

## THE TEACHER'S VAINGLORY AND MISDOINGS

I deal with the English teacher in this section believing that, if you know what you ought to know about him you have as good a hold on the contemporary history as you wish. That is because we answer three, relevant questions:

1. What kind of character is the Indian teacher in English?
2. Has he such abilities and virtues as promote sound education and secure our civilization against its hostile forces?
3. Is he not representative of the Indian philistine of education and power? or Is it not that the major contemporary forces make him representatively modern ?

You must ask yourself further to see my point, why is he not a better teacher and a better man than he is now? If you do not care for this line of enquiry, you will either blame me for being too hard on him or accept him, with a certain amount of cynicism, saying "It is common in India, and why all this exposure? He might as well be left alone?" To have no sense of what we are doing and its consequences is truly the spirit of modernism, but this spirit threatens to wipe our identity of belonging to a distinct civilization out of existence, if we are not watchful. We are poorer in mind in this period, for in the institution of education the teacher is a total failure, being ill-trained.

If a teacher is such a failure, elsewhere we cannot expect a better instance of the modern Indian. The first proposition we can make about the community of teachers is that with the modern spirit the teacher cannot be devotedly interested in his work, since like every Indian he is absorbed in money-making, status and power. The proposition is so true that it will be self blind to disregard it. Take for example, the case of a professor who served for over thirty years as a teacher. First, I don't think he ever bought a single book on his subject for his use. Secondly, he never taught his subject with any worthwhile knowledge of it. Thirdly, all along he had been a money-lender, being preoccupied with his business at home and equally, in the institution. Fourthly, through his power and dissimulation, he earned a name as a strict disciplinarian and through his palavering<sup>1</sup> habit, he earned also some reputation in his subject. If you scrutinize him, you will find that all the common attributes of officialdom and philistinism make him what he is now - a monster.<sup>2</sup> I do

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<sup>1</sup> For instance he would say on any occasion such things as "What is Gandhism? It is but communism minus violence, therefore Gandhism is superior to communism etc. Our government must have a series of five year plans, not to curb private enterprises but to export Gandhism, the greatest contribution modern India, I am proud to say, has made towards peace, prosperity and harmony in this crisis-ridden world" and so on and so on.

<sup>2</sup> You could expect him to be cunning and suspicious and to bow to the authorities but to be haughty and nasty to his subordinates.

think that an average teacher answers to my description of this professor, except that he may not be so successful. Deep down he is totally unconcerned with his work as a teacher. That is really the point, and we must realize it, not merely being convinced of a few details in the character of the teacher, but knowing well the conditions binding his spirit and their connection.

I had been, years ago, the Director of a Summer Institute in English, which was intended for the training of college teachers in English, in some new methods of teaching the undergraduate. I did not have anything to do with lecturing work but I used to look after the finance of it. Something very interesting and peculiarly Indian, characterizing the teacher who is crude and mofussil, scrambling for bourgeois success, took place, and I recorded it then for its telling-ness in illustrating the idiocy of the participants, all of whom were M.A. Degree holders. We had a specialist from England, her name being Mrs. Gubbs, to give a few lectures to the participants. She had not been before to India, to anticipate what was going to happen. She gave her first lecture, and invited questions from the audience. Normally, one would not expect irrelevant questions. But the questions were unexpected though through triviality they escaped notice from everyone else except me. These were the questions put to her.

1. What is your husband?

2. At which university did he study?

3. What degree did he take and which grade did he obtain?

4. What is his present job and how much salary does he draw? All of them were from male participants, to be fair to the women participants, who never asked any questions. Well, no question regarding the lecture was ever raised from any quarter. Of course, she answered these questions delightfully, being unconscious of the crude mind she met with. What do these questions tell us about the Indian teacher? They certainly point to the absence of conceptual strength in him as much as to his disgraceful manners, -- to the lack of character and intelligence. Next, they show the preoccupations that beset his mind. Further, they demonstrate his being totally unconcerned with the subject. Lastly they prove that he had never risen to a mature level of mind so as to be sane and self-knowledgeable. I wonder if any communication bearing thought is ever possible with his mind! If you look at the questions in the light in which I looked at them, you would find the Indian teacher to be the most crude, penny-pinching and graceless character you can ever imagine.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> As I write this above account of the disgraceful behavior on the part of teacher, something darker comes to mind with the conviction that some of us are shameless and dangerous villains. Once the principal of my college sent for me. And as I entered his office, he asked me to take my seat, and handed in a letter to me. While I read it I was dazed. It was an anonymous letter full of malicious remarks on me and one or two other colleagues of mine (one of these is included so that the writer of the letter might not be suspected). From the references intended to make the remarks sound true, it was obvious

Most of the teachers just do not like to face a challenge and in point of behavior, they are downright liars, like petty shop-keepers without any moral sense; and it is needless to say that they can never have a tender feeling for anyone's suffering and the only theme of their life is a grim attachment to money-making and money-saving. Especially in money-saving they betray their mind -- the mind to which the mean way of living is 'natural'; and in addition, a thousand tricks for saving a few pennies. This plebeian side of the salaried middle class makes impossible even a little expansion of the mind by reading and learning; this one character of their mind accounts more for the degeneracy of teachers than any other. They are nasty and cunning, looking after their interests, and are so clever as to put on such disguises and throw out such remarks and insinuations about others as give the impression of their being morally superior.

Here I must relate a historical situation originating from the British rule of India in the 19th century -- very common indeed in the Indian circumstances -- which must be understood carefully. The nasty, cunning, secretive type of man comes to you in a humble and self-effacing spirit and gets his favors. And when you find him out and tell him off, he will turn against you and present you to the public as a very undesirable, corrupt man and so forth, 'exploiting' him, the lamb of angelic virtues. At times his abuse of you would be so flavored with the dirtiest words in the language that the public opinion will apply to you "where there is a smoke.....". Like a sower broadcasting his seeds, he broadcasts insinuations against you. When you pass in review the ways of

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that it could only have been written by one of the department. Nothing could be more like a villain than to have written such a letter anonymously.

When I became the Head of my Department I was young and there were senior members with their claims for promotion. But I was chosen from outside, which makes it obvious that I could not be blamed for anybody being overlooked. From the outset it was made clear that nothing else but teaching would matter to me and that the members would find me straightforward in my dealings., Still, I made as much allowances as I could for any force that might, out of jealousy, break forth against me, even though it meant going once or twice against my instinct of being straightforward. I made, in fact, such allowances as could help the department run without any trouble. But, yet, more than once, abortive attempts, disgraceful even to relate, were made to alienate the post graduate students from me and organize them into an overwhelming force against my position by whipping up anti-Andhra and anti-Brahmin emotions. These attempts finally ended in publishing an anonymous pamphlet, more filthy in its charges against me. This cowardly villainy of calumniating me is the commonest trouble I encounter from time to time, whenever I make my point bluntly against this or that corrupt practice. I never make my point for the sake of quarrelling with anyone, much less to belittle him; I believe it is a point, which cannot be helped if you are honest, against what is thoughtlessly going on in the name of teaching in particular. What I was expected to do, of course was to keep quiet and mind my own business -- the usual retort flung at me, is "Why attack anybody?"

living common to the modern Indians of provincial spirit in jobs, you will know that a great part of their time is spent in this mire of abuse and backbiting and falsifications. The first step the Indian villain of provincial spirit in a job takes to slander you is to write anonymous letters, and the next step is to back-bite you unsparingly. But he is capable of being more refined; he uses argument, making a plausible case against you by listing your shortcomings and failings, but at the same time not without some praise of some point in you, in a prejudicial language. Slandering, dissembling and harm-doing are so common to the Indian mind that if I were asked to represent it by three characters in English literature, I would mention Iago, Pecksniff and Uriah Heep.

