming students, either out of self-importance, or self-justification, there has been no protest by students against the teachers, when nearly all of them are undesirable in teaching. If you can but pick upon a couple of Professors who are not undesirable I should believe against my will that this education is worth something: In order to know the teacher in English we must know our historical relation to the English language. We have a poor knowledge of it, using it in place of our mother tongue, thinking it indispensable, and imagining ourselves to be masters of it, and we are all affected by its prestige among us.

We see often a kind of teacher, who has a ridiculously high estimate of himself and of someone else he admires, and a very low estimate of all others in the profession. He is a sort of provincial curmudgeon, usually keeping to himself, but being of little help to anyone. He will be punctual, regular, and methodical, which turns him into an object of fear or contempt. Nothing more or nothing less than a feeling-less talk on literature with citations and arguments of academic pedantry can be scholarly for this hidebound teacher.

I have often heard that some teachers of English are well known as being scholars and I must own that I have met a few of them who attained fame. I am sorry for those who regard them as scholars because when I ask them why they regard these teachers as such, invariably the answer is that they are well-read, versatile, and fluent, but the truth is quite different, in that they only talk endlessly about theories or authors or their ideas and they quote profusely from many critics. One here forgets that one can be more a fool than a scholar for talking or quoting. One is never a scholar for what one claims to know or for what one is alleged to know, but for what one does in writing by virtue of one's true scholarship. Quoting or referring to critics has become a habit of every worthless teacher because to quote often is not only rewarding with the students but also much easier than to understand the text and quote relevantly. I am yet to see a teacher who has read an important book from beginning to end thoroughly and who has made any real sense of it. The teacher, no doubt, reads the prescribed text for the class work only, and yet fails to have a personal and thoughtful experience of it. It is for this reason that he resorts to 'fluent speech', common-place ideas, and irrelevant jokes, which go against the very grain of real teaching. Exposition of the text is what frightens the teacher and what else can he do except give notes of others' opinions⁶, or explain a few things which are obvious, or mystify the text by reference to spiritualism or transcendentalism and mysticism. No teacher is trained to attend closely to the words, and now if anyone attends closely to the words without training, he will be distressed at his own incapacity for understanding the text, but this happens only with a few rare, conscientious teachers. The student does not attend closely to the text either, which, in fact, saves the teacher from exposure. It is surprisingly common for any teacher to talk about what he knows from some book, often an unimportant one, and dictate passages from it as his own notes. Sometimes he is admired for an act of such labor, but, at times, he is discovered. If he is a Professor, in

⁶ Notes on 'Spiritual Drift in Frost' and on 'Mysticism in Emily Dickinson' etc. American Literature is now the crown-jewel of every Indian Professor in English.

spite of the discovery, the students have to flatter him. This cannot be avoided; since one is appointed a Professor without being tested for one's abilities and since, after the appointment, one is too secure, however graceless and unfit one is. There are many teachers now who never read anything important or who are incapable of reading, having reached a mature stage, but go on piffing for the rest of their time about the few books they are supposed to teach, and comfort themselves with the illusion that they cannot be worse than any teacher reputed to be good. If one with intelligence overhears what a teacher does in the classroom of English Literature, one cannot help contending that the teacher's performance is a matter for examination in the laboratory of pathology.

There is really a pathetic side to the teacher's 'scholarship'; if we look into the link-up of the various quotations in his notes or talk, we see how utterly groundless his mind, as regards the subject, is!

Our poor and vulgarizing education gets in the way of our understanding literary classics. Those teachers who edit them with notes-the Indian hogwash - are as bad as those who teach them in the classroom. A teacher does busy himself getting up some opinions and passages from critics regarding the standard works, and thinks of it as an achievement. And, of course, he is a scholar of the first water in India! But working on literary classics with real application of the mind because there is zest for the experience of life is too rare indeed. This work is the most difficult and it goes against our spirit. It is in our spirit too to do all sorts of inessential work in which there is no true labor and pretend to have done this or that difficult task. How often I hear someone's hard work being praised or I hear one talking about the hard work one has done, when 'hard work' means inessential work!

When a classic, in our syllabus, is taught by our ill-trained teachers, its power of awakening us, its power of stimulus, goes unnoticed and unfelt by our students since they themselves make some notes on it "from worthless guides for the examinations, and they cannot throwaway the trend under which they court opinions, opinions which become fixed for lack of mental agility and self-criticism. It never occurs to us that a classic must be taught against false trends, and it must be taught to remove the student's inabilities.

It is very common for a teacher, particularly a young one, to complain that his students cannot follow him as though on his part there is nothing blamable. True, there are many things which the students cannot grasp. But a teacher has no right either to say such things as are incomprehensible to them or to complain of students' inability. On the contrary, what the teacher does in the classroom is not something above the student's head but something shameful. First of all, he does not understand the text himself properly, and so fails to give a good exposition of it to the students. To save his face, he puts on pompously ridiculous affectations in the manner of a buffoon, and also he talks endlessly about everything under the sun, including his wife. And yet he complains of the students' inability to understand him. It pained me to notice that two of my former students, now teachers, who got interested in German Philosophy, talked about it to their students without understanding a word of it when they lectured on English Literature, and this brought down ridicule upon them, though they still think they are doing fine in throwing out high-sounding phrases of German metaphysics. And they complain of students' inability to follow them, being irritated by their indifference. In my experience,

I find that if a teacher says anything against his students, he is, as a rule, false. Given our shabby education, the teacher in English can never have a true relation to his subject just as the students, in their turn, have false estimates of their teachers, and of their knowledge of the subject. The students, of course, know some bad teachers instinctively, but at the same time, they are taken in by some other different kind of bad teachers, who are successfully pretentious or impressively talkative.

Only by active application of the mind can a work be mastered and the teacher know the implications of the text on all sides. But, the case is otherwise with the young teacher who falls into the trap of looking at the text and talking about it from opinions which he gathers from unimportant critics out of laziness or thoughtlessness. There must be a sound relation between the teacher and the text through hard work and studious application. First, let him know the text well and give an account of it. It is the standard of good exposition of a work. It is inevitable that a teacher, knowing his limitations, though he does not admit them, takes devious ways of dealing with the text with the aid of critics' opinions. Once the teacher knows the job of representing the text accurately, it will not be difficult for him to say something engaging and also he will be able to see the point of any criticism of the text he reads.

The danger with the teaching of English Literature in India is that the teacher talks about a dozen things quite off the point in the classroom and that he is accepted, on account of this red herring, either as a scholar or as a pleasant fool, depending upon how he does it; the danger with its learning is that the student here never knows enough but forms habits which prove very harmful later to his mind, and that he can impress the teacher by any trick of which the teacher himself is incapable. Each one being dishonest, the teacher and the student never meet for the purpose of genuine communication. In teaching or learning we do not get to the bottom of the subject but we float amidst opinions and impressions, and as such we become unbalanced in behavior in any confrontation. We notice that there are times when teachers lose their head and behave like mad dogs, being peeved over their ill-reputation with the students, and there are times when students are feline or sarcastic in their remarks in order to annoy the teacher or to get a rise out of him. Not unusually a nasty self-willed student talks ill of his teachers to put himself before them; he is the type of the cocky rooster.

When some teacher says that he has given plenty of material to his students or when some student says that he has collected plenty of material, it must be understood that what is given or collected is pointless, dissociated excerpts from critics or from a book on the History of English Literature. The student is likely to mistake such a teacher for a scholar for his giving such material and the teacher regards the student as brilliant for his collecting it. When the students talk of their teachers as being 'good', 'useful', 'informative but not original', and 'original but not useful for examination answers', these expressions refer only to the wrong impressions they have of their teachers; so also when teachers single out 'brilliant' students.

Once you question what the teacher does and what the student learns, the present English Departments have no right to exist in India. The Professor does not know the subject well

but thinks he is above everyone in the profession, and by virtue of his authority he acts on prejudice or caprice without coming under fire. It is impossible for him to behave without the display of uncurbed egotism and exhibitionism, which is ironical when we remember that he was before cowardly and slavish, and even now, he is so to the authorities above him. His subordinates flatter him knowing him to be a fool, and flatter themselves to be greater scholars than he is: all of them are oriented towards one another politically, or communally, or by professional jealousy. As of the students, a great many of them accept the pretentious claims of the Professor, and also of some other members of the department, and think very high of their own knowledge. They do all sorts of things in the interests of their career or they are up to any trick, adopting fashions in order to show off. Occasionally, a provincial go-getter who could manage to procure a Ph. D. in his late forties gets the Professorship through local influence, or equally, it is possible for an urban showman to have it. Then, the department will be indescribably bad in all its workings. If not these two, we will get a mediocre Professor, far less pretentious and not less detestable as a man, but equally useless for teaching the subject.

Year after year students of M. A. degree English are fed on their Professor's notes drawn from fifth-rate editions or from excerpts chosen arbitrarily from unimportant American or British pot-boilers. They take their M. A. degree with the impression that Emily Dickinson's poems are as good as Shelley's or Frost is as great as Wordsworth since he too wrote on Nature, or far worse and comical. Their Professor is as important a critic as Matthew Arnold since he has a Ph.D.⁷ Till the student distinguishes the statement of experience which has thought in it from the statement which is not of thoughtful experience, he cannot be said to have had education, as he is liable to become a prey to substitutes, that is to say to superficial ideas, impressions and sentiments.

Most university teachers of English do not understand the whole of the text they teach to the post-graduate students and they make up for it by affecting to know it much better than anyone else or by making insinuating remarks about others, and arrogating to themselves great merit; more usually they take to infantile boasting for making believe that they are wonderful. There is another device, which has become an inborn habit with the teacher, that when the communication breaks down in the classroom, he will resort to the dictation of notes. You really cannot get away from the notes-dictating demons in South India;⁸ such a breakdown is avoided by those who can always talk on any topic but say little because they do not touch the text: and if at all they do, they give some magical explanations of it. There are some lucky teachers, who, without understanding the text,

⁷ No one will believe that a final year student of M.A. degree in Madras Christian College, who is now an English teacher, once held as an important opinion that Dr. Mullik, who publishes hogwash, was greater than Arnold on the score of his possessing a Ph. D. degree.

⁸ In saying all this I may be convicted of being one-sided and vicious, but does it occur to you that there is no Professor in South India who published his lectures which are readable. From what I know in North India regarding this topic, I see there prevails primeval anarchy in the teaching of English Literature there.

do succeed very well in giving the impression that they understand it, by using literary jargon about it and its author, and also by telling the students that one cannot easily make sense of the text, with the implication that their understanding of it is the result of hard labor.

There are some others who do understand the surface sense of the text, when they attempt to; and they do not know what to say about it. But they are anxious to say something original and, in order to do so, they make funny variations on what they quote from the critics, or they disagree self-importantly with this critic or that, while their agreement or disagreement amounts only to a stunning illogicality. A low sort of splurge saves many teachers in the face of students, and egotism leads them to imagine that they are also critics, when they justify themselves as critics only by dishonest tricks. Almost every teacher knows what I am saying, and is guilty of the charges I lay at his door, but, I know, he resents such an exposure.⁹ But the student is not sensible of the teacher's deceit nor of the irresponsibility of the employer, whoever it is, the government, or the university, or a private management. These three which control our education are equally blind to any distinction except the communal, and together promote thoughtlessly low standards. They serve their own interests through power over educational institutions, of course.

Bad criticism follows academization of literature. By bad criticism, I mean criticism of worthless theses written for a set purpose, or critical vocabulary indiscriminately applied to good as well as bad books, or criticism from a 'critic' who has no standard. When such a criticism exercises influence as it does in the faculties of English in Indian universities, it produces false reputations. Today, many teachers and students of English Literature form their habits on bad criticism. Just as those who form their habits on good criticism cannot rightly see any merit in worthless books, those who form their habits on bad criticism will not be able to see the superiority of one work and the valueless-ness of another work and will be incapable of judging the worthless as worthless by the right sort of appraisal. A bad critic is one who produces criticism before he is perceptive enough, or makes noise about modern authors of little or no standing for the sake of his self-importance or for a paper at a - seminar. Bad criticism, needless so say, falsifies one's relation to literature. By bad criticism one can achieve a measure of success as a teacher or, in the case of a student, as an examinee and that too without hard work, and it shows the easy way to the majority out of the difficulties of hard work. A bad critic is

⁹ Those who are prejudiced and lead their life by all sorts of illusions are here touched to the quick. I know how we dislike to be told that we have been holding false ideas and harboring fantastic illusions. If the exposure cannot be avoided, at the most, we prefer to be exposed tactfully rather than being held up to scorn by downright exposure. The usual tactics when hurt by exposure is to recoil into ill-feeling or revengeful hostility. It is not a question of I versus other teachers. But it is a question of the application of standards. What must be done is to allow ourselves to form a sense of what is happening without self-deception. But you deceive yourselves if you feel attacked in these pages. Our probe is into "what the teacher docs, in front of the students, with the text."

fashionable or clever or both, but, if he has readers, they must be naive or credulous or affected ignoramuses.