With equal truth it may be proved that the Indian who acquires power is beastly, for he has no perception of anything else but his interests and caprices to be consulted in its employment, making use of every legal principle or rule cleverly, as though he is following it, but only to do as much harm as he can to others. Why does one work hard jealously (like preparation for examinations etc.,) to acquire power in any form? For nothing else but to be placed better than others without power. Then, it goes without saying what he will do with it. There is, now, no chance of any Indian coming to power to discharge the responsibilities entailed by it with a mature mind and a good sensibility for keeping to principles. One's mind is now so crude, so selfish that one comes to power in order to enjoy it. The power of learning in India cannot mature the learner and has little effect on the Indian character which is formed according to the forces under which one is active in seeking bourgeois success, and nothing powerful is evoked in us through the process of learning, changing us, just as nothing compels us to participate in what is deeply moving and peculiar to our civilization, making us humane. One is now grown up, educated, and formed for seeking sheer bourgeois success. Modern education, which we praise so much because through success in it one is assured of bourgeois success, has abstracted our mind from whatever promotes its growth, especially those achievements of civilization which give vigor and tone to our emotional life, and power and maturity to our mind.

A great many of the Indian teachers are imbeciles and swank-pots. As I mentioned in the first chapter a student in his final M.A. Degree class, who became a teacher the next year, held that Dr Mullick was a greater critic than Matthew Arnold, imagining that his Ph. D. degree made him superior. And, in addition to this imbecility, no Indian teacher is far from being irrational in his admirations and beliefs. Take for instance a university teacher, who believes that a certain showy professor is the best of all professors in India for his accent and for having been to America several times, and for his having published a few poems in the "Illustrated Weekly". This teacher thinks the best that could happen to any Indian is to be sent to a missionary school, and to a missionary college, getting a First, and the summit of achievement to be securing a rank in I A.S. examinations. That is to say, a young man with a different schooling and a different job is too inferior a species for this teacher whose mental habits in estimating persons and institutions are fixed in favor of believing only in positions, the Western model and in the importance of science. He is, here, as much irrational and false as any other Indian. Obviously, he believes the Western model to be the only right thing for India; the upshot is that the image of the West and its advancement is so insistent that he condemns India for its backwardness and

negates the Indian past. He doesn't think any other subject than a branch of science worth studying. He finds the Indians backward because they are not as scientific as the Europeans; hence, his habit of accusing others of not being scientific, etc. His state of mind is essentially modern, though he is not in any sense so sophisticated as the urban de-Indianised careerists. He is modern, wishing his children to be like these urban de-Indianised careerists. His mofussil, naive, crude mind cannot imagine anything to be better, for a young man, than a government job, and cannot conceive of any use for the Indian achievements in his own language, Sanskrit and music, but it can only believe in tangible things. And what is tangible for him is a young man studying a branch of science and settling down to a well-paid job, and secondly, India following the American methods to achieve a success similar to the American in business and technology.

The question that our consciousness of the teacher's state of mind ought to raise is, can he understand and teach a classic? We must, first, know what is it that he ignores as valueless? Quite patently he does not value a devoted study of language. He would certainly disapprove of anybody working hard to write well. The very issue of writing will even look strange to him. Such is the influence of the contemporary spirit in him. He resents being related to anything other than moneymaking, prestige and power. His spirit favors only good degrees with 'A' grade in education, and repels the very suggestion of anything being equally important.

We must next ask what capacity of mind for what and what energy of mind for what does he possess? While answering such a question, we must not forget his being a contemporary educated Indian struggling for bourgeois success with single-mindedness. The whole energy of his mind is absorbed in this struggle with the character peculiar to the contemporary India. He struggles self-blindly, though with a sense of being enlightened for receiving modern education, and along with it, superficial (and scientific) ideas. It is a struggle that makes him mean, secretive and nasty, that turns him impervious to any suggestion contrary to his 'ideas'. If, in the issue, he gets power, he is autocratic and revengeful, but if he is crushed, he is cynical, irritable and abusive with the slatternly habit of calling down imprecations on others. It is a struggle in which he throws to the wolves all decencies and all scruples. His mental energy is wholly directed towards his interests without the affections and relationships that an age-old tradition and a real feeling bind us to. He emerges as a monster casting aside everything unrelated to the bourgeois success he is hell-bent upon procuring. The interests for which his mental energy is reserved turn him into the typical modern character of the contemporary Indian under the Western impact.

Through such a struggle his inside is rotten with his ambition and the means adopted for its fulfillment. His inner self discards all moral sense for securing his interests or rather they compel him to relinquish it. Surely, you cannot have moral sense, if you make money, gain prestige, and secure power now in India. Here, regarding his mind, we must be careful not to confuse his capacities for pursuing his interests with those for learning, communication and expression. In him as in any Indian similar to him in mind, we meet with the famous Indian habit of being secretive, mean, scheming and nasty privately but announcing in stentorian voice -- so often we hear it -- ideals and programs which are

breath-taking. His typical relation to language is that, for his inner self, it is that of accounts, and that, for the dissembling self, it is that of flabby generalizations. Therefore, his capacity for understanding and communication is so severely limited that his mind is forced to rely on images, impressions and superficial opinions or ideas just as his character is conditioned by the impulses generated in the course of his struggle for bourgeois success.

The question then, for this teacher, of learning a classic and teaching it is essentially bound up with the contemporary forces at work on him. And the forces are what make him self-blind and incapable of understanding a classic, and of teaching it. Teaching is a function very much subordinate to his ambition and it is done without any interest in the subject. This account, though brief here, of the general conditions of the teacher must convince us that in his case failure is inevitable. True, to many of us his failure is not so obvious; but it is because, generally speaking, we do not have the ability to see it. Nevertheless it is a fact, and we cannot ignore it. It can be demonstrated if you look at his standing in the subject. In studying English literature, the University teacher has not mastered the rationale of English for training in the skills of writing well. I am sure that in the world the Indian professor is distinguished for his want of ability to write well, though, doubtless, his talent for speaking will, at times, be impressive. The poverty of the Indian teacher's mind in his subject and the conditions underlying it must never be lost sight of. Since we don't like to think that he is poor in his subject because we do not know the conditions for his poorness, I shall, here, produce an example of writing by two English teachers from Osmania University and make reasonable inferences. Dr V. A. Shahane, Professor of English, and Mr B.N. Joshi, Reader in English, brought out an anthology of modern essays under the head "The Modern Vision" with a short preface and long notes. It was prescribed for the undergraduates of Madurai-Kamaraj University, and I happened to teach it to a small number of students in the Evening College. I read the preface and was puzzled by its form, and substance. Since it is a very short preface of a paragraph, let us have it and see what it has that deserves our notice. Dr Shahane had his Ph.D. degree from the University of Leeds, and must have been distinguished by the maturity of years of teaching and research experience. Although Mr. Joshi is not adorned by such a degree, still, I think he too must have the maturity of teaching English literature for a number of years. Here is the preface bearing the stamp of their mind, and it could have been written by any other Indian professor. A more sophisticated teacher of the present generation would have written differently, but without any superiority in merit.

This anthology of English prose aims at projecting the image of the modern world in all its complexity and color to university students in India. Its twofold objective is to show different aspects and facets of the modern man and society and to convey this kaleidoscopic vision of the world of today through Essays and speeches which are in themselves fine specimens of modern English prose style. Aspects of our political, social and moral dilemmas and difficulties are dealt with in this anthology but this is not all. The prose-selections also express the visionary quality of their authors' minds: they contain the essence of the modern vision which is the solace of the present and the hope of future generations. It is sincerely hoped that this

anthology will give to Indian University students both joy and awareness of this moral vision and that it will help them to acquire intellectual curiosity and dispassionate judgment.

If we close this preface with, "and innate critical faculty", it wants nothing to have the full effect of the Babu English which it is. But, we accept this English as good and the teachers as admirable. They themselves make big claims for their merits. Are we right? Are we not self-deceived? How is it that we fail to notice that such a writing has no attributes of good learning and training, and of perceptiveness? In the present form of our education when they become Professors and Heads with attractive degrees, we take them to be competent in their job. Do we question them? But how can we question them, if we cannot set up standards? The first reasonable inference, therefore, is that because we cannot set up standards, being poor in our subject, we are deceived by the position of the teachers in university and by their degrees. Let us see if my charges against the university teachers stick.

There are five sentences in the preface, each of which is an offence against good training. The first sentence strikes the Indian note. It sets forth the aim of the anthology, rather too pompously. That the image of the modern world in all its complexity and color suggests want of modesty in the teachers is not the point, but to make so big a claim for their anthology shows their habit of conceiving. Whatever they want to say must be high-pitched. This habit arises out of an anxiety to be impressive, but they do not know their writing will give them away. If one knows the selections of the anthology well, and the purpose for which they are put together (to get the anthology prescribed so as to make money) and if one has sense as well as a good command of the subject, one would not write such a sentence. The anthology could project 'the modern world' instead of its 'image' and if the variety of selections in such an anthology shows 'all its complexity and color it would be too difficult for the poor students to digest so rich a nourishment!

The Indian teacher loves big words<sup>4</sup> and the second sentence is a good testimony to his love of them. '*Twofold objective*' could have been 'twin aims', but for the influence of speeches or writings of the linguisticians in the last one or two decades, Either 'aspects' or 'facets' will do, but the Indian mind wants more and more words in a sentence, The lofty note of the first sentence is sustained by 'of the modern man and society', The second part of the objective is puzzling, but being used to Indian writing, I anticipate it. How dear is '*kaleidoscopic*' to Indians! and how much more dear is '*kaleidoscopic vision*!' The function of '*this*' is what puzzles me, but I think sloppy habits of writing puzzle anybody. Here is presented no less than such a vision '*of the world of to-day*' in '*essays and speeches*,' 'which are in themselves fine specimen of modern English prose style<sup>5</sup>. Read

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<sup>4</sup> In India you will find a teacher regarding someone else's English as wonderful because it is to him high-falutin. He says so often naively "I like his English because it is high-falutin".

<sup>5</sup>All the selections are of columnist's journalism; and the tone of their authors uniformly betrays it.

this last part of the sentence omitting 'English' and 'style' and it sounds better, but it does not sound so to the Indian ear.

The third sentence is as senseless as the second, with more high-sounding words thrown in. To read 'aspects' of.....' is really unbearable, ending with a braggart's gesture, *'but this is not all'*; something still loftier is promised!

The fourth sentence fulfills the promise, enunciating 'the missionary quality of the authors. Nothing can be more representative of Indian writing than the second part. It has the mush of the *'solace'* with the gawky phrase of *'the essence of modern vision'*. Note how the teachers are unaware that *'also'* weakens the big promise.

If this flimflam of *'the image of the modern world'*, *'the kaleidoscopic vision of the world of today'*, *'the visionary quality'* of the authors and so on, is sense for us and if this gutless English of the university teachers passes as good writing, what hope can there be for us? I am sorry to go on, but note again how students are assured in the last sentence, of *'both joy and awareness of this moral vision'*, well, what to make of *'this moral'* qualifying *'vision'*? In Indian education, the students who go through this anthology, according to the teacher's sincere hope, will acquire *'intellectual curiosity'*, *'dispassionate judgment'* and, I say why not, *'innate critical faculty'* and *'scientific outlook'*, as this pair sounds as good as that one.

When an Indian reads such English, all the big words impress him and he makes his inference that it is good English. He does not even know that there must be standards for communication in writing and that what he must look for in such a writing is the presence of the mind which can perceive, infer and state well. When the readers are muddle-headed, the author will be either poorly or pretentious. You can only judge a sentence to be good or bad, when you yourself can write a sentence well. When we are so poor in learning and writing, it is quite natural to regard poor writing as good. If we are told so, we take offence.

You notice that words do not fall in their place according to a thinking habit, but they are placed according to an idea or sentiment which is attractive to them, at first, and which they think will be attractive to the reader, You will also notice the spirit of accepting the third-rate as good and making a bally-ho of it in unctuous language in the Indian manner. Surely, the passage has no sense that a thinking mind can accept. It is possible, of course, to argue that there is nothing wrong with it or to defend it apologetically with some specious reasoning. Actually, two lecturers defended it on the ground that one should not expect anything better in an introduction like that. There is the point. What I am concerned to show is very different. If the passage is defective, but good enough for such an introduction, I will be as ready as the other two lecturers to approve of it. On the contrary, I see in it such defects of mind as are a great menace to our civilization. They are defects unpardonable, for they presuppose an unintelligent and dangerous mind in us. Please note I am not confusing the Indian-ness of our English with the defective thinking which it is impossible to avoid on account of the Time-spirit and modern education. The Indian-ness of English doesn't worry me - as long as it doesn't mean the degenerate use of



it- so much as our poor habits of thinking which demonstrate the lack of power of mind in us.