When the text to be taught is misunderstood, it is quite logical that any critic is as serviceable for the English teacher as anyone else. The university teacher cannot even tell a good critic from a bad one, since his quest is for material for the classroom. Actually it is the bad critic who is far more helpful to the teacher than the good one, for from him he can lift without easily being caught by the student or draw upon his 'ideas' more easily because he can follow him better than the good critic¹⁰. Some teachers are so full of this material drawn from bad critics that they are honored as scholars in the Indian universities. Those few teachers who can write their own English prove better, but they too bandy about phrases from well-known critics of certain journals and they are honored as creative 'thinkers' and 'writers'. What they achieve is reputation among the fashionable set of students if they are young. But nevertheless, they are very disappointing for their poor range of knowledge, and their poor command of language and their ability to think out a serious question is so limited, but yet so self-pleased are they that they depress you beyond words. A young, fashionable lecturer who is not really above his middle - aged pedestrian colleagues in the command of language, with a few borrowings from English or American magazines, can be more harmful than them. He will make dissemblers of some of the young men - that is his contribution towards teaching!

I remember that some years ago a colleague of mine brought to me his essay on some American author for my opinion, but as I went through it, instead of telling him what I thought of it, I asked him how many of the sentences in the 'essay' were his own, to which he replied frankly, saying, 'none'. In this regard you can count on fingers, in Indian universities, teachers who are different from my colleague. But my colleague is one of the very rare teachers who are frank though they are dishonest. A fashionable university teacher is dishonest not only for lying but for defending himself by outrageous poses and claims to a high standing in the subject.

This being so, certain dishonest lecturers by their tricks will be more interesting to the student in proportion to the latter's meager and false relation to literature than an honest lecturer who is serious, and this honest lecturer may even be regarded as dull. It is just how the teacher and the student are related in our education, The students who are credulous think very high of some teachers, but if they themselves are affected, they think high of themselves. A teacher in a university can make a success of himself by any combination of the following: loudness of voice, sentimental gestures, poor jokes, speedy delivery of bad dissociated sentences, ludicrous affectations, pretentious show of knowledge, and, on top of all these, certain reserve with a forbidding squint.

¹⁰ For instance, many read American critics on Wordsworth rather than Arnold, for the reason that Arnold does not lend himself like the others to be dictated in the classroom. Because one reads American critics one often does say 'Arnold is outmoded', which remark is shamelessly made often enough.

In the study of literature in our universities the habit of taking down dictated notes is formed very early in the student and it stays, finally leading him or her into the other habit of talking about texts without any understanding, and, what is unpardonable is the imagining that he or she alone understands them. It is the teacher who is to blame as he substitutes his patchy notes drawn from fifth-rate critics for the text. The teacher does it because it is paying: he gets a name as a scholar for such an easy task. I think that the teacher and the students are so used to this corrupting 'communication' that even if you demonstrate it to them they will not be ashamed of it.¹¹ The true experience of a literary text has become valueless beside the importance of knowing opinions about it. What is ironical, allowing for the teacher's claims to a knowledge of the text, is that in their opinions and in the way they express themselves, the teacher and the student betray egregiously illogicalities and shabby linguistic habits. In the study of literature, the mind attends to something other than the experience of the text: the teacher's mind attends to departmental politics and domestic urgencies and personal avocations, and the student's mind to the examinations or to the more immediate, the senses or to dreams about future 'happiness' However, it is interesting to know that the women students with the English medium schooling are invariably superficial, but they get good results since they write 'better English' ; their mind can never reach the literary experience of the text, but they are mistaken for brilliant students and get preferential treatment, for they chirp about modern theories regarding modern literary figures, or they babble Bergson's importance in T. S. Eliot's poetry and so on. My word, you cannot re-educate the educated in India!

Once one is a Professor, there are no exacting demands to meet, and one can evade any demand by the use of power. A Professor is very safe in India not only because he prefers a dull sort of life, but also he is too prudent to involve himself in a controversy of any kind. Besides, he does not write anything worthwhile. He has his notes and that is about all. Of course, he will never be tired of talking even if the students are disgusted with him. Power compels them to listen to him or take down his notes. As far as possible he avoids anyone who appears to be trying to him. Unless he has an itch for public speaking -- if he has, you can easily flatter him by inviting him to speak -- he would be a retiring sort of man with reserve and concealed egotism or dry humor. No Professor is a good enough scholar to overcome gross prejudices, and a good enough man to be above shocking caprices.

One of the interesting things we discover if we listen carefully to a university English teacher is that what he says is only fit for ordinary rambling talk, since it lacks in form, and cannot be written and read. If the lecture is 'serious', it consists of cribs, and if it is not, it is an affair of gossip. Teachers of the older generation made their name by repeating eloquently a few standard critics on a few standard texts, and rhetoricising what they could say about the text in a way that students are baffled, and carry false impressions about their scholarship.

¹¹ No teacher will ever admit that he dictates notes. He will join the general disapproval of such a practice. You will even find him loud in protesting against notes-dictation.

Professors of the old generation had intimate knowledge of a limited number of well-known poems and prose passages from different authors, and of a dozen plays of Shakespeare, and knew their Bradley and Raleigh. They had an exalted sense of literature, so accordingly they adopted a kind of literary style¹², speaking fluently though not always idiomatically. They were never affected, at any rate, though pompous and amusing. They lived an Indian life but they sent their children to schools which exposed them to de-Indianisation. They were too mannered and conservative for any exercise of intelligence. They never wrote much. A few of them published bad notes. Their mode was haranguing. They did not give much thought to their own work. They were, in a conservative manner, cultured, having been students of Sanskrit and lovers of music.

Those of this generation, instead of intimate knowledge have the merest acquaintance with an equal number of limited texts, and on each of them they crib half-a-dozen or so critical passages selected at a venture with a view to giving useful notes to M. A. degree students. In the classroom, besides this notes, they will mention the names of several other critics impressing their scholarly mind on the student by some tricks of the trade ('of course, I do not agree with this critic'... 'that critic is controversial'). There is not one who has a thorough knowledge of any of the texts in the syllabus, and of its appraisal by a critic or two. They talk about their point of view, though they can never arrive at a tenable point of view. They are invariably affected. Unlike those of the previous generation, these are not cultured, but occasionally you will meet a fashionable one interested in dramatics and poetry, writing poems for a local magazine, and in Western pop music, which does not go to make one cultured. Professors of provincialism speak English unsuccessfully when they attempt to speak like the English or the Americans, while in a similar attempt those of an urban background are successful and, hence, more impressive. Some of them are really coarse, but some others put on polish. Pretentiousness and Westernisation go together in all the young teachers pretending to "creative" merit or to be superior to anyone in speaking English for their better accent.

But neither of them is capable of dealing with a literary work intelligently. The teaching of a literary text means to make its content an effective 'experience' in relation to other experiences. In fact, the value we derive from the text is in proportion as we relate its experience to other experiences. Its impact on the mind is the test of its being taught well or ill. But the sense of the text as an important experience has not yet impressed itself on any university English Department as far as I know.

Of the old generation there are many English teachers whose love of English Literature is nothing less than morbid idolatry; if one is a Christian he will worship the Bible betraying his mania for quoting from it and delivering passages quaintly on any occasion, regardless of propriety; which only brings ridicule on him; if he is a Brahmin, he will, while approving the greatness of the Bible, fall for Shakespeare and exalt him, being little

¹² 'Style' like 'accent' is another word which has a spell over the Indian teacher and the student. Not knowing anything one applies it to those one admires, and being thick-skinned one feels so happy when it is applied to one's speech or writing.

short of madness, and share the same fate as his Christian brother.

Sometimes a teacher has acquired, to be fair to him, that much linguistic skill that it is fairly easy for him to see the difference between Indian English and the English of the native speaker, I mean that he knows the latter to be preferable. But it is very difficult for him to distinguish one English author from another, and therefore, he goes by the established reputations, or praises every author in false rhetoric. Or, he reads someone on an author, and borrows his evaluative opinions and makes a name by airing them as if he is their parent. In our education, therefore, there is no condition enabling the teacher to make sense of an author and his work. How then, can, he be a good teacher?

When the teacher thinks that his students understand him and when they themselves believe that they understand the subject through the teacher, what is actually involved is a misunderstanding on both sides because there are no conditions either for the teacher's understanding and teaching of it or for the student's understanding of it. What there is is the student's false impression of the teacher's mastery of the subject, and the teacher's false impression of the student's capacity. The teacher often loves to express openly the student's incapacity, but then, checks himself as he is jealous of his esteem. Whereas, when the teacher thinks that a student is brilliant, it is probably because the student overawes the teacher by something unusual in him.

In the study of English Literature in our universities, the challenge of interpreting a classic is evaded by the Indian teacher because of his habits formed on his inabilities; instead of meeting the challenge, he deals with the text in the most hypocritical manner of borrowing notes from any criticism at hand, and reconstitutes a false image of it for the student. What the student essentially retains of it, if he does not add to it, is this false image of the text, and a good or bad opinion, of the teacher into the bargain. But no amount of tinkering at the syllabus can put an end to such a transaction.¹³ If the teacher thinks that he understands the text the results prove otherwise and betray his illusion, and if the student believes that he knows it, it only shows unchecked egotism in him. Just as the student's estimate of the teacher is unfounded, so also is his self-estimate. If the teacher, however, enjoys a good reputation it is chiefly because those who consider him to be good are incapable of sane judgment, and deplorably vulnerable to false impressions.

Ill trained as our university teachers are, used to corrupt teaching as they are, they pass ideal resolutions whenever they meet at a conference, as though no one is accountable for bad teaching except some power above or beyond them, which is impressively attacked. It is a common experience that a bad and incompetent teacher gives an impressive screech on the ills of our education!

¹³ Reconstituting the syllabus into different patterns is a conspicuous change, of late following the creation of autonomous colleges, but is it any meaningful change if you keep other conditions unaltered ?

But surely, there is something low about the English Departments in our universities when the student is asked to study Thoreau as he 'influenced' Gandhi or to study Frost imagining that he is as great as Wordsworth by superficial comparisons or to concentrate on the mysterious profundities of Emily Dickinson, and at all events, when he is expected to think of and write about them in high-sounding critical jargon. Not that these authors should be left out but we must go to them in order to learn what the human spirit fails to do, attempting to do something creative. Yes, I don't see how it can be tolerable when an English Department forces on the student the choice or 'Indo-Anglian' writing. Years ago, even if the student couldn't understand great authors in his M. A. degree syllabus in English Literature and even if he was not taught well, he was not at any rate exposed to this kind of vulgarity of reading anything as literature, and of mumbling jargon about nobodies.

How low our English Departments could be, let us see further. Some university teachers dictate notes to the students, but the notes are not, as usual, genuine in the sense it is more or less a chain of passages from critical books on the text they are teaching. They would not even write in their words others opinions but borrow also the language along with the opinions.¹⁴ A lecturer who dictates such notes would try hard to appear to the students as if everything dictated comes from him (of course, because he dictates, it comes through him!). The problem for him is to sit in such a posture with his exercise book of notes in front of them that he can dictate from it but must so impress the illusion on the students that he is actually lecturing on his subject. What is at stake is his prestige, and no trick is spared to save himself. As the lecturer reads his notes but pretends to lecture, the students take down notes, and as they do, the teacher slows down the reading so that the students can copy easily from him. He does slow the pace of reading as though it is for the benefit of the students. He is saving himself from exposure by appearing to conform to the student's ideal of the glorious teacher who harangues impromptu.

The teacher's inability to organize a lecture properly and to communicate to the students has the most dangerous effect on them, in particular if the teacher is impressive. There is a sort of lecturer who the students can never find to be a humbug (though he is one), being impressed by his notes drawn from half a dozen critics or so without any alteration, not knowing what to expect from him other than his notes, which are regarded as useful for the examinations. Since these notes contain the language of critics, the hour in the class is filled, the effect produced, the students are not only satisfied but also admire their teacher, and to crown it all, they get their degrees.

¹⁴ There is the bazaar guide for every text of the syllabus, which is a gimcrack thing, contemptible for any merit it possesses. And every teacher turns his nose up at it, and shows 'horror' at the habit of those using it. but he is himself the victim of such a habit, being unable to do anything else. He says SO pleasingly that it (the guide) is the "bane of our teaching". The horror of hypocrisy is something unimaginable in India. Personal morality in talking about oneself and others is very low indeed.

Three cheers for this glorious tradition in India! Long live women's colleges where this is more successful! Such a habit of notes-dictation leads the student to expect only notes from his teacher instead of true explanation and commentary, instead of, that is to say, guidance proper to the understanding of the text. And the notes are very rewarding in the examinations; this or something similar is what is demanded of the students and the examiner's anticipation is fulfilled if a set answer without any grammatical mistakes which he can spot is given, even though it is not the answer to the question. Very rarely does any student answer the question relevantly; I am yet to find one who answers the question relevantly but¹⁵ of course, it does not matter with the present kind of examiners. But if he tried to answer the question himself and makes a few mistakes in grammar, he comes down very low in the estimate of the examiner, whose habit is to set a high value on the irrelevant but set answer clear of the grammatical solecisms according to his knowledge.

The teacher as the examiner penalizes most the student who writes an independent answer with faulty grammar, though he says that that is the student he values most. On the contrary a trim answer consisting of large passages lifted from critics is the right answer, not because the teacher knows its relevance or irrelevance but because, as he reads the trim answer, he is impressed by the mistake-free sentences written by some American or English critics, which he cannot write but is educated to appreciate.