Here are two university teachers who cannot do their job well, but we do not know their case to be such. What possibilities, then, are there, for anyone, taught by such teachers, who may even be reputed scholars, to benefit from the study of English Literature, allowing it to mature his mind?

We must further know something of the teachers' misdoings, when they commit them out of vanity and ignorance. Often they recommend a critic to students, knowing little whether he is useful or not. But they do recommend him, frequently with an emphasis on his merits or his being up-to-date and so on, which is a well-known way of exhibiting their scholarly mastery of the subject. Some teachers recommend 'this' critic rather than that one, but only to belittle those other teachers who do not know him. For an Indian teacher to know a critic seems to know so much that he boasts of his knowledge. Truly speaking, knowing a critic is a great relief to the Indian teacher who otherwise does not know what to do with a text. For obvious reasons he emphasizes his knowledge of critics and often talks of their importance. We must call his bluff now. Suppose he recommends Robert Penn Warren's article on Hemingway, and the student reads it. Our question then is: Is it a good article helping the student to be clear-headed and perceptive about the novelist? When we answer it, we will have answered three other relevant questions, and moreover, we will have a true sense of the 'nature of teaching and studying English literature in Indian universities. These three questions which we answer here but which the Indian teacher does not raise and the Indian student cannot imagine, are crucial:

1. Does the critic judge the novelist by setting up standards?
- 2 Is he perceptive about the novelist's work?
- 3 Is he an academician or a journalist who cannot help writing, setting himself up as a critic and not minding his own limitations?

The article on Hemingway runs to about forty pages. The critic treats of Hemingway's work comprehensively; he refers to most of his works, his development, his beliefs, his style, and the characters and other organizational matters in his novels. Strangely, he compares Hemingway with Wordsworth, bringing in some other authors in English and American literature. It would be the most interesting article to the Indian teacher, for there is novelty, comparison, impressive critical vocabulary, here and there admirable gesture of defiance, or dismissal of someone else's opinions and above all, there is the manner of appealing to the reader on current ideas outside literature. Let us see if we are wrong in raising these questions over Mr. Penn Warren's article.

He says in the midst of the article:

'This is not the time to attempt appraisal of Hemingway's work as of this particular novel-if there is a 'final' appraisal'.

Obviously he does not judge Hemingway. But if the first part of the sentence is an admission of his not having judged the novelist, the closing gesture invites us to his self-confidence that we ought to accept him (Hemingway) as a novelist deserving critical attention, though his expression is not adequate to the gesture, being 'playful' and wanting in point. It is a way of hedging about the gut issue in a discussion of a novelist's work. If there are no standards the critic is under obligation to produce, and if there is no judgment related to them, an article on a novelist would be, in the worst sense, academic journalism. But it is this academic journalism imported or otherwise that casts a spell over ninety- nine percent of the university teachers. There is the rub, and I would not take the trouble of proving an American critic unhelpful to the Indian students of English literature, had not the practice of praising American critics indiscriminately and of insisting on their being read come into force in India two decades ago. If the first question is left alone, the critic cannot avoid talking round the novelist and his work. But still, if he is perceptive we will have to give him due credit. What surprised me was rather the comparison between Hemingway and Wordsworth than what the critic says on this score. Let us examine what the critic makes of the comparison. He says so self trustingly:

"Instead of Wordsworth's peasant we have in Hemingway's work the bull-fighter, the soldier, the revolutionist, the sportsman, and the gangster; instead of Wordsworth's children we have the young man like Nick, the person just on the verge of being initiated into the world. There are, of course differences between the approach of Wordsworth and that of Hemingway, but there is little difference on the point of marginal sensibility. In one sense both are anti-intellectual, and in such poems as 'Resolution and Independence' or 'Michael' one finds even closer ties."

Is the author perceptive either about the one or the other in his comparison between them? No, he cannot be perceptive for the very reason that he does not answer the question about their relative status. Two people can be anti-intellectual without having anything in common' in point of the quality of their work. But the critic's statement of their having little difference on '*the point of marginal sensibility*' will, no doubt, be impressive and memorable to the Indian teacher, so also any empty statement with the novelty of a phrase like '*marginal sensibility*'. Because he does not raise the question, what does such a statement say about their work? Such a statement does not lead us to a perception regarding their work, touching us by its force and enabling us to retain its stimulus I do believe that the academic study of literature makes one a bad reader and a pretentious critic. You can compare a Shakespearean play, for example, with one of Shirley or Brome, making the latter seem worth more than what it is, because you can find similarities, and apply three fourths of the same critical vocabulary to both, without meeting any objection from your students. And the contemporary spirit is elsewhere so busy that it does not care to sit in judgment on your folly, and that, on the other hand, it will reward you for your labor in a 'specialist field' with an academic position.

The third question we raised about the article is implicitly answered for us by its failure to meet the challenge of the first two; we have already said that the article is academic

journalism, but we must have a stronger conviction on this point. To quote once more, and this time it is to make sure that we are not wrong in our estimate arrived at in the interests of the students of literature. Mr. Penn Warren goes on,

"I have just indicated a similarity between Wordsworth and Hemingway on the grounds of romantic anti-intellectualism. But with Hemingway it is far more profound and radical than with Wordsworth. All we have to do to see the difference is to put Wordsworth's preface to the 'Lyrical Ballads' over against any number of passages from Hemingway."

I stop here, for any more from this critic would be an agony to us. But I do refer to Hemingway's prose which we are asked to set against Wordsworth's Preface to realize the former's greater profundity in anti-intellectualism. We will have just a sentence from a long citation from Hemingway in the article to save space:

"There are many words that you could not stand to hear and finally only the names of places had dignity..... Abstract words such as glory, honour, courage or hallow were obscene beside the concrete names of villages, the numbers of roads, the names of rivers, the numbers of regiments and the dates".

Hemingway's anti-intellectualism would not appeal to me, however profound, but his English does not strike me as prose at all, considering the mental energy and its force in Wordsworth's Preface. For me Wordsworth and Hemingway are of two different orders with too wide a difference in mental strength and Wordsworth would have been as severe on the contemporary taste for Hemingway as he was on the taste of his times for German theatricals. Things are different in America for any author to be like Wordsworth – to reach the order of Wordsworth's mental quality. Anyway, I have no business, here, to comment further on the American conditions for an American author.

Lionel Trilling is another American critic very much valued and praised by Indian university teachers, and he deserves our attention like Mr. Penn Warren. No doubt, he is held as a greater critic, and I think he merits such an estimate. As an undergraduate I had some enthusiasm for him, but then, naturally, it cooled off after my reading a greater part of his work on Arnold (I didn't go further, when I heard Dr Leavis's remark, 'It is not worth taking the trouble of reading through.') and some essays like the one on Wordsworth, and his Freud's centenary lecture. I do not possess any other book except his 'Freud and the Crisis of Our Culture', which I bought at Cambridge and read at that time making my comments. Reading it again I do not blush at the estimate I made of him. Then, I dismissed his essay with the feeling that it was pretty bad-my then comments, though juvenile, illustrate it but without the ability to offer reasons for my evaluation. I read it now to know if the Indian teachers' praise of him has any reasons which I ignored. But, I have read it with nausea. A sensible estimate of it must inevitably disclose more of the Indian teachers' incompetence. The title itself is attractive to the Indian mind, which anticipates so much fare of profound thought from Freud being associated with the 'Crisis of Our Culture',--' Freud' 'Crisis' and 'Culture' carrying the intension of indefinite associations are a bait to any teacher and student of English literature in India. The

relevant questions that must engage our attention are, why do we fail to make a sensible estimate of Lionel Trilling? and why are we so readily attracted towards him? Again the teachers lack of good command over the English language and of mastery over English literature is responsible and equally, their conceptual poverty. We must also take into consideration the general condition in India, namely, that anything American is irresistible to the Indian mind. To fail to make a sensible estimate of the critic's writing at issue amounts to a failure in understanding it and in working it up into a conceptual framework, defining its merits and spotting its shortcomings. You cannot estimate it unless you are capable of being conceptual about it. If one is unable to be conceptual about it one makes one's way towards yielding to any prompting or illusion, or more probably one will come out with an opinion that may have arisen from self-importance or vanity or ignorance.

If we are trained to know a writer by detecting the quality of his expression, we could easily find the status of such a writer as Trilling. First, we must be able to judge from the internal structure of his sentences and their inter-relation. As we read a writer, his sentences must disclose his mind and its power. If, then, we examine him with standards before us, we scarcely fail to fix his rank. No doubt, if we are not trained in discrimination, we will be confused about him. It might also happen, on the other hand, that we are confused, but hold opinions about the author, and believe them. Indian teachers are never aware of their true relation to an author, but still defend their opinions (adopted mostly) as if they have arisen from a sound knowledge of the author. Look at the way we deal with English literature; you will acknowledge that any pose, any pretence, any opinion, any thing but good teaching is now possible. So long as we are ill-trained without the ability for discrimination, our mind is anything but capable of value-judging. It is bound to be not only confused but also assertive, since it cannot bear to know its limitations. Whether we can be trained for discrimination depends upon the age. True, modern education seems to have provision for 'all ideal things' but nevertheless, we emerge, finally, as philistines with a crude and obtuse mind. When education has provision for all ideal things you *may receive training in discrimination*, but without being able to discriminate because you do your exercise without the urge or ability to discriminate and your teacher 'guides' you only according to an educational program without feeling its importance in relation to the achievements of the past. If you have an education in which you have everything on the list -- ideally prepared in imitation of the American education, but if you have, no true theme related to your past, informing your living -- it is quite impossible to work up any interest in training for discrimination for such an interest means concentration on language and its achievements, which is ruled out under the circumstances in modern India. What interests us is what really matters, but I am dead certain that to study a language and its achievements for the growth of the mind does not interest us in the least, Our education is too defective to promote such an interest in us. At a stage in our education when the study of our own language and its literature must be central to our mind, we have the overriding importance of English, which is so poorly taught that we use words as symbols unconnected, being unable to use them as connectives. It follows that our mind is too ill-formed for a skill in writing and for understanding and judging an author. We get our power for discrimination from the conditions governing our life, but such conditions as give us power are now non-existent.

We get our ability for discrimination from training but, our education answering to the, modern conditions has no such training to offer us. We are what we are now, without skill in writing and without the capacity for judging the author we read or teach. We shall now see what we ought to do with Trilling's essay, but, as I said, could not. The essay falls into two divisions, and in the first, the author establishes three points of common ground between Freud and what he calls 'the tradition of literature', which is an empty phrase. The three points on which they converge are: the 'conception of self' to which 'literature is dedicated'; the reality principle and the pleasure principle; and the theme of opposition between love and power. In the second division he gets down to the "crisis of our culture", the grand part of the title, rousing expectations in us, It is, of course, even possible, if one can, to infer from the title itself that the author will be impressive rather than penetrating. If he faces an audience which can make an inference like that, he will think better of delivering his lecture. On the contrary, we the readers seem to be impressed by the title as much as, later, by the substance of his lecture.

Suppose he established successfully a common ground between Freud and literature on such heads, would it be meaningful? No, it cannot be because nothing relevant and valuable can be drawn from literature in such a manner. As for me I do not care if there is anything useful in Freud on these heads. Look at the title and his argument, you will not find the author's lecture worth while. His argument is according to his capacity. The gap between his generation (the 1920s) and the 1950s is, it seems, very wide due to social, political and scientific changes. Well, that is a commonplace. But a proviso is offered from which we have the development of his argument, namely that both are closer, nay, closest, on account of the literary creations and ideas of the 1920s still dominating and puzzling as much to the later generation as they were to him. This closure of the gap is again because, 'literature is dedicated to the self' and Freud subscribed to this idea of the self in his works. What follows is doddle but must have been impressive to his audience, and, I am sure, is marvelous to the Indian university teachers. What literature has been doing down the ages (his idiom) according to Trilling, and what Freud does in his works, is the recognition of self-hood in others, and we must therefore believe in it, that is the point. Recall the title and now look at the manner of his argument, and much more, at the profundity of his ideas as a result. For the name he made as a man of letters and as a distinguished professor of English literature in America, it is not a little distressing that he talks of literature and Freud with no real connection helpful to us. For a critic who wrote a large book on Matthew Arnold it is very annoying that he should have recourse to such far-fetched and empty ideas to bring literature and Freud together. His essay has too little form, too little honesty and much less depth, to recommend itself to our attention. But, the title is grand, and, of course, references to many authors inside, though irrelevant, are as grand in effect. There are several indications throughout the essay, and interesting to us, of his wide range of superficial knowledge -- in references supporting his argument -- quite in keeping with his position as a well-known academic professor in his time. But we do not see that he found anything useful to us in consequence of his thinking about the question he sets. As far as he can make superficial inferences, he establishes his first point. He says,

"In almost every developed society, literature is able to conceive of the self, and the self-hood of others, far more intensely than the general culture ever can..."

To this idea of literature, which is his painstaking discovery, Freud must be conjoined. But he is conjoined to it by Trilling by an unexpected transition. Yes, unexpectedly, Trilling employs Coleridge for the transition. To refer to Coleridge is scholarly, but to refer to him in an off-hand manner is to be still more scholarly. I will give a long passage from Trilling without any apology, for we must know that he talks without a point, though he seems to make a point so impressive to his audience and so marvelous to the Indian University teachers. If we could see what, as I said above, the internal structure of his sentences disclose, we will profit by reading closely this passage.