No English teacher of any university in India possesses the skill of giving the right exposition of a text, of showing to the student the ways he can relate himself to its experience of thought, suggestiveness and other important characteristics, and of guiding him to give an account of his own experience of it : instead, his so-called explanation is haphazard, his notes disconnected, and his opinions borrowed, or otherwise pointless. The teacher conquers the student by ill-temper, show of power, and distasteful remarks. But the student can conquer the teacher by uppish gestures and dapper intelligence. The teacher learns to say one thing at the start of his career and goes on repeating it; he says that the students are unable to follow him, implying that his teaching goes above the student's head but never suspecting that he could be blamable as a teacher, and repeating it as an excuse for any unpleasant relation, for he is likely to suffer discourtesy and ridicule from the students on account of his inefficiency.

The mode of dealing with an author in the teaching of literature is praising him rapturously, as much common as is the mode of sentimental exaggeration in our poor writing. If there are exceptions they take to decrying this or that author in the most irrational manner possible because they are rudely egotistic and insensitive. Therefore, in anyone's account of an author or of any of his works one rarely shows the experience of having thought, of having instituted comparison of him with some other author on the basis of sensitive apprehension. What can be done by memory, by the force of stimulus for self-praise and for public applause, and by unbounded love for theatricality and the impressiveness of noisy rhetoric, and by a native misappraisal of one's own and others'

¹⁵ Once after the university exams, I asked my second year students to tell me how they understood a question which they had answered. All but one failed to understand it right

abilities, is done in the classroom with fanfare and duly acclaimed so as to make one feel ashamed of our mind, and despair of any possibility for intelligent communication. One's mind acts through the habit for the commonplace, the desire for personal distinction, and the impulse for accommodating oneself to the world to one's advantage. Such habit, such desire, and such impulse never favors thought and its experience. Then what sort of hold the Indian English teacher has on his own subject through his formal qualifications?

Take any Professor of English and his attainments. For example, first of all, he would have done for his M. A. degree only a few essays, poems, plays and a couple of novels, from his syllabus, of which he need not have read the novels if he can get their summaries. Even if he had read them he would not have made much of them.¹⁶ During this period he would never read a serious book completely. After the degree, when he takes up teaching, he teaches a few essays and poems and so on for some years without mastering anything. He may come to have some fashionable opinions if he is a fashionable young man, but otherwise he would generally stabilize himself with his notes from Victorian introductions or from the hogwash of the Indian bazaar guides. Over a dozen or two years he does some phony research on a comparative study of an insignificant 'X' in English with an insignificant 'Y' in his native language, or on Indian philosophical ideas in some English author, and gets a doctorate at the expense of true scholarship.¹⁷ And when he becomes a Professor through local influence he behaves like an old man married to a young pretty woman.

By formal qualifications with the distinction of American degrees or through wire-pulling, the English teacher can eventually obtain the professorship. The teacher, who is so keen on a formal degree for promotion will work for a Ph.D. in his middle age even when his mental habits are most unsuited to real work on literature.¹⁸ In addition, if he is

¹⁶ You will hear such ridiculous things as a teacher telling the students that no one should take more than a few hours' time for reading a novel. There is no end of inane gesturing for self-importance in English Departments. What can one say about a university Professor who 'expressed his view' that Dr. Leavis' book on D. H. Lawrence is an elementary work and preferred Mrs. Vivas's book because this latter is finer according to him. There are three things to be noted. 1. He must be confused in valuation. 2 He must have on his mind someone in his department who likes Dr. Leavis but whom he despises! 3. It is an inane gesture to give the impression that he knows Dr. Leavis. The sentiment implied for the Indian students in 'elementary' is exploited.

¹⁷ I am not against the comparative study of literatures, in a separate department of comparative studies, it is then tolerable as a novelty, but I want to point out why the university English teacher takes it up and what happens to it at his hands.

¹⁸ The appointment of Dr. Appasamy as the first Professor of English in Madras University is a case in point. The Professor took his Doctorate on Keats as he reached his fifties without any precedents warranting ability for it. He gave a dolorous lecture on Keats in Madurai and I felt sick when he bumbled On 'Ananda, 'Sachitananda', and 'Brahmananda' in Keats's 'Endymion'. The manure for the first crop of Ph.Ds was some

a wirepuller, well and good; or even if he is not, he will still be successful as long as there is no rival for him who is a wirepuller. Since there are no standards in the subject, here no one is ever selected for the chair of English Literature according to one's standing in the subject. It is obvious that there is none with any standing; obvious, because there is nothing of remarkable worth produced. Given the false prestige or egotism which dominates our mind, it is most difficult to think so frankly of ourselves, though we are ready to believe scandals about others when someone reports 'frankly' evil of them. The condition of learning English and of studying English Literature is essentially a corrupting condition of the mind, making the teacher a sordid, inefficient being.

The teaching of English is so degenerate now that the teacher of English is reduced, by the fact of his ill-training, to use anything he can lay his hands on for teaching his subject. What he offers to the student is the most pitiable and wrongful substitute of notes for the text. Not even one sound idea or opinion, not to speak of real knowledge and experience, is ever offered in the classroom, nor is it ever demanded by the student.

Therefore, we are 'qualified' as teachers by academic degrees, and not educated in the sense of acquiring abilities. Our educational qualifications are too formal and useless however impressive they may be, and our educational experience of the subject is too meager, unavailing, and second-hand to recommend us to any teaching job demanding competence and efficiency. There has been no institutional training in India which makes us intelligent readers and competent teachers. Hence, in judging of teachers, we apply dubious standards as in judging of anything else important. We cannot help it, of course. We lack so much in right training that we scarcely know what the words in a sentence mean, how one sentence is related to another, and finally, how to organize the content of a classic into an effective experience as an argument for communication in the classroom. What a classic communicates is a force peculiar to it and invaluable to the mind; we must feel it before we communicate it. Plainly our mind is without the power to make sense of a classic and communicate it! And in this education, we are far from having acquired true knowledge and experience of the subject! The organization of our education is so inferior to the British educational system, though apparently modeled on it, that for anything higher, we are now utterly dependent on Anglo-American organization of education, and emotionally, we look up to it, believing that we can never attain to it. It is painful to know that we are made cheap and kept inferior by this imitation-institution of our education.

kind of Indian spiritualism in an English or American author, and for the second crop it is the comparison of an Indian author with an English or American one. In the case of exceptions it is continental philosophy like existentialism. Every author, in whom the Indian university teacher is interested for his research, reverberates with ideas or ideals which he does not respect, but which are taken because they go down with his prospective examiners, I mean Indian examiners.

The same teacher, who is 'philosophical' in his thesis usually fails to perceive the subtleties of the work he is teaching in the class, being degenerate by the habits of making broad generalizations, and of believing in ideas and theories with reference to the matter of the text.

There is hardly anyone who is interested in knowledge and knows how to acquire it. As it is, such a state of affairs is shameful. We have been only, at the best, text-book learners, being most external in our mode of acquiring knowledge. Actually, many depend upon the 'Indian' notes on the text book, memorizing a few quotations and making a superficial acquaintance with a few theories or impressive jargon. The way our educational institutions operate shows that you are only expected to have a formal degree to be a teacher but not a sound knowledge of the subject to train the students for possessing it. Correspondingly) we have something interesting about the habits related to the educational institutions: the Heads are exceptionally cunning and diplomatic, the other members are self-protective, egotistic and spiteful.

In no other country is teaching reduced to mere gossip, or notes dictating as it is in our institutions; in especial, the teacher in English is the most offensive gossip. His fondness for talking and for impressing the student by it leads him to mofussil humor, catchy phrases, facile attitudes, pious exhortations and unmeaning appeals. Some teachers are so senseless that they ask the student to read nothing except their notes, and if the student requests them to recommend some books, again they insist, surlily this time, that he read only their notes and nothing else. There is another thing in India which we do not find anywhere else in the world; a Professor goes to the class and reads a few lines from the text and shifts to autobiographical discourse (adding a short biographical note on his wife) recounting his exploits¹⁹. One half of our teachers while away the time in the classroom in this manner.

With the teacher the illusion that he is the best of the lot is so strong because the self-regarding habits are so strong-: for instance, there are teachers whose habit of storing up quotations, of delivering them, of talking irrelevantly about theories of all kinds with a secure instinct for gossip, can easily make them to be looked upon as the best. You cannot challenge him because he will be offended but will take no notice of your challenge. He cannot even imagine that anyone can be a scholar like him. You can only be provocative to him by saying that there are others who are scholars.

It is also interesting to note that quotations, mentioning of theories and their authors, together with bad, affected, but fluent English (run-on sentences) with the command of only half-a-dozen or so patterns of English sentence, make up a good teacher for certain students who are incapable of learning and growing and incidentally are under the feeling that their English is far above others and also imagine, 'under the false impression, that those whom they admire must be the best. If the teacher is irredeemable, the student does not seek redemption.

¹⁹ Once I attended a Professor's class. He began by reading twice the first line from some writing of Burke and inviting student's comments. Those who made comments were humored by the Professor's rambling complimentary gestures. All this took about 42 minutes. Then coming into his element he atoned for the lost time by dwelling on his exploits including that of his first encounter with his wife.

With university English teachers there are two possibilities: either they borrow 'ideas' about the text they teach or they form 'ideas' according to their misunderstanding of the text or according to the windmills in their head. The students of English Literature in India do not learn anything at all on account of their false impression that they really learn from such teachers. The relation between one's mind and a great author is all important in the study of literature.

But the relation between the Indian mind and a great author has been essentially false, false in the sense that what it makes of the latter is in the nature of an infantile or sentimental altitude or of slavish admiration. Instead of moving towards precision, comprehensiveness, and definition in articulation, our mind moves outwards into sentimental and large generalizations and frothy rhetoric when we read a classic and express our opinions. But the nature of the unthinking mind is to pretend to thought and in order to show that it can do thinking, whenever, it comes across an original thought, it cries out that it had already had the same ideas!

Suppose a teacher goes through T.S. Eliot's "Tradition and the Individual Talent" for the sake of teaching it. I shall try to describe here what is typical of our teachers. He will half-understand Eliot, and no doubt, will be impressed by the essay. The impression sets him off, and he may soon work up an enthusiasm for Eliot, if he is in the habit of striking attitudes. He will now swear by Eliot, and is restless till he is recognized as an authority on Eliot. Next he turns to a few critics' opinions on Eliot, and sees that they understand Eliot better than he does; therefore, he feels more at home with the critics than with Eliot, because he understands the critics far better than he does the author. It is natural for him to lift arguments and phrases from the critics he has read incompletely. He will never read a critic entirely; he will do the ignoble-praise Eliot in the most elating spiritual or psychological, as the case may be, terms but this is his spoken deliverance to the students, whereas the written deliverance is in his 'notes' in which not a single word is his own. The teacher, at times, argues concerning the subject, but then, he quotes one critic against another when they, actually, both agree, or when there is truly no relation of opposition. He~ will go on to exclaim how he agrees with one critic and disagrees with another with the emphasis of certain reservations, conveyed in 'as it were', 'so to speak' etc. As regards Eliot's essay, a real argument is out of the question for the teacher, but when he is obliged to explain the essay to the class, he will take to humble or highfalutin language of praise or perverse assertion²⁰. I do not know why, but it is true that a teacher, standing before his students, is generally tempted to tell lies but in the event of losing self-possession, he slumps into the chair and goes on dictating notes till he is tired of it. Notes-dictation or reading of the text in the classroom is a prop for any nervous teacher. Women teachers are unrivalled in both, though it is trying to bear them. If the teacher has to teach a play the usual trick is to assign various characters to some students in the class and ask them to read aloud the play till the end of the hour. Here is a modern method of teaching received from America!

²⁰ He will dislike Eliot if someone in the department praise him, and refer to critics against Eliot.

Having listened to different lecturers on Eliot in our educational institutions I found that there are ten kinds of offenders against teaching:

1. Those who talk in generalizations about poetry or literature, being ignorant and having no interest in either and who, therefore, betray stupidity.
2. Those who know something about literature but cannot be seriously interested in it, and who are, on this account, charlatans.
3. Those who express fantastic opinions and justify them, being clever and capable, projecting themselves by a variety of poses.
4. Those who are too superficially trained to understand a classic but who land themselves in idealism and solemn, illusory ideas.
5. Those who are enthusiastic but without sensibility and with a tendency to trivialize literature, and with cheap humor of mofussil flavor.
6. Those who are blind to the distinctions between feeling, emotion, passion, idea and thought because they cannot feel passionately, and get confused when they attempt thinking, and because they are muddled when they are emotional, and who love private, willful opinions and offer mystifying explanations in defense of them.
7. Those academic scholars who produce potboilers for promotions, who are vociferous in using jargon in any talk on the subject and who bore the audience to death by their cant.
8. Those who slight others' abilities in order to shine, who hawk their petty knowledge, and who harbor the most false opinions about others, their 'pride or arrogance'.
9. Those who are offended when their mental corruptions are exposed, but who cry out against everything under the sun, and who are wanting in sense and balance.
10. Those who are ignorant, naive, and unselfconscious dupes of grand generalizations, of false and impressive analogies, and of the show of others, and who are credulous and pitiable.

These offenders are the best witness to what is done in India to the leaching of literature. Unless we see and possess the experience of the distinction of great literature, nothing can make us different. The reason why the value, the distinct force, of great authors does not bear on us is that when we are young, our habits are false²¹, and when older, they are worldly.

²¹ Sometime ago I attended a lecture on literary criticism. The speaker could say nothing worthwhile but spoke 'fluently' for an hour with phrases of critical jargon and modern philosophical and psychological theories in a tone flattering to the audience and to himself. Although he never appeared to be sensible of what he was talking, he looked so resourceful to his listeners. He was an instant success. A research student

My description of the teaching of English Literature shows the general condition of our relation to any author with whom we have to deal. The point is that the teachers have not only a miserable 'knowledge' of an author, but also a tissue of opinions of all sorts with many theories added to it for the purpose of exhibitionism. The students are taught by such teachers and they get their degrees without the ability to understand the texts prescribed. Such a tradition cannot be too bad since the results are never discouraging!²²

To come back to T. S. Eliot, assuming that the teacher understands this particular essay of Eliot, how can he place the author in relation to the civilization to which he belongs? To place him thus, there is so much that the teacher has to learn outside the prescribed text but he cannot or does not learn it. By extending this case, it can easily be seen how we come off badly in applying our mind to the European impact, so long as understanding means for us seizing an idea or an impression or an opinion, if not an occasion for fanciful interpretations!

When an Indian teacher in English praises an author or expresses 'critical' opinions about him, there is nothing wrong with it. But praising an author or freely expressing one's critical opinions out of ignorance, and also to cover one's ignorance, is too dishonest to let go. As he usually knows only little of the author's work, he feels so insecure that the best way to avoid being exposed is to praise the author overmuch or to pretend to some 'critical' knowledge about him. The students do not easily see through him, and, moreover, they condone him on the ground that though he is not original what he does is necessary for the examinations, quite unaware of the shameful practice of the teacher. All this is, in the last analysis, due to the fact that, in this education, one is unequal to mastering a classic and giving an exposition of it.

In the profession of teaching the teacher must know more than enough, which alone makes him an efficient teacher. The standards of education depend on how much a teacher knows and on the status he enjoys. Invariably the Indian teacher knows much less than enough (I know that a contrary opinion prevails), and one of the reasons is that he has to know everything in English. He cannot apply his mind freely on this score, and he either becomes too soon mannered or relies upon acrobatics. Let it be remembered that the teacher talking in English to the students, when he and his students speak the same language, stands in a false relation to them, proving that a right kind of behavior in communication is out of keeping with his ill-training in English. Most people overlook it, but there is something ironical about the teacher in the Humanities, when, being helpless, he makes use of gossip or irrelevant talk and is never slow to wrath in the classroom. Since teaching is concerned with the mind, nothing can be more valuable than to train the

rapturously said "What a marvelous speech it was!" But she exclaimed impatiently when asked what she could make of it, "Why bother about it". Since the beginning of our education there has not been a meaningful communication in which something worthwhile is said and understood, because of our false habits in relation to knowledge.

²² In 1971 there were ten or so First Classes in M. A. degree (English) out of 12 candidates in Stella Maris College, Madras, which must be a record in the history of our education. But no one need be happy except their parents.

teacher well. Well-trained teachers are a greater asset to the nation than well-trained soldiers or administrative officers. What is wrong is that the teacher takes it bitterly that he is doomed to a lower social status. If the teacher cannot be paid well, let no one else be paid so much higher than he for the same qualifications; the social judgment of the teacher's status is too great an insult to the teaching profession in India to bear.

There can only be very few at any time who would not pretend to knowledge which they do not possess. Now, we meet different kinds of pretentious people. Some pretentious teachers tell downright lies about themselves, but some others are careful. Indian teachers of English are rarely careful, being too boastful and talkative, which gives them away easily but their claims to superior merit show how ridiculous mankind can be ! Knowing little and doing little a Professor of English regards himself as the most scholarly of all the Professors! His luck is that some others also think him scholarly!

There is a Professor in a university who is the worst offender. He reminds his students of his power from time to time to cow them down. He is ruthless in his Communal prejudices with a Hitlerite hatred of a particular community. His only ability is to pass on lifted passages on a vast scale to the students through the Indian pedagogic medium of dictating notes. As regards his subordinates and his students, he is a formidable autocrat. But he is so worthless that only by pretence, by the force of his formal degree, and by the easy terms on which he appears to move with the higher authorities, he survives unscathed. Just now his image has become brighter; he is encouraging (women) students to do research under him as long as they do not come from a caste which he hates, though only for the sake of personal prestige. Under this chief, the department looks cheaply tribal and low. What can check such as these from holding even bigger positions ?

There is another Professor of English in a local college who speaks English²³ with such an affected and affronting accent -- as if he is without teeth -- as to make us lose any confidence in human decencies. His fate has been to backbite his professional brethren. He is noisy about his interest in modern literature, and talks always in a spirit of self-elation, of some recent articles in newspapers, disputing some opinions expressed there and concluding that he could write much better. Whenever he meets anyone, he has a 'doubt' about a phrase or a big word but only to test the other person and to feel triumphant if he is appealed to clear the doubt. This Professor always delivers himself of pithy and *weighty* remarks (so they are!) in order only to show off. He cannot keep quiet, but then he cannot be wise. Therefore, he quarrels for his position by antics and perverse egotistic claims. What is typical in him is his pitiable illusions and balderdash of 'original' opinions. He claims to be a specialist in modern literature, and for evidence, he says that he subscribes to 'The Times Literary Supplement'. This accent-monger is admirable to us, of course!

²³ This la.di-da, and h;s type, would not exist but for the self-encouragement to do well in the beau monde by earning a name for their 'superior' English. They make up for their lack of social standing by self-exaltation and 'commanding' affectation.

When an Indian teacher goes into raptures, for example, over Bertrand Russell's style regarding it as lucid, and over his ideas regarding them as clear and profound, on reading only 'In Praise of Idleness'²⁴ (often it is prescribed under Modern Essays for undergraduates) he is a great humbug to me. Not only does his admiration lack substance but it is a point for him as he is without any other point, and he is so insistent on his virtues in his admiration of Russell that we are invited to mistake him as a man with some stuff. His admiration of any other English author is very much like this. You cannot reform this English teacher!

An educated Indian who chooses teaching cannot help choosing it. As a teacher, instead of attaining knowledge, he adopts the form of a scholar, that is, gathers a crop of quotations and phrases, and displays them as of scholar's privilege. He will surprise us by his variety and range, citing from a journal of music from Yale University and referring to the Upanishads in the same breath, with countless names of philosophers, scientists, psychologists, and anthropologists thrown in to boot. One can see how insufferable he can be, but he is in demand with the Indian audience. No need to say that he Jacks in coherence and thought. He is very much flattered when he is applauded as a scholar. He believes in his scholarship. In any case he will have little difficulty in passing off as a scholar for the time being. I have had many encounters with these scholars; unless you are credulous, they would not like you. When I express my unwelcome opinions on some modern novelists, instead of refuting me by argument they level charges against me and Dr Leavis. There is no Indian teacher in English but will say that Dr Leavis is cantankerous though it is very, very rare that anyone has read and understood him. But he resents being told that he has not read Dr Leavis. Pretence and trumping up charges against others (most Indian teachers are familiar with those commonplace charges which a critic makes against an author or against another critic) are the two ways by which one saves one's face, and disarms exposure. As a matter of behavior, there is something disgraceful about it. Discuss the subject with an English teacher and show your interest in continuing the discussion by going a little deeper into it: two things will happen, either he will reduce it to a question of each one being entitled to hold his 'views' or he will say nasty things about you behind your back. I do not think he can bear the heat of true arguing. He will never forgive you for trying it on him. But, at the same time, he will talk about the subject in such a way as to look far better informed than anyone else by saying, 'So and so does not know even the title of that novel', "that lecturer does not give good bibliography" and "this one does not know expressionism in Eugene O'Neill", if Eugene O'Neill is the subject.

I have been reading a few articles by Indian teachers in English Literature to see if I am wrong in my opinion about the university teacher in English, but I find something novel and yet very depressing. Apart from the fact that they have not much to say, they impose their articles on our attention by the research form they give to their writing, providing bibliography at the end, foot-notes, cross references, with one half of the sentence in their

²⁴ Whether Russell deserves such a praise or not is not an issue here, but reading only a single essay of his and characterizing him as a great author is dubious teaching as it is self-important raving. That Russell has influence over the Indian mind is true but it is not in place here to treat of it.

own words and the other half in quotation, comparisons without point but supported by some ugly statistical data, eulogy with some self-important qualifications (previous generations of teachers eulogized their authors without any qualification), attack in critical jargon and finally, modesty in a smart phrase.

I know that the English teacher makes no discriminations, but I know also that he is usually vociferous about an author or a book only for his self-importance. It is only when we are able to give an account of great authors that we can be intelligent about the rank of lesser authors. No teacher has reliable and defined experience of a great author to render an account of him. But he pretends to originality as he talks about the author. He may escape while pretending or he may even be granted originality. There are no Furies to punish the Indian teacher for his pedagogic sins. Actually we do not have to be worried about standards because in our education they cannot be raised, no, no, they cannot even be brought into existence. The poor inefficient teacher asserts his virtue in covering what are known as 'portions', but the pretentious teacher announces his virtue in ignoring them.²⁵ Great literature is so much of human life and its realities, but in its effect on us it is so little of note that some university Heads and lecturers behave as though they teach some strange lifeless subject: they are dead from above the waist, and what they possess are only parts of middle class philistinism.

An Indian teacher in English Literature wants always ideas or sentiments which suit him since he looks for them; not uncommonly, he reads his own ideas into a critic who is not guilty of them; that is to say, he cannot bear the complexity of a complex experience which involves far more than commonplaces. Of course, he will be eager to adopt certain out-of-the-way ideas or gestures, for misleading the student into a good impression of himself. But essentially, he is at home only with the most commonplace ideas, and in talking about them as being the crucial part of the text, he has the illusion that he is original. Therefore, he wants to be flattered, and he is irritable if he is not. Rehashing the critical ideas of someone else is the only solution to all the defects inherent in his training.

An idea is easy to get hold of, and we have recourse to ideas of any sort about the text of which we cannot have a personal experience since we are not able to master it. What the teacher wants is to appear to be doing the right thing in the classroom by some substitute for the text. The student as a result gets no training at all. With no training, there can hardly be any growth of mind in the student, any radical change in his or her ability for higher experience. At first, when many things are not clear in the student's mind, the teacher's substitute deforms him. Take, for instance, the useless seminars of the department, which are farcical in that the students read papers with everything in them stolen from critics, hardly useful to anyone, and nothing happens except that the teacher who presides over the seminar talks as much as he likes.

²⁵ The Indian woman teacher discovered the best method of finishing portions -- reading through the text down to the ground without raising her head except to wake up.

A student from another university called on me some time ago and in the course of our talk I said that we never had even a single Professor of English who edited a text in the standard way, that is setting up standards which no one coming later can overlook, she was instantly shocked and self-assuringly burst out challenging my opinion and asserting that her own Professor had written many articles in American journals. I need not dwell upon the false connection in her mind (she is a brilliant 1 Year M.A. student but nevertheless.....) between my remark and her rejoinder; for me she is partly the victim of her Professor's self-advertisement, and partly of her confusion between an ideal Professor and her Professor. For her, her Professor is a scholar, and no less efficient than anyone she can imagine to be because of his contributions to American journals, and it is logical to her to think of him being able not only to edit a text but to do everything in literature. What gives weight to her Professor is his Ph.D. and she cannot believe that he could have got it, this momentous degree as it got him the Professorship without being out of the ordinary. We can only believe in degrees, having no idea of standards in written work.

She knows very well my conviction that the sooner English gives way to the regional language the better it is for us and that I see no point in Indian writing in English. She could not contain her violent impulse to oppose me, saying that we need not give up English and that if we cannot use it like Englishmen, we must evolve our own brand of English. Certainly, being a Malayalee Christian without any relation to her own language, being brought up outside India, and having had her education here in Missionary institutions, she can only feel secure in our own brand of English and not in her own language. Recently when I lectured on Arnold and stressed the rigour of his standards which, I added, ought to make us ashamed of our accepting so many nobodies as worthy of our attention, she was once again so provoked that she expressed herself against Arnold, said that he is dogmatic, and 'questioned' the very basis of his standards, meaning that we ought to ignore him. She, however, missed the point of my remark that Arnold could only be understood by seeing that a literary discrimination for him is bound up with the choices we make in life. I then replied to her that one's acceptance of Arnold's standards depends mainly on one's belonging to this or that centre of values. We must remember that she is working under a Professor who thrives on American Literature notes and phony ideas of comparative Literature in a department which forces out Arnold, T.S.Eliot, LA. Richards, and F.R.Leavis, but imposes on the students Rene Wellek²⁶, Scully Bradley, Robert Penn Warren, and so on, as the most important critics since it is from them that the notes for comparative literature are drawn. Her kindred are many now. You meet them everywhere in India. To realize what our Professors of American Literature and Comparative Literatures do, I cannot help referring, by way of analogy, to what the American soldiers did in Vietnam!