"One of the best known tags of literary criticism is Coleridge's phrase, "the suspension of disbelief." Coleridge says that the willing suspension of disbelief constitutes Poetic faith. I suppose that we might say that it constitutes scientific faith to;), or scientific method. Once we get beyond the notion that science is, as we used to be told it was, "organized commonsense", and have come to understand that science is organized improbability, an organized fantasy, we begin to see that the willing suspension of disbelief is an essential part of scientific thought. And certainly the willing suspension of disbelief constitutes 'moral faith - the essence of the moral life would seem to consist in doing that most difficult thing in the world, making a willing suspension of disbelief in the self-hood of someone else. This Freud was able to do in a most extraordinary way, and not by the mere impulse of his temperament, for he was not, I imagine, what we ordinarily think of as a sympathetic man, but systematically, as an element of his science".

In continuation of this passage, Trilling bumbles on to inform us, as pointlessly as elsewhere, how Freud was taken for a ride by some of his patients who told him made-up stories about themselves, from which 'scientific' inferences were drawn. It only shows how Trilling fills in his lecture by whatever is at hand. We shall now return to the passage above, and see what it can tell us about Trilling. Though the paragraph begins in a genial and self-confident manner, it is heavy-footed, as Coleridge's phrase is overworked in association with science and morality. The effect, as it should be, I suppose, is that of a professor who talks on a grand subject by the aid of words and references at his command, when no one is offended and everyone is pleased, but nothing is produced. Taking Trilling's argument, we ask why should not Freud be directly linked to the idea of self-hood, without the mediation of Coleridge? How does the Coleridge tag (to use his word) help us here? How does Coleridge's suspension of disbelief. constitute not only scientific faith but also scientific method? The great surprise is that, for Trilling it also constitutes moral faith. Now read the passage again. Is there any argument running through 'poetic faith', 'scientific faith and 'moral faith' except that the latter two are added only by 'also's'? The three phrases connected without argument but by the Coleridge tag must be grand in their effect on the Indian teacher. Let us take a sentence:

"I suppose that we might say that it constitutes scientific faith too or scientific method".

Surely what constitutes scientific faith must have a greater force of expression, but the sentence has no content to make us feel its force. One need not suppose what one might say; and what constitutes scientific faith cannot constitute scientific method, unless 'faith' is confounded with 'method'. We know that sentences can be written without content, but with impressiveness; but here we cannot go into why such a thing happens. We must content ourselves with the awareness that human mind writes sentences without content and that human mind is impressed by them.

This time let us see if we can gather anything worthwhile elsewhere. Under the head of the opposition of love and power, Trilling drags in Blake by the head and shoulders but with the effect of surprise:

“William Blake, who envisaged life in a way that Freud would have easily understood, calls in a great voice, "Bring me my bow of burning gold! Bring me my spear!" ... What does he want this libidinal armament (*italics are mine*) for? Why, that he "may build Jerusalem in England's green and pleasant land".

As soon as we come to the verb envisaged itself we exclaim that Blake is mistaken and abused. If Freud has not vulgarized Lionel Trilling, he has certainly vulgarized Freud. There is no harm in looking at the second part now, where he deals with 'the crisis of our culture'. I said that such a title rouses expectations in us. But, if so far he is disappointing, further up he cannot produce anything wonderful out of a hat. What we have to ask of such a writing is what power of mind goes into it. To ask such a question is to keep in view a standard while reading it. We are usually impressed by such writing, because we do not keep a standard in view while reading it. What power of mind there is hits us in the eye, as we see that Trilling addresses those of '*our present day educated, enlightened, progressive middle class*' (*italics mine*). We can guess or bypass whatever sense he has of the crisis of our culture. Even if we bypass his sense of the crisis, let us know it and bypass it. According to him "the progressive deterioration of the self and of the right relation between the self and culture constitutes what I am calling a crisis in our culture." When I read this essay as an undergraduate, I marked in the margin against this quote 'pseudo-problem'. Now I hold by it. Referring to Freud's personal life with as much relevance as can be expected from him, in order to show Freud's resistance to what he terms 'cultural interpositions', something 'unique' is said about Freud, and I think it is '*memorable* !'

"And then beyond these cultural interpositions there was his sense of himself as a biological fact. This sense of himself as a biological fact was of course supported and confirmed by the various accidents of Freud's cultural fact, but it was, to begin with, a given, a *donnee* - a gift. It was a particular quantity and quality of human energy and its name was Sigmund Freud."

In dwelling at length on Lionel Trilling I have all along borne in mind the question, how to set about explaining a writing which is without content but impressive? A writing in order to deserve our attention must presuppose a standard, and sound thought, and be adequate to its content<sup>6</sup>. Briefly, in conclusion, we must be aware of these things. We have had no training to resist the attraction of content-less writing. It is a question now of perceiving how we are attracted towards such a writing. Further, it is a question of conceptual understanding of what happens if we are attracted towards it but do not know that it is content-less. Then, what is our true situation now? Is it pathetic or tragic when an American author produces content-less writing and Indian university teachers mistake its quality, and believe and contend (at times nastily) that it is wonderful?

Time and time again we meet with this lack of intelligence in the university teacher's opinions and arguments. If you tell him about it, he will be offended. Offence or no offence, we shall have to carry out our investigation. We will be plain with him whether he comes to his senses or not. But this time we will take a different author, who has made a splash in India, and he will be our last example – the example of an author whose estimate by the Indian teachers is far out of proportions to his merits, and whom they take as an author to research; he is Mr.V.S.Naipaul, who deserves special consideration for putting India on the map through his interest, as an extraordinary traveler (to be distinguished from ordinary tourists), in Indian history, civilization, culture and through his still greater interest in the contemporary Indians, in their manners and their institutions. Mr.Naipaul has written a good deal on India, and well enough to impress the Indian University teachers; and I hope he will write more and more, as it is his Aunt Sally. In short, he is a success with them, which means that he is equally admired by other educated Indians. It is not possible for them to resist his charm of observations, analysis and inferences. Surely, the charm of his observations, analysis and inferences as a great traveler is that of smell, titillation, and flattery. Mr.Naipaul's claim is that no Indian is capable of producing this charm, I mean in writing; He has an eye for places of putrid smell in India – I wonder if he has not kept his eyes skinned for them – and describes them with a three-dimensional effect on the reader, our University teacher, as if they are special to India. The Indian teacher has the pleasure of recognizing them in the author's writing, which he knows by sight only. The author has a talent for what the Indian does but does not expect it to be described by travelers and describes it again with three-dimensional effect on the reader, our university teacher, as if it is special to India. Being ill-educated, the Indian teacher has the added pleasure of reading things in Mr.Naipaul's writing which he applies to other Indians. The pleasure for Indian readers is that titillation, and now they have a habit of responding to it. One expects that they would be ashamed of responding to it.