Here I must make note of a common trick, odd and primitive, but none the less true, played by some Heads who have a program of self-projection. Desiring popularity and enhanced power, they throw hints opportunely at the magnitude of their power, at being the chairmen of this Board and that, at their publications in America, at the number of

²⁶ He is translated and admired in Tamil Nadu, and is a mascot for a higher degree in comparative literature.

pressing invitations to speak in the public, and at their ability to get overseas scholarships for their students and to influence other examiners (who are their friends)²⁷. In any other sphere of life I do not know if one has to suffer such low-down impostors now. This is especially true of those who did not expect to become Professors but did become Professors on account of the local politics of communalism etc. They tell downright lies about themselves, and unscrupulously magnify their petty merits, when their sole chance to publish anything is only in the university journal or college magazine. True, a few of our Professors do contribute to 'foreign' journals ('foreign' has still a charm though abated now), so what? These few get popularity among those who cannot write for those journals. I remember an Indian Officer in the British Council who, drawing my attention to an Indian Professor of English Literature who wrote for some overseas journals, expressed great admiration for him but without having read any of his articles and was happy that it (his admiration) made me look small. All of us are carried off by false valuations when high formal academic qualification is in question. Not even a few have a true consciousness of what is happening, when we teach English Literature and admire authors and express opinions on our colleagues. Everyone, on the other hand, praises or attacks everything loudly or sarcastically without the least sense for discrimination. The ability to test what imposes itself as reality on us, and to come to a sensible estimate of it will be lacking to us, so long as we are not trained to state directly our own experience.

Once I said in my class that there was hardly a university teacher in India who read and understood I. A. Richards's "Principles of Literary Criticism". It seems that, when one of my students later asked a lecturer whether he had read it, he said 'yes', and the student, then, contradicted me by reporting it jubilantly as though I should lose my face for having my opinion proved to be unjustifiable. That is the point; which lecturer in India will have the modesty of admitting that he has not read such and such a book when a student asks him if he has read it or not?²⁸

What is so rare among the university teachers is an ingenuous and engaging argument in which one Indian quotes another Indian to the point, and what is even more rare is a genuine interest in the subject. As I have seen some articles and read a few books, I find that one Indian quoting another Indian is rare because no one seems to make a point anywhere. On the other hand, the pattern is to write an article borrowing from some English or American critics for the basis, and, for the sake of appearing to argue, to conduct a phony argument disputing some other critics while adding luster to it by bibliography, foot-notes and affected gestures in parentheses. There is no strength in any argument advanced by the Indian teachers I have known, nor any sound connections, nor any weight of matter. There is only a mere grouping of silly or musty 'ideas' as useless as

²⁷ A Professor, having introduced 21 paper on comparative literature, would address the student', first, with this sort of self-importance "Is there anyone who wants to go to the States? I can help him or her". The students are so impressed that they remain hopeful till disappointed and would tend to value the Professor and obey him.

²⁸ The most pathetic disguise of the Indian teacher is when he tries to appear omniscient to his students by merciless lying.

they are unconvincing in their inter-relationship. Consider the Indian's research, which is no more than a patch-work, because the researcher as a student of literature is so miserably trained. There is a certain level one ought to reach, even if one goes wrong. But the truth is that the Indian researcher by his greed for a degree and by his ill-education can never reach it.²⁹

Nothing is so despairing as when a university teacher expresses his opinions on current topics. Take for instance the question of standards. We say that the standards are falling. But one offers only ideal measures for a solution. The whole question is evaded by calling for urgent remedies. One only knows the fall of standards ideally and vaguely, and in speech or report one emphasizes it with self-importance and one's illustrations are tediously commonplace as much as one's remedies. One has only an image of standards, being unable to set them up. In all our views on standards we do not know what we are talking. Those teachers who are loud about the low standards of students' performance are really hypocritical or self-deceptive since they themselves are so poor in their attainments.

The teacher or the student expresses opinions (borrowed) and defends them without a convincing argument. When the student, in his M.A. Degree class, is introduced to critics he can only repeat certain passages because he cannot bring into any meaningful relation the text and the critics, since he has no understanding of either the one or the other. But the students, like their teachers, are very good at pretending to have reached a certain standard in their command of English ('I am better than ...') when they are never able to answer any question concerning what they think they know properly. And yet they get through their examinations because the examiners, being no better, award them pass or class grades according to the false impression they form of the student. The difficulties of the students and the teachers alike in English are in great part due to a lack of command over English, which they do not admit. They always try to conceal their poor English which seems inevitable once English enjoys so high a social prestige.

The English teacher is nothing without borrowed abstractions, and invariably, on account of this, he is helpless and misleading. When the teacher in order to cover his inability adopts them in the classroom, it is the most attractive lesson for the student. That is, if a teacher dictates, it is borrowed material, but if he talks off his own bat it is a windy discourse of ludicrous opinions in awkward English spoken egotistically. In all our teaching of English Literature there is a want of genuine argument with content arising out of a sound mastery of the subject and of a sound point of view. An Indian teacher faced with an opinion from another teacher argues against this other teacher instead of

²⁹ I met a Reader in English from a well-known University who had worked on religion in D.H. Lawrence but without ever having heard of his 'Apocalypse'. Once I read in the 'Osmania Journal of English Studies' a research paper On "A comparative assessment of the geographical, historical, archaeological position of the Barabar (Marabar) caves" of E. M. Forsters 'A Passage to India'. From wherever the contagion comes (as an incentive to such assessment) the author of the paper has a mind answering to our description of the English teacher in India.

arguing from the text, to which the opinion refers, to pursue any point he makes. The first teacher may know the text, but it is not a masterly mind knowing it and recapturing its experience. If I say that the teacher is nothing without borrowed abstractions, even the case of conscientious teachers is no exception, for to one and all both mastering the text and the skill of writing sentences are impossible. Regarding most of the university teachers one can fairly characterize their knowledge of the subject by the analogy of an ill-tempered housewife's ideas about domestic servants.

When university teachers gather for a Board Meeting they usually condemn students for not writing 'ideal' answers, but they themselves do not know what they are. It is the teacher's habit to condemn the students to impress his standing in the subject on other teachers. He may even go to the length of exclaiming that the students did not answer this or that question 'though he did give them the answer'. (*He gave them notes...*)

Obviously it is not literature that the teachers study, it is not literature that bears on them, but the opinions of unimportant critics misunderstood. These opinions are a banner of their self-importance. What is shameful here is that they cannot withstand the students' disagreement with 'their' opinions. It is a very base motive in a teacher to expect any of his students to agree with him, and yet even if the teacher is aware of the wrongness of such a motive, it is difficult for him to like a student who disagrees with him. The teacher must know clearly what in him must be got over by cultivating a sense of fairness. No teacher is good enough unless he gets over it, and that Indian teacher is rare who gets over it.

So much has been said here against the teacher of English, but it is intended to show the nature of our education and its relation to our mind. Now we know that the teacher has failed to have a mastery of the text he teaches because he has failed in arriving at a point of view with a definite basis for interpretation. It helps us to know how deficient we are in application of mind, in intelligent study of classics. Therefore, what has happened here must have happened elsewhere calling for a thorough enquiry. For if you retort that we are not deficient, where, then, is the evidence? Let us further see if we can support this conclusion.

If the teacher reads a text several times, which is not usually the case, it is to memorize a few parts of it either for private pleasure or for the public performance of lecturing. Actually, the closest possible study of the text is impossible for him. It presupposes good training, which he does not have, and concentration to which he is not equal. One must read a text more than once in order to get at its essence. As one reads it, one must, in the first place, feel keenly one's want of its mastery, and feel impatient for mastering it. One does feel so only when one has a true purpose for mastering the text. The purpose should actually keep one restless till one gains mastery. The more one reads, the more one is sensitized, and one enjoys the freshness of increased ability. All this respecting the study of text demands extraordinary concentration which the Indian teacher would not consider to be necessary or valuable, for he can manage by memorizing parts of it or by knowing about it at second or third remove. Actually, when the teacher reads a book for the first time and is impressed by the whole of it, he does nurse a dangerous illusion, on the basis

of which he asserts his claim that he has mastered it. When someone is said to have mastered the text, what is meant in common parlance is that he knows by heart some purple patches from it or can chaffer about its 'significance'. This being impressed or memorizing purple patches, or chaffering has no relation to standards.

What the Indian teacher makes of the text is that he explains it, as he does not understand it, in terms of pseudo-concepts (borrowed) since they are the easiest to remember and handle, and also since his students are easily impressed by them as they cannot know as yet that they are pseudo-concepts on account of the illusion that they know the text because they know these concepts. What ensues from this is the unbearable foul atmosphere in which the teacher pretends that he not only knows the text but also knows it better than any other teacher, and the student believes in his teacher's large claims and also flatters himself that he understands the text and that his English is much better than any other student's.

The routine of preparing for examinations by lifting passages from critics and memorizing them has become, so tyrannical because it is so indispensable for success that anything of intelligent and discriminating work from a really good critic has no real value either for our students or for our teachers. Our teachers never know who is a good critic and who not, for they do not go for anything else except stealing in order to belch up notes in the classroom: well organized routine of this kind produces good results. A Head of the Department of English with the mind of a jail warden will be very successful in it and acclaim as the best teacher. An English Department is not a community of teachers doing their work with common standards and idiom. The false terms of appraisal, the commonplace expressions in our discourse, our appreciation of an author which is only a self-important admiration of him without any sense of his work, all go to show that there is no idiom current among us for intelligent talk or exchange.

With the teacher's stealings from critics art his mind, the student is in utter confusion as he is denied direct contact with the subject. The worst thing is that the student does not often read his text. If he does, still he does not know what to make of it because he is predisposed to his guru's notes, and also because his English is too bad for him to know them. By the help of the teacher or by doing for himself what the teacher does, the student gets through his examinations with a good degree, and he comes to think very high of his attainments without ever coming to know what has happened to him. The one prejudice that sustains him throughout his life is that he feels himself to be superior to others in his knowledge; even if he is the humblest student you can ever meet.

All that is written by academic Professors of English is unbearable; they neither have talent nor training nor purpose for writing well. While it is not difficult to see through the poverty of academic writing, it is, on the other hand, very difficult to bring any charge against the many university teachers who never write at all, but who talk endlessly and make intolerable claims for their merit. So used are they to talking and boasting without ever doing any independent writing that there is no basis for a consideration of their merits or demerits except that they must be condemned wholesale for possessing no ability whatever to write. In so far as they write at all it is to plunder the critics for

dictating notes in the classroom, if they are teaching post-graduate students. However, there is no teacher who cannot say something or other on every author and topic, which can never be put into a written form. You feel really depressed when you hear a Professor bawl out critics' names and theories, which 'takes on meaning' for the Indian students.

The vulgarity of continuing this teaching of English Literature must strike terror in anyone's breast, as it is now ossified into pseudo-ideas and tedious notes-dictation or extempore gabble in the classroom. Those without the patience to dictate notes gird at those who engage the class by their notes-dictation, imagining that they are a cut above the latter. But they too borrow opinions and base their talk on them or indulge in gossip or sidetrack the students by blue jokes from journals like "The Reader's Digest". So far we have been utterly blind to this paltering with the subject in our universities and its consequences for our mind.

There are two reasons why we have failed to do any good work, though we have been studying English Literature in our universities for a long time. One, those who take it up have no deep interest in it much as they express a self-important enthusiasm for it; two, it is too vast a subject and too complex for mastering by our shabby methods of teaching. We do not have that training which enables us to think in the subject because we have mastered it thoroughly. As far as I know, no student of English Literature has been told that the appreciation of a literary text involves a sense of problem related to personal life.

Many seem to know what literary criticism is but when they deal with a text they scarcely talk to the point. I do not know if one can really know a text and talk sense if one has not got a purpose and is under the tyranny of selfish interests. In all of us egotism develops before the mind develops, and so, we pass our life in unbridled egotism.³⁰ What wonder is it, then, if we adopt opinions, attitudes and poses, according to the dominant temper or impulse in close association with our selfish interests?

The students suffer from teachers who think very high of their knowledge, the more so because the students cannot, failing to judge the teacher's merits by standards, help acknowledging their claims to mastery of the subject with admiration. Some of the teachers are so boastful that they are insufferable. They may, strangely, even have a following;³¹ so little do they know, but so well do they impress their 'scholarship' on the students. No race has suffered so much as ours during the recent period of our history from the calamity of the teachers knowing their subject shabbily. Again, in this period, there were opportunities for doing thinking, but those who ought to have done it never took it to be a pressing need. At one level, solemn and idealistic substitutes for thought are popular, at another level, substitutes of fashionable kind imported from abroad. That is, you have the old teacher full of the first kind of substitutes, and the young teacher full of the second.

³⁰ To be an Indian in this period with formal education is to be egotistic about one's command of English.

³¹ I heard about a university teacher of Correspondence Course boasting of his reputation among students of every centre in the state that associations in honor of his name sprang up.

You will always be exhausted if you speak as you think and feel, which is quite natural. But you can talk endlessly and untiringly if you talk glibly from the habit of talking without thinking or feeling. You meet often a teacher in our universities who can go on lecturing or talking for hours on end, and he does so because he never gives thought to anything he says. Also, he combines boorish and irritable manner with such mental habits. It is very true in our education that when one ought to become intelligent, one becomes clever and talkative, and when one ought to know things well from a standpoint, one thinks one knows many things well while one actually knows some newspaper ideas and broadcasts them as if it is unique that one should know them. When you think of a university teacher's competence, you must think separately of his knowledge of opinions about the text and his knowledge of the text itself. In India teachers are very lazy and quite unequal to the hard work of obtaining the textual knowledge.

There is a class of teachers in our universities who get to know opinions from critics of any kind and pass them off as their own, and in evidence of their scholarship they refer to several critics and theories. They engage the class with some fashionable talk about films from the West, the Western pop music, modern poetry, novel and drama, modern art and theories and techniques of their composition. They gain popularity, but, being lazy, they do little or no work. They usually make up to the fashionable set of girls by special attention to them. Often, some of them have a good degree without any knowledge in the subject.

Another characteristic of this class is brutal egotism and showy Westernization with a scorn for anything Indian; the more it becomes conscious the more one imagines oneself to be admirable on account of it or it becomes conspicuous when one wants to snub those one dislikes; the habits it presupposes are habits of affectation, imitation and sophisticated cant. When I say that most Indian teachers are not able to write well because they have no training in written work, we must not forget the ability of many teachers to talk tediously and meaninglessly at length, knowing nothing but believing to know everything. These tedious talkers are under the lasting illusion that they are a much better sort of teachers than any other. They do calumniate anyone they secretly feel to be a good teacher because he is a threat to their popularity. There is the ignoble ideal among some students, that of emulating the glib talkers. No teacher can ever fail to come out successful with the students if he is gifted even in a meager degree with anyone of the following:

1. Fluency - speedy delivery in Babu English.
2. Affected accent.
3. Imitation gestures.
4. Memory for critics' names.
5. Forwardness to conjure theories
6. Faculty for boasting.
7. Talent for notes-dictating.
8. Ability for jazzy postures.
9. Grave appearance with sarcastic remarks or plebeian joking.
10. Readiness for self assertiveness and mud-slinging.

Nothing is so tedious and insufferable as the inabilities of the Indian teacher, and the sickly and anxious desire of the student to get a degree somehow. With the student the immoral habit of doing nothing, and expecting nothing more from the teacher than is required for the examinations is so ingrained that education becomes a matter of too degrading a mechanical preparation. Even in this mechanical preparation what goes on in the name of knowledge is really a sordid affair. With the teacher the immoral habit of 'teaching' through notes-dictation of lifted material is so common that educating the students has become a rank dishonesty. If you start as an English teacher, you must quote as much as the student cannot remember or grasp but will be impressed, because he has no idea of benefiting from the study of literature. The teacher's pretence and hypocrisy are in proportion to the credulity of the student. And the student's confidence about his teacher's merits is, again, in proportion to the teacher's success in tactics and self-advertisement. A university Professor is a failure only when he is an all-round failure. Any one evil habit will bring on success to him. Say, if he can read a guide and disgorge some lifted passages into the student's note-book, what else do you want on earth for success? If he has more than one evil habit he will be an all-round success; honors may come thick from above. I do not think that any relation is so shabby as the student's to his teacher.

Unless a teacher has the 'gift of the gab' he will not be popular with students. As regards such teachers who are not orators but who are sincere and 'give' notes for use in the examinations, no doubt their sincerity and notes will be popular. Pretentious teachers will be popular too because they can cheat the students. There are thousand false ways by which the teacher can be impressive to the student (In nothing the age looks its true characteristic as in this). But supposing we have a teacher who can give a good exposition of the text but who makes demands on the students for more intense relation to the subject, by asking them to apply their mind to the text with concentration, the chances are that he will be shunned. But if, on the other hand, a false teacher, having nothing to say and being unable to explain the text, can exhort the students as if he is interested in them and in the subject with apparently 'similar' demands on the students like the hypothetical good teacher, with "You know you must work for yourself. You must think for yourself. You must not expect spoon-feeding from me. What do you think I am? I am unlike (better than) other teachers. I expect the students to read the text for themselves. You must realize that you are post-graduate students in the university. You must set an example. I should like only to guide you", and, besides this hypocrisy, if he can terrify the students with bibliography, he will be their tribal chief and will be looked upon as such and worshipped with votive offerings. If this tribal chief is careful, stealing from others and dictating it as his own, his reputation will last, but if he is not careful, he will be found out, but yet will be endured. No student can ever know the text well because he is taught by false teachers.

The reason why we cannot rise to thought is that we have no training of the mind in this education. No teacher reaches a point of view, nor even strives towards it. Education of some kind without reaching a point of view is good enough for us to get on in life.

Besides, personal ambition, which gives us a sense of reality is what guides us now. Or, where we are confused and mistaken as we very frequently are, thoughtless impulses of vanity, sentimentality and exhibitionism organize our responses, which makes us poor and ludicrous in our mind. To say that we cannot rise to thought need not provoke us into anger or shame: to say it is not to say anything positive either. What helps us is the consciousness of those characteristic but defective modes of 'experiencing' a literary work common to this age, which have failed us. The moment we form an opinion we become thoughtless; the moment we form an impression, it leads to opinion unless we resolutely fight against it.

Not a single teacher knows that it is very difficult to write a sentence expressing a definite idea, a definite feeling and a definite attitude, and that to attain to the ability of writing well, the most rigorous discipline is essential. What the Indian teacher can offer to the student is cowardice, affectation and hypocrisy and what he offers to his junior colleagues is misery and frustration. What a strange teacher is the Indian teacher! He will never think of what the words say while engaged in reading a text, for offering an exposition of it to the class. He is always on the look-out for an idea or, if he cannot find an idea, he will put his commonplace ideas into it

But even if you explain a passage to a student and show its significance, he will not make anything of it unless he is cheated by being told that the passage in question illuminates such and such an idea, preferably, of idealism or spiritualism or of existentialism. It is so with the student as he has been cheated by teachers who read such ideas into the textual passages for they cannot grasp them and explicate their significance, being ill-informed about the subject and ill disciplined regarding the language. Imagine what an English Professor is like if he dictates notes on 1, 2, and makes knowing remarks such as 3, 4 and 5!

1. 'Emergence of Transcendental Fallacy in Emerson.'
2. 'Fictional Technique in Henry James's Ambassadors.'
3. 'English scholars are nowhere before German scholars.'
4. 'Cambridge University is insular.'
5. 'Dr Leavis is popular with undergraduates but I do not lose anything if I do not read him.'

The fact is that if the teacher is interested in learning from the text he has to teach so as to improve himself, he may teach it well but as he has no sense of the value of learning from it, not being interested in mental development, he will want only 'ideas' and expressions--for padding--to teach it, being of course, obliged to teach, and will get them from wherever he can. He cannot know the text even if he reads it repeatedly, which, in any case, he would not do.

Explanation is, for us, a matter of explaining petty details one by one but further than this is impossible for us; therefore, the urge for the teacher to dictate notes and talk of theories, and therefore also the demand of the student for something that will not be trying but 'useful'. The teacher has never been in a position to get over his difficulties with the subject so that he can be natural to the student: on the contrary, he is always uneasy regarding the subject and goes about it with a false pose.

I am sure of a few who are sincere in their pursuit of literature but their level is that of emotional fervor, and of impressive platitudes and phrases about 'aesthetic beauty' and so on, which has no point in it. Since, with respect to the importance of literature, they do not suspect the insignificance of their talk, they by habit, dwell on the pleasures of literature and work up some enthusiasm with cliches. When they talk to a responsive audience, they pour out everything they know about literature with untiring self-elation in a flow of quotations, while the audience catches up with the spirit of the speech. They glorify poets by literary and non-literary 'concepts' for the climax of applause from the audience. No doubt, they are enthusiastic but misled and are misleading. They never attempt to know what they ought to know; they can only do this if they question hard their own miserable want of self-knowledge, but, a standard of self-questioning does not exist for us. They live imagining that others think well of them and their gift for speech. They are confused but being unconscious of the confusion, they confound anything with anything else. In their case, an idea without precision soon goes over into a sentiment without force or point; they cannot hold precise ideas, their mind cannot bear precision, and they shuffle and rattle away all sorts of pseudo-ideas and bogus expressions³²; they do this in teaching a poem or anything else, when the upshot is that the student looks more impressed than confused, though more confused, in truth. Once again we are in the vicious circle of a meaningless teacher-student relation of false impressions. .

What makes me ashamed of the Indian teacher in English is that he is so shameless in speaking on any author whom he has not read but on whom he has a few shabby summary generalizations from a cheap source somewhere. But when he reads an author directly he has neither the training, nor the talent, nor the anxiety for self-education to go to the core of the organization of the work for benefiting from it.

What goes above his head is the centrality of the work itself because what he cannot bear is the demands of a complex experience. What is essential to grasp the work conceptually is unattainable by him, and he is therefore, under the threat of his incompetence being exposed in a confrontation. By cunning, and through naive tactics he avoids such a confrontation, but speaks of ideas. He refuses even to recognize thought in the work for fear of being exposed. Ideas which he can call psychological or philosophical are more than enough to keep his ground.

When we read a text, our (teacher's) instinct is for ideas about it and we either receive them with self-elation or passively. When the mind is filled with false enthusiasm on account of them, it cannot bear a message to the student. As we read a text, we will be

³² I am assured that the university teacher in Tamil also corresponds to my description of the English teacher.

engaged with the present sentence, forgetting almost what has gone before, when we finish the book, what remains of it for us is only general ideas, if not gross misunderstanding of its import.

The impact of literature on the student and the teacher is in proportion to the ability to keep alive in their mind the "message" of the classics. Both of them because of this education, can retain nothing of the classics in the syllabus for they can not penetrate to their significance. By habit they use their memory for retaining Some external knowledge, of opinions, and that too for the time being when it is essential Even when they retain any knowledge, it is not at all ordered in any form that makes its retention meaningful. Such is our 'training' - so hopeless our that mind cannot remember in that form those experiences related to classics in those connections that it can possess freedom to collate, and infer from them according to a principle and purpose. Such a freedom requires a kind of sensibility which we cannot attain to in this education³³. Even if our feeling is genuine and honest, we have no intelligence to direct it and no determination to learn things deeply and creatively.

As the teacher cannot teach the text well from his firsthand knowledge of it he tries to be sophisticated, and therefore, cannot avoid the awkward shifts by which alone he can manage the class. For so managing the class he yet demands credit. First of all he does not have knowledge in that form in which something is settled in the mind for communication. The wonderful thing is that he 'communicates' without the ability to write. The first requisite for the teacher is that he must give an exposition of the text, and he must set it down in his own language. All our teachers are without it. In place of exposition they make commentary which is nothing but borrowings, and in place of the ability to write, they show great talent for gossip about psychological and philosophical catchy expressions. A teacher does not know how to teach because the country does not know where it is going!

The curse of the university teacher in India is that he has to use English, without learning it well, for every important communication. So the student gets nothing from his teacher but his tricks of the trade; like his teacher he cannot help resorting to subterfuges to avoid his shortcomings being noticed, and like his teacher, he does not admit his own limitations. Strange though, 'learning' in this education has from the beginning degraded our mind, when all the time we thought it improved us. We thought it improved us because we got ideas into our head, ideas which, on the other hand, the illiterate have no use for. We could not measure ourselves against a disciplined mind for we have no instance of it amongst us. We judged ourselves by our illusions, and so also others by the same measure. Even if we knew anything, we had an idea or an image of it but we could not write it in a form. That makes us dependent upon those who acquired the form in writing (obviously, we have been dependent upon the West). We manage with their work, and the skills, if they can be called so, that we learn help us to get a job, what else do we want? Many of us say enough on this or that head³⁴. But I ask how can it be the right

³³ See the chapter on the Profile of the Indian student.

³⁴ All of us want to talk, if possible, impressively about literature rather than learn from it. We cannot bear the hardship of learning from it, being settled into a form of fixed dispositions and opinions.

thing? You might surprise me by "why should not we do what we are doing? and what is wrong with what we aspire for?" In doing what we are doing, and in our aspirations, we prove ourselves to be imbecile. I say, there is no honor, no standard, no manliness in the way we are going. The question is whether you care for them or not. Yet I know you do not. We cannot afford equivocation. To come to the point, there is not a single reason for our defense of our actions in this age.

The Indian teacher's first impulse is to admire an English author, whether he grasps him or not, on his first reading and teaching him, and it remains with him unalterable, lapsing into a habit, but if pressed for a precise knowledge of the author, he takes refuge in borrowed opinions to save himself embarrassment. Besides, he can put on excellent manners, put on a reserve or put up barriers in order to save himself from any chance of exposure. In this respect he is rarely unguarded. On this first impulse he makes no advance, and his command of the subject includes only some grammatical knowledge—the pride of our teachers—and potted opinions or modish ideas. He becomes so self-assured that there is no chance of making good his shortcomings and grows more and more irritable, if called in question. It would be a very rare thing to see a teacher at work for self-improvement. The circumstances of the profession, together with his ill-training and boastful or quiet egotism kill in him the instinct of self-expansion.