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<sup>6</sup> I have a suspicion that there must be conditions requiring the author to be a pleasant critic of 'American progressive middleclass culture', and that he played himself in. Or, it could be that the author lived in conditions in which he could not think directly and deeply. Or the resources for mental development in the commercial and technological age are different from those of the earlier times



No, on the other hand, they want it, and now native writers too are meeting the demand. The third element of author's charm is flattery. Mr. Naipaul is a successful journalist, and a journalist, in order to be successful, must be an expert in using words aptly for effect. The skill of using words depends upon the interests he serves, and not the ideas he entertains – but anyhow a journalist never entertains worthwhile ideas. Mr. Naipaul, as a journalist, is a tradesman and a salesman, so to speak. Just as his description of putrid dwelling (dirty huts and shanties) and of Indians' urination and defecation (in open spaces) have a three-dimensional effect, so too his *judgments* on India with reference to its civilization and its past have a consequence – an effect flattering to his Indian readers. A journalist does not have convictions – there cannot be in him a mental development leading to them. But Mr. Naipaul strikes the Indian reader as having them based on 'sound' observation, 'scientific' analysis and 'logical' inference. He has the air of being self-assured and inviolable in his opinions. But the air of being so is due to a confidence that he cannot be seen through. He is a good strategist, being a foul writer. He makes a monkey of the Indian civilization and its past, of the Indians with pre-industrial habits and customs, of the modern Indians who are inferior to the Europeans by imitating them, but his opinions are yet flattering to the Indian readers, but how? There is the rub.

The Indian who has received education in English for a career through the mediation of the Western impact will have the habits of comparing India with the West, of regarding Indian as very backward, and therefore, disliking it and finding causes in the quality of its civilization and in its past for its backwardness, and of finally believing himself to be superior because of his education and ideas. The educated Indian is sunk in this morass of vicious but modern habits, and he becomes, at times, emotional, lashing out abuses against India and Indians for any discomfort he suffers or when he does not find anything flattering to his vanity. Mr. Naipaul's readers in India are of this type, though varying in degree in their hostility to India. Is it then a surprise that he appeals to his readers because he flatters them by his opinions on the Indian civilization and past?

There are other reasons why the author appeals to his Indian readers: One, his Indian origins attract them, two, he writes English so well that it passes off with his admirers as the English of the English-man. Three, he is successful as a writer in England itself, which is a great point in his favor; four, the Indian readers can get ideas from him and use them against India and Indians. Nevertheless, here and there, a few Indian readers register the horror of his opinions, because he exacerbates and wounds their sensibility. To these he appears like a man blind-drunk raving that he is quite sane, but it is sadly true that for them the circumstance of his success is too overwhelming. But unfortunately, they feel the violence of his opinions rather than recognize their shallowness. Today, Mr. Naipaul can get away with any scornful remark on India on account of his intimidating success. Many Indians in fact accept his competence to judge India, and I have pointed out the reasons for their acceptance of it. The more insistent and louder he is in repeating tirelessly his opinion 'Hindu civilization is a decaying civilization', 'India is so horrid a place', 'Indians are despicable for their intellectual second-ratedness', the more admirable he is to his Indian readers. It is obvious in what esteem he is held in India. But I make no secret of my opinion that his admirers are intolerably wrong in their estimate of him and that he is an author far from deserving such an estimate. As we

made earlier a sensible estimate of Mr. Penn Warren and Lionel Trilling for whom, as we say, the Indian university teachers' admiration is out of place, now we attempt a sensible estimate of Mr. Naipaul whose claims to any worth his Indian readers mistake, and for whom there is now misplaced enthusiasm.

In offering my judgment on Mr. Naipaul, I wish to show how the Indian university teacher makes a wrong estimate of him, and how he is without the discipline of enabling him to see the defects of the author's writing. Reviewing is too bad in India to be of any help to the teacher, nor does he read reviews often. One thing is that he deals with a book in terms of ideas; that is where he goes wrong. The habit of dealing in ideas about an author and his work is very injurious to a proper judgment. The habit is kept unrevised with him by lack of mental improvement which he is never disposed to seek. Suppose the Indian teacher finds certain ideas in an author with which he agrees; we must know what happens to see the true nature of his mind. First, there is no conceptual exercise before arriving at agreement. Second, he has no idiom to define the author's ideas with any precision and the point of this agreement. Third, his (pathetic) condition compels him to read his ideas into the author's work and defend himself as if he is unquestionable in his understanding of the author. Fourth, his English is too bad and when he reads an author in English, invariably he loses his bearings but talks tall about the author's 'ideas'. He cannot grasp the content of the author's work and therefore, he cannot keep to the point. By ideas he either condemns or exalts the author, so that he suffers for want of an idiom for proper discourse on the author's work. Fifth, indiscipline leads him to borrowings and pretentiousness and affects his character, undoubtedly rendering him incapable of being self-critical and of arguing with content in his head.

Presently, we shall take up Mr. Naipaul's *The Area of Darkness* and *India: a wounded civilization*, leaving out his fiction since these two books enjoy popularity, inviting the reader to the controversial judgments made on India. At any rate, they seem to engage the readers' attention, as I have shown above. One notices at first that the titles themselves are attractive, making one believe that Mr. Naipaul must be a serious writer, and like banner headlines in a newspaper they promise something stunning. What exactly do they say, then? They consist of the author's impressions and observations as a traveler, gathered from his meetings with a wide range of Indians in different situations all over India. But had he not made these two books more important than a traveler's record, they would not have received any attention here. The author made them more important by a design on his part to tell the Indians and the Western readers that India is a stinking place, its civilization is a decaying civilization, very inferior to others, and the Indians, who had always been subject to foreign invasions, suffer from thousand and one evils like caste, religious superstitions, uncreativity and so on, handed down from generation to generation for so many centuries and that, therefore, their inferiority is bred in the bone. According to him Indians are, and have been, little short of yahoos, and they must again, for their own safety, invite a foreign invader. He makes it clear that the foreign invader had better be a European invader. The author is tender about the prospective European invader being made to suffer to rule over such a horrid nation as India. If you catch the author's design, theme and his intended effect in my representation, which has only one mistake of attributing to Mr. Naipaul that he wished

India to be again subject to a European invader, which, to do him justice, he did not, you will find it true to his books. He is a gentleman, he would not wish India again a subject nation ! But who can doubt that his anti-Indianism has the same force of Hitlerite anti-semitism. If Hitler had been successful and if India had been a subject country under his heels, Mr.Naipaul would have celebrated the event in one of the public houses in London, saying "History knows what is right". Since such a thing did not happen, he had no choice except to visit India and publish books on its *true* condition to enlighten the Indians and the Western readers. I said I made a mistake in my representation of Mr.Naipaul but I made it deliberately so as to bring out the emotional intensity of his hatred of India. His hatred of India is reserved mainly for two classes of Indians. He cannot hear of the pre-industrial India, and attacks fiercely those who are still in that past. Equally he attacks those Indians who make bungling attempts at imitating the West. There is another class of Indians, writers or professionals, who have insights like him, that India is hopeless and Indians are contemptible; with this class he has little quarrel, and he would be even at home in the houses of those of this class who are rich and have no trace of India about them.