The teacher knows that the students do not make any demands on him. Therefore, he can manage with anything he can get up on the subject. But his knowledge cannot stand scrutiny. As teaching is without any standards, the teacher does not have any self-scrutiny as to what he knows, nor does he expect any scrutiny from outside. For instance, he is not afraid of humiliation for lack of a standing in the subject. He would labor under the illusion that he is good at his subject or be anxious for the good opinion of others, and secure it by bombast or display of 'critical' opinions. On the contrary, a teacher at Cambridge will have to prepare on his subject with certain standards in view. His interpretation must bear looking into in so far as it is a class material for the students. That he may be good or bad is another thing. He has to meet the student who makes demands on him, meet his colleagues' expectations, and make a name in the university, thinking of publishing his work. Therefore, he will test his preparation by what I call self-scrutiny. The Indian teacher is different because his conditions are different; he can be dishonest and lazy, and yet assert his claims to knowledge. He gets away with any gossip, with a mumbling, on the basis of a few borrowings from second-hand sources. He, quite obviously, does not think of publishing anything he prepares, and his colleagues do not expect anything of him, while his students want only dictation of notes from him or some gossip. I omit to say that the Indian teacher has been now publishing for some time; it is only a verbal manifestation of his miserable handling of the subject. One teacher does not have any expectations of another as there is no forum in the subject for common standards and intelligent communication. Also, one is so poor in the subject, yet so high in self-estimate that there is no question of one entertaining hopes about another. One teacher does not meet another as a teacher but as a companion far gossip or as an ill-disposed rival. We are all so damned ludicrous mainly because in our present institution of education we could not acquire a form to write in with ability; we are like the awkward sort of young people, doltish without form, perspective, and ability—for self-expression.

What is lacking in us is a capacity for argument and patience for organizing it. The ugly thing we do now is to string together unimportant opinions and quotations. As we express ourselves in English when we interpret a work, we are not sure of interpreting it without being ludicrous; therefore, we try to manage with affectations or with safe trite remarks. When none of us are above it, how can such value-judging words as 'brilliant', 'good', 'bad', 'original' and so on be relevant and meaningful to us? But still we employ them! You could see how a false idiom is formed with us. The Indian teacher's expressions in English are most empty and always carry for me something pitiable and despairing. 'Out of date', 'repetitive', 'cantankerous', 'academic', 'thought-provoking', 'obscurantist', 'lucid', 'vivid', 'picturesque', 'graphic', 'scintillating', 'motivated' and such like terms come to teachers so easy that they are used not for what they point to but for showing that they know about what they are talking.

It is very common for a teacher of the old generation to say that he does not see anything of value in modern literature. There is no need to take him seriously in that he never says anything worthwhile about the 'old' literature he likes, although he teaches it with so much gusto and eloquence. So also one of my generation makes much of modern literature with the assertion of some opinions and 'likes and dislikes', but, by the same criterion, you will see that one is rather self-important than intelligent in one's interest in it. You may at times find someone of the old generation exhorting us to go all out for modern literature, but this one loses head and talks the way he does, being anxious for compliments for his disagreement with his own generation and for fraternizing with my own.

Some academicians do not appear to be so bad as my description of them implies. They in vain try to improve, being aware of the conventional reproach of not being good. Some may not improve for want of urge for self-development. A great many conceal their poverty of mind by making accusations. These assume poses of scholarship and through verbal insistence, they pretend to stand for a 'dispassionate' point of view and analysis. There will always be a few who do admirable work whatever their limitations, and my agony is about our not having them in India. To ask false questions and raise meaningless issues in order to fill up pages for a thesis, shameful and nauseating though, is now an entrenched academic habit. Either we leave off this habit or we are doomed to stay inferior with a slatternly mind. To leave it off we must work hard, and make sacrifices. There is no alternative to it. And when an experience is formed, and when its pressure and coherence are compulsive, then it becomes storable and we undertake its articulation -- its form is unmistakable, while we must remember that, if we feel like saying something, it need not be compulsive, and we may be self-deceived by false enthusiasm and vanity.

The question what one knows relates to what we expect by habit from one who, we think, knows the subject. Someone who roars on an English author seems to us to know a lot; someone else who steals long passages from third-rate books of literary criticism and offers them strung together as his own seems to us to know more; still some others who can talk endlessly and pointlessly referring to several ideas, subjects, and authors without

shame seem to us to know most. How can, given our education, there be a scholar and how can we deserve a better scholar than those whom we admire by false impressions substituted for standards which we cannot have, since we do not know the subject, having studied it under sham scholars ourselves?

Can Professors of English literature be sincere teachers and good scholars? If you accuse the English professors in India of general defects, they even agree with you, each one feeling exempt from them but if you expose specific defects touching their abilities in teaching the texts and the quality of their mind, they will fly at you defending themselves by producing argument and evidence and hurling abuses at you. There is, however, a class of English professors whose position is safe, being invested with power, favored by authorities, and having made a name under false pretences, and who, therefore, need not have any conscience over what could be brought as true charges against them. Some of them retain only a few senses intact owing to success in the urban centers of fashionable life and alcoholism, and they take up teaching as a game in society life. Some others get a name for their American collaborations and the number of trips made to America, which boosts their local prestige and they become, for this reason, too elated and proud for teaching jobs, though they exploit their position in the teaching profession, appearing impressive by mumbling the latest critical vocabulary in the class room, across the air and in magazines and showing off as V.I.Ps in seminars and conferences. Career diplomacy infects them to the core, and they warm up to the chances of success with pleasing manners and invitations to dinners. There is a third kind of professors less successful, and attractive but equally secure in their places through mofussil cunning and by toadying to the authorities and terrorizing the subordinates.

When a teacher of English believes that some of his students understand a particular poem or a passage from valuing their written commentary on it, it can only mean that he misunderstands it as much as they do. His understanding (misunderstanding) amounts to having a few commonplaces, and students are right for him, as long as they can say the same commonplaces. For the teacher as for the students there are certain commonplaces applicable to any kind of poem, provided they refer to the contrast between idealism and materialism, progress and backwardness, human happiness and so on. It is really harrowing that the most fundamental defects of the student in the organization of his essay are never noticed by the teacher himself, for lack of training; he is no better than the student in organizing an essay. When the teacher goes over the student's essay, all that he can do is to spot a few grammatical mistakes according to his knowledge of grammar. Since he cannot see other mistakes, he comes down hard on the student for grammatical solecisms and, I forgot to mention, spelling errors (Sp-gr). Even if the student writes the most awkward sentences, unrelated in organization, but without any faults in grammar, the teacher will tick it off as a good essay. If the teacher is not so old and if the student happens to be a good-looking girl with convent education, he will announce from the house-laps that she has a style of her own, and he would be eager to impress on her his flattering estimate of her English.

When a teacher expresses opinions and defends them I doubt he could have arrived at them, since he has no knowledge of the text to which they refer in order to form them, I

am questioning the very possibility of a textual knowledge for the university teacher in India, I question it because I know for certain that there has not been a case proving it to be possible, Even if he claims it, --textual knowledge -- it is a false claim as there is nothing coming in the way of true judgment from it. What could happen is that he forms opinions not grounded in his experience of the text but drawn from a commentary of someone on the text. No doubt he thinks, he will lose his face, unless he can lay claim to the parentage of his opinions, That his command of English is poor, that he is vain of his superiority, and that the conditions of our education are most harmful, should be conclusive proof against the possibility of a sound knowledge of the text and sound opinions on its value, though in argument we would not like to be so categorical -- since it is so damaging to the teacher's position of trust -- in our denial of the possibility of teachers forming opinions grounded in their knowledge. It is self-evident that we cannot be educated by reliable teachers, I stress the word 'reliable' in order to point out how, as teachers, we have no true standards of an understanding and mastery of the subject, and of ability for written work and yet are vain and are in fear of being exposed if we accept such standards, although none of us are tired of repeating that students have no standards and that therefore we must immediately set ourselves to a 'program' of improving them. Well, when a teacher expresses his opinions and slicks to his guns, what he betrays is ignorance of the subject and an assumption of general opinions. With such a teacher discussion will be frustrating as we are expected to make provision for his false position in the subject.

We cannot read a literary work well and digest it because I we want ideas about it and so the experience of reading a text for us comes very much to the reading of ideas (our own or someone else's) into it. Our habit is to accept ideas and resist everything else. A work reads easy if we read ideas into it. To whatever is difficult and complex, Our habits are opposed and we are crazy for entertaining ideas of it. We have too little sense to know that the most difficult in knowledge is the most difficult to learn. I think that to learn the text of a work without facile and irrelevant ideas about it, we have to alter the present age itself. Our sense of it can never deepen beyond facile generalizations we adopt from someone else. In effect, when we write down this 'sense', our sentences are flat and ornamental, or quaint, and yet we attempt to give them a modish turn by sticking into them some colloquialisms from modern British and American usage. What kind of mind can it be as a result of such a learning? Can we ever master any classic' of literature inwardly and can we ever hope for the power of judging it on the basis of the rich experience of its details and implications?

Doesn't any literary work become for us an uncreative experience, when we make a few ideas of it, remembering only purple patches? Our habits of self importance and of generalizing without point or believing in pointless generalizations, make any work of literature an uncreative experience for us. We make nothing of our literary studies. What we get out of a literary text is a mental copy of false impressions and, later, of ideas and opinions lifted. This copy remains unchanged even if we read the text of a work more than once, which we do not usually. With the eulogies the author receives from us in offensive taste, and with this copy, there is no question of drawing anything from the rich experience of the text. Once our mind is provided with facile generalizations, and in the

British period nothing deeper was attractive to us, our habits of understanding and interpreting are most capricious, egoistic, and invariably ludicrous. We have, in short, wrong habits of following unchecked impressions and of holding or asserting anything for the sake of prestige. Reasoning from one point to another following the crucial details of the text, in the nature of things at present, does not take place with us. Our mental activity is more like a somersault shifting from one idea to an entirely different one, and from one level to another and therefore, hardly coming to a point. One teacher yells out his opinions with a mind unmistakably characteristic of a lunatic, and another not being a lunatic, emphasizes madly the right to hold his opinions. We must put up with such a lunacy, and must honor such a right, of course. A word about a few -- only a few are there -- fashionable, sophisticated professors and lecturers in English teaching. They are more successful than others, for their pose is very impressive. They teach the text of any literary work with their own 'opinions', 'authoritative' critical knowledge, with 'romantic' accent - a bit effeminate when they want recognition for it-and with asides on Western music, films, angry young men, hippies, and existentialism. They shrug their shoulders ever so often, repeating 'Well, you know, you see...., ... so to speak...' and other such tags. English Literature has thus been blasphemed in the Indian class-room by these Professors and lecturers!

Fake work according to the time-table is all that a University English department can lay claim to. There will always be some schedule in force, but there can never be a true communication about the literary works in the syllabus so long as the teacher is wanting in a sense of literature but manages with a shoddy knowledge of opinions for classroom use and holds forth Indian commonplaces in a quixotic way. The Indian teacher's readiness, for what strange reason I do not know, to offer to talk on any subject is something disgraceful, but we seem to think that admitting incompetence on any matter we do not know will be a blow to our prestige. The Indian teacher is cheap-jack and ill-trained with no capacity to write well but with a mania for talking and his pitiable belief in his superiority.

Suppose a university teacher is to teach Shelley's 'The Defense of Poetry'. There are three courses open to him: one, to talk of Kant, Hegel, etc., and leave Shelley alone; two, to dictate a large part of Bradley's essay in the class solemnly and three, to lift from a shabby Indian edition which pretends to give a summary of it-the Indian hogwash. It is impossible for us to be clear-headed about it mainly because we do not concentrate on the text with improved sensibility. Clarity in the Indian mind over any matter under consideration is very, very rare indeed³⁵. In other words, we do not know how to give content to Shelley's language and value-judge it. In view of our failure to master it, we

³⁵ I have been teaching 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' to M.A. degree students for some years. My observation is that the complex experience of Eliot's sense of tradition is something they cannot grasp, though I explain it as far as I can. They go on identifying their customary idea of tradition with Eliot's sense of it or they get hold of ideas from critics without understanding them. It looks as if it is much easier to teach them differential calculus. A writing representing complex experience is too difficult for the contemporary Indian because it demands exercise of the mind imaginatively.

resort to one of the three disgraceful courses of 'teaching' the text. Let it be remembered that the same lecturer who does spend one class on the philosophy of Kant, Hegel, etc., (about whom he can know nothing) dictates notes (borrowed from Bradley or the Indian edition) in another class to the same students.

The student, and equally the teacher, faced with a sentence with a richness of sense, attend to it only to see a clue in it to a train of commonplace ideas, or of associations habitual to them, which they express in chaotic and miserable English. The stupidity of it all is that they believe themselves to be in the right and resist tooth and nail any correction. The ill-training inherent in this education makes it a natural habit to mistake a sentence, imagine it to bespeak one's common place idea and to believe oneself unassailable.

I feel ashamed when I notice how facetious and irresponsible many English teachers are when they dismiss an author or a work with facile remarks, only because they can never master either but wish to look big and superior. The fact is that they are shameless, and are up to cheap tricks to make believe that they are wonderful in scholarly attainments. Can we change this mind of ours? If we want to change, realizing how poor we are, there cannot be any quick remedy, but we must undergo a severe discipline of self-education.

Allow your mind to learn and grow rather than be set by a false idea or impression. Work hard to master the subject and express yourself with force and clarity. Always prefer to state experience and avoid affectations. Always check with what form of consciousness you express yourself when you write a sentence. Question hard your own sentences and do not spare yourself. However difficult, bear your errors being exposed from the viewpoint of standards. You can never be intelligent unless you are able to set up standards and judge the relative merits of what you read. It does not imply that there is a program of easy work for self-improvement or methodology of better learning. It is a question of inwardness. You attain to it if you are serious, if not, you will not; It is difficult to describe how to work in order to improve one's mind. It is none the less true that a mind bent on it can achieve it, though it is subject to limitations. We fail of it usually when we learn things from false stimulus, when we are controlled by self-interest, when some progress seem to serve our purpose making us stop with it, and when we do research with an ambition to do well regardless of the quality of the work we produce. Further we fail in self-improvement, it being impossible for us to escape the attractiveness of ideas, the force of impressions, the convenience of lying, the pull of modern habits, the consideration of self-interests, the novelty of a fashion and the hope of doing well by pretentiousness or affectation or a pose. First of all, we could only be naive or affected or de-Indianised since our social life under the European impact could not offer us maturing experiences. In this social condition, the state of our mind is never favorable to our educating ourselves to a 'free play of intelligence'. And yet if there is a real urge for improvement, and a determination to have it at any cost, of course we can have it. But we can have it only at the cost of immense sacrifice. Of our students only a few work hard to get an attractive degree, but even they will not make sacrifices for mental improvement. That is to say, written exercises, when we are mature students (but we finish our education before we are mature) take us a long way towards improvement,

but only in a real institution, which so far we could not have. We now have to overcome several misfortunes. It is a problem of giving in or getting ahead. It must be remembered that so far no one who received this education with success could establish a point in any matter under discussion in his subject, illustrating and defending it by cogent argument. Stating any matter cogently is impossible for the teacher, and it goes without saying that the student cannot be different. The Indian student is the poorest in understanding, and the greatest cultural problem India faces now is that of the education of its youth.

The teacher's failure to master a literary work is certainly due to lack of training. Confronted by the text the teacher must first present the meaning-of it, secondly, work it up into an argument showing the sense of it and finally, enlarge on its experience implications. Formal 'training' provided in our education is too, too poor for mastering it. Nor is the teacher under any inward pressure to master it. Our teacher, our university teacher, I mean, with his Ph.D. from overseas, gets bogged down at the meaning level itself and reckons upon psychological ideas, etc., and a pretentious knowledge of critical concepts bearing no relation to the text.

To start with, no teacher ever taught our university students why one sentence is better than another, but he would leave them to hold as good whatever strikes them as such. Secondly, we never had a real course of translation exercise at any stage of the students' career after school leaving. Thirdly, both the teacher and the student are bound by false opinions without linguistic skills and discipline. Lastly, being poorly educated and under the influence of ideas and self-interests, they have no sense of civilization and culture, of the value of literature, the place of thought. But this modern teacher and the modern student will assert their opinions and claim too much for themselves. It would never occur to them, even if they are told, that so much must go into an opinion to carry weight, and to arrive at an opinion is the right thing, and not to get one or form one groundlessly. To be a teacher with an ambition to do more than a teacher can do is creative, but it is very strenuous to teach with such an ambition, particularly when faced with a bleak prospect of realizing it in the hard conditions of teaching in India. But alas! to teach with no like ambition is to be a deadly philistine. First, there is the crushing work of self-improvement which none dare undertake. Secondly, the teacher has no guts to swim against the current. To swim against the current is not easy, in the present conditions, but expecting a teacher to do so is to ask of him to use the weapons of intelligence and criticism. Of course, the teacher is too uncreative to forge these weapons. What makes teaching a graceless profession is that the teacher is imprisoned in his incompetence and philistinism, and is wanting in the strength of inwardness against the success in the contemporary India of the partisan rebel, politician, businessman and of the philistine civil servant, doctor and engineer. Their success, to see the age in its characteristic spirit, is an offence against the sensibility of intelligence and self-criticism.

A superficial theory or idea is a stalking-horse for the English teacher's failure to deal with his subject squarely, to make it a meaningful experience to the student in the classroom. The teacher's proper business in teaching, say a poem, is to present it to the students with its experience and relevance in such a way that they must apply their mind to it. But the teacher now fails to do it for want of good training, for being possessed by

bad spirit, and dodges it, reading his habitual commonplace ideas - of idealism and spiritualism etc, into the poem, and offering to the students a false sense of it in shabby English with boastful affectations. I do not think there has been any other communication in our departments of English in our universities. Something could be done to offset the ill-training of the teacher if he undertakes self-education, which he won't, as he is least bothered about his mental improvement, knowing nothing of its value, and therefore, caring very little for it. A University is too much a philistine centre for concentration on self-improvement but the teacher, however, would take the trouble of doing anything to get a Ph.D., here or abroad, retaining the same habits of in-training and dodging the real work to be done on the poem In this phase of our civilization, he, *qua* teacher, does not know what to do, which in fact, is the effect of not knowing what kind of mind he must have and what kind of man he must be with such a heritage as ours.

As I said at the beginning, no Indian teacher ever likes questions from his students, but expects his students to answer his questions in the classroom and the examination hall. If the teacher knows his subject well, questions by students must be a pleasure to him, since he can deepen his relation to them by answering them. It is otherwise with the teacher, because on account of his ill-training he never asks questions himself and answers them. It is surprising to know that the teacher never asks questions himself and when they come from the students, he resents it. One will be surprised because one imagines that questioning and answering are simple, and the teacher will have no trouble with it. But I believe that there is nothing simple in literature. All questions are complex and fundamental if they are right questions. The teacher himself does not raise them, for they are troublesome to him, and he resents them from the students for they are a threat to his position, as he imagines. And when he sets questions for the examinations, he does it stupidly without knowing the subject, with the previous question papers in front of him, and attempting at loftiness or smartness, though the effect is far from what is intended. When he 'evaluates' the answers, he does not know which is the answer and which is not, but awards marks or grades according to the number of grammatical and spelling mistakes which he could spot. Of course, the answers are not answers of any standard, just as the questions are not the right questions.

In any English department teachers of philistine habits get crazy over new courses, new methodologies, and research techniques, which is shocking. They bear down on the students with self-importance. They will not introduce literary works to the students without the ballyhoo of these modern vulgarities, which are false, ruinous, and wasteful. The student will soon be formed like his teachers with nothing of intelligent application to his subject. We have, now, a new breed of teachers and students whose attainments are shameless, whose standards are not worth speaking about and whose postures are unbearable. What can happen to the teaching of literature in their hands can easily be imagined. As men first, and as students, secondly, of literature what is common to all of them is a deplorable want of inwardness. You fear that they cannot learn to speak and write well. They look such poor specimens of human qualities.

Even supposing that he does home-work on his subject and produces something passable, the teacher finds himself in a false relation to both the subject and the students because of

his habit of lecturing often on different topics without being in contact with the written work of the students.

Take for instance his handling of Milton's 'Paradise Lost.' The teacher will talk of the epic form of Homer and Virgil whom he can never know, and then read aloud the text poorly, stopping only to give meanings for difficult words and, if at all, wrong explanations. He will do it because he cannot read 'Paradise Lost' comprehending it and forming the total experience of it with the ability to put it in writing on sound principles of understanding. If the teacher is below forty-five he will dwell on critics by which his ranking goes up in the mind of the student who identifies him as a scholar. He will not finish the text (one of the twelve books) in time, but usually he will take extra classes to show that he is too scholarly to cover it in the period of time assigned to it on the timetable, when, before the examinations, the student arms himself, though forgetting his teacher's Milton, retaining some trace of the impression that his teacher is a scholar, with scraps of some notes from a wretched guide which will do for any kind of examinations including the competitive ones.³⁶ As for the quality of teaching, there is not even a reference to the organization of the poem in the classroom meaningful to the student who, in the present manner of teaching, remembers a few praising epithets concerning the poet and the poem, and nothing else. Just as the teacher in India is for ever ill-trained for good teaching, so also the student is for ever incapacitated for writing a sentence with a sense, and discriminating a good sentence from a bad one. We ought to ask, but we don't,

1. Has the teacher an intimate knowledge of the text?
2. Does he communicate it successfully to the student?
3. Does the student benefit from it?

The gulf between the ability to write and the superficial gift of talking about the work one teaches is so wide that nothing worthwhile has come of the teaching of English literature for over seventy years in India. But still, big claims are made and will be made for the shoddy work now done in the name of teaching and research.

Take students who admire a lecturer, and in turn, lecturers who admire a professor, and professors who recommend authors by praise. Neither the admiration nor the recommendation has any point in it. Their very idiom of communication is pointless and rotten, and you cannot find a sense-filled word or sentence, although they habitually brag of their competence. Here, the important thing to note is that when anyone is held up for admiration, it is difficult to believe that he deserves it, knowing how inexorably we go wrong in our judgment, thanks to this education and the European impact on us.

When we lecture on a text we feel we have said something which the students could not follow. That the students often fail to grasp anything worthwhile that is said is true. Equally true is that we deceive ourselves in taking what we said as worthwhile. Then, the

³⁶ My advice, ironical though, to the students has been that if one wants to be more successful than other examinees one must be more successful in cheating the examiners than others.

question whether students follow us or not does not arise as long as we do not say anything worthwhile. That we could talk long on a subject is a surprise to ourselves only, to which is added our illusion that we do well in it. But, we talk long because we talk meaninglessly. We can only see its meaninglessness if we put our talk to the test of writing. The affectations and tricks of the university teachers are very much like the petty thefts of lurchers, and when they speak and write cannot rouse a better feeling in us.

The bad academicians are silly as much as bombastic, dealing in abstract generalizations. The malodor of their opinions, and of their claims, gets on your nerves, and the humility/pride of their bearing is a vexation. The good academicians are in more than one sense admirable, but their habit under the given training is to make a 'point' without hitting the truth, because they are not passionate and disinterested to discover the truth. They are useful but very limited in value. While we must avoid the danger of being blind to their work, identifying them with the bad academicians, we must also take care not to come under their tutelage by a mistaken value of their work. However, the academic bent in India is always unmistakable for its duffing, and almost all academic writing in India is a compost of awkward and pretentious sentences, ill-formed under the helpless condition of false ideas and affectations, with poor English at its service.

The ultimate purpose of teaching literature is to impress on the student the value of literary works and to enable him to set up standards from a sense of this value. The whole question for the teacher centres on mastering classics, his will-power to do it and his ability for it; but he is liable to think of what he knows about them as equivalent to a sound mastery, when there is hardly any ground for such an estimate. The test of one's mastery of a classic is a good written exposition and an intelligent interpretation of the text. By this test the Indian university teacher is an unqualified failure, and his claims for mastery render him rather comical. The only merit about him is that he is not conscious of any shamelessness associated with such a failure. It is plain that an English teacher is not a bearer of values in any sense.

That the condition with our teachers of English literature in our universities is deplorable, with their not being able to translate a passage of English prose into their own words, but, nevertheless, undertaking research and lecturing 'scholarly' on the prescribed text with no small a claim for their mastery of the subject, is what I want to get acknowledged. But to bring this condition to the notice of our university teachers would be scandalous to their self-confidence, even if they know that they are as bad as I described. They would like to have it as a professional 'secret' kept from the public, and particularly from the authorities and students.

We hold teaching positions in our Universities not by virtue of our standards but for want of those who possess standards. When I had to teach the P.U.³⁷ students in Madras Christian College, I was nearly of the opinion, which every lecturer in India repeats for self-importance, that I was teaching my lessons well but the students could not understand me. I say it is an opinion we all hold because we believe we know English

³⁷ Students who undergo a year's study of specialization before they enroll for graduation.

well and we leach it far above the students' head. Thus, we come to put the blame on the students self-righteously. Let us see what is true. Granted the students are poor in English, and therefore, cannot follow you, how is it true that you are teaching well? Could it not be that you 'are not teaching well but think you are? Could it not be that you are doing something else which the students find difficult to make out? The P. U. syllabus of English consists of long excerpts of English prose from several authors along with a few small poems, which the English teachers, doing either prose or poetry, must finish within three terms (about 180 days). I said that I was nearly of the opinion that I was leaching my lessons well but the students made little of it because of their poor English. I could have made everyone -- the Principal, my colleagues, and students--believe in the opinion by the sheer prestige of. my Cambridge degree. What shocked me at first was not the students' poor English. Following the shock was the question facing me whether I was teaching at all. To test it, I stopped doing what I used to do -- to talk about the text of the lesson with the explanation of the difficult words which I could do impressively. On examination into what I was talking I caught myself being dishonest. Truly, I was not even being honest. Even if I were to be honest, it would only improve my human relation to the students but not my teaching. I was unable to teach the text well, and I was doing what I was expected by the convention here, and I held a self-important opinion of my teaching. I talked everything and anything but obviously without argument in good sentences - that is the convention. Then I knew how to test myself. I set out to summarize each lesson in my words in a form communicating the substance of the text. It was a crying failure. I felt so miserable being a teacher, not because according to the conventional standards I was not successful, but because in writing, organization, and inwardness, I was so deficient and the bad state in which I was placed could not be cured. Earlier I had talked so confidently and vainly about the lesson and nearly thought the students blameworthy, but now when I tried to paraphrase it into an argument in my own words, and in good sentences, I just could not do it. Somehow I could paraphrase it, but I had not the least doubt of its being anything except shabby and disgraceful. I took pains but without allowing myself to mature. However, this exercise brought me to my senses. With this awareness I spared no teacher of English, demanding from him some real standard of English, for which I got bad name and false admiration together. From my experience I find it very true that if you master the work you are teaching with a purpose to improve yourself, you will know how to get it across and the students can be drawn in. You will have no trouble with teaching so long as you do not stand on your head with foolish ideas about yourself.