Mr.Naipaul's method is vitally related to his subject, and his subject is vitally related to his intentions. His method is natural and logical, his intentions are to entertain and enlighten his readers, and his subject is the objective study of the ugly scenes. To visit India is to watch the ugly scenes, and if the visitor is a writer the result is a book. Mr.Naipaul, as a celebrated writer, cannot escape the ugly scenes on his visits to India. Who could contend that it is his fault to see Indians defecating in the open spaces. But, oh! Does not such a sort of thing strike you as horrible, I mean, are not you, Indians really, well, ashamed of it? Well! Well! What can be concluded from it? "Why, describe such things, having a writer's skill, and entertain and enlighten your readers, and make money". The rational and logical method is this. People defecating in the open spaces are barbarous, and their civilization is, therefore barbarous. People living in huts and shanties in rural India, and people living crowded in dingy lanes and on the pavements in big cities, are as much barbarous for being under-fed, poor, and dirty. Their civilization is barbarous too. Mr.Naipaul meets a petty officer with broken English and bungling attempts to do this or to do that. The officer is a dunce and so, his nation is a nation of third-rate men. The author now encounters a politician in Gandhi cap, who makes imbecile generalizations. He concludes logically that India is a nation of intellectual second-ratedness. But, now, he calls on an author who is himself very critical of India and Indians, and despairs of the future of India, and for Mr.Naipaul it is a relief to meet this enlightened Indian. They have dinner together and across the dinner-table they exchange similar views. The enlightened Indian shakes hands with the celebrated writer. "Mr.Naipaul, it is splendid having met you. I am sure, when you come next to India, you will let us have the honour to host you, you will stay with us for at least, shall I say, a week. Sure, you are not so disgusted with India! Well, nothing can be done about it". Mr.Naipaul responds warmly to his host and kisses his ifew a' la' Europe and takes leave of them to go to the ugly scenes to finish his book on India's decaying civilization. The poverty of India is a big attraction to anyone out of his senses, and it is all the more an attraction to a writer from the West intending to write a book on India. Poverty is a problem, no doubt. When it becomes a writer's problem for description in his work

whose purpose it is to entertain and enlighten his readers, it offers readily, to his skill, scenes and events such as can *move* his readers. After dealing with poverty, what next? Why, naturally, the writer can write about those who make imbecile generalizations and fail to solve the problem of India's poverty. Is that enough? No, but to make his book interesting, he must condemn the nation, its civilization, its past, and its people. The writer, I mean, Mr.Naipaul, has found out the real India, and presented its conditions and features – its contour – in his unmistakable style. Mr.Naipaul is a perceptive writer, and his perception of India is a corollary to this perception of the West. After all, India cannot be judged without comparing it with the West, whether the judge be a European, or a writer like Mr.Naipaul with Indian origins but settled in Europe, or an educated Indian. The comparison is inevitable. It is now as habitual as it is thoughtless, whenever it is based on ideas and impressions. What supports, as we said, the logical conclusions of Mr.Naipaul, is this comparison, in which, we paid a tribute to him by saying that he is perceptive. Is there, in Europe, poverty so disgusting as the Indian poverty? No. Are there in Europe dirty people living in huts and shanties, and people living in dingy lanes, and on pavements, and that too in hundreds of thousands? No. Are there imbecile politicians dealing in imbecile generalities in Europe? No. And on top of this what a wonderful order Europe is possessed of in which an individual lives as a free individual, unfettered by customs, bonds, and usages such as disgrace India, and attractive for its pulls on mind – the order of production and exchange determined by demand and supply. Obviously, India, struggling to attain to this order to provide the individual with freedom for which Europe and America are justly famous has cracked up. Now, compare India with Europe in the light of so many facts discovered, analysed, and put together by Mr.Naipaul's genius, you will find his conclusions on India ineluctable. Shame on anyone who suspects that Naipaul could, for a moment, be wrong. What genius, what style, and what depth one meets in his writing! It is quite fair that he clobbered India and Indians, isn't it?

I must now ask whether Mr.Naipaul is original, or comes of a line of writers on India who showed him the way, and answer it. My answer can only be brief, and I cannot help it. Yes, there had been writers who condemned Indian thoughtlessly from ulterior motives. For instance William Archer<sup>7</sup> made insulting remarks on India, to whom Sri Aurobindo replied with sound content and admirable zeal. He had a good sense of the journalist in Archer, but did not show him up by examining his writing. If a reply to such a writer as Archer is essential, the reply must be serious for the sake of helping those who would be misled, while dismissing the author by a discussion of the quality of his work. We must not take up ideas in such an author – obviously they are worthless, but the quality of his writing, because worthless ideas and good writing cannot go together. We should not take a journalist seriously, except when his influence is menacing. Sri Aurobindo's gallant defense of Indian civilization is the most organized reply to an attack on India I have known. He had perhaps in mind the menace of Archer's attack and took

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<sup>7</sup> When I read Archer, at Cambridge, on the modern and Elizabethan dramatists, I understood his remarks on the latter to be those of a shallow progressivist, because I had the standard of Yeats' comment (Autobiographies) on Ibsen. It was a shock to me when I learn from Sri Aurobindo's reply to him in the 'Foundations of Indian Culture' that Archer had written on India. But I have not read him on India, though.

it up. Usual replies would be profuse in sentiment, taking on the nature of a quarrel and lax in thought, and not a little boastful, making you blush for shame at the poor answering. Sri Aurobindo has, on the other hand, an admirable concept of the Indian civilization, being a formidable scholar with enviable conceiving power of mind and mastery of English. His treatment of the Vedas, the Upanishads, and the two great epics are the most valuable part of “The foundations of Indian Culture”. But the weakest part of it is his chapters on Indian polity. But what is marvelous is that the book has the fundamental ideas related to the achievements of the Indian civilization, indispensable to the Indian mind, and I cannot imagine that anyone else in India could have been capable of them. So many ‘great’ people in the last hundred years whom we admire in India are undoubtedly inferior to him, for one reason that they do not have his conceiving power, and his grip on the Indian past, and for another that he could resist all that in the West – in particular, the Western scientific advance – spell-bound them. The deeper strain in him belongs securely to the Indian past, and his mind is so inward with the past that the vulgar explanations of the social sciences and psychology for religion and religious experience, which would be convincing to the ‘great’ men, inferior to Sri Aurobindo, as I said, are repelled by him, as a first-rate mind, understanding their origin, their status and their purpose. There is one defective side to his book, though it is not by any means a blemish. The defect of any Indian addressing himself to the European when he talks of India as if he is anxious to convince the European of the merits of the Indian civilization, yes, this defect seemed unavoidable in Sri Aurobindo too. So, he could not maintain the tone equal to his thought. The greatest benefit of the book is that one’s confusions about the relation between India and the West are cleared up, and that a feeling based on the content of the past is evoked and kept up.

Catherine Mayo’s ‘Mother India’ is too well known, which I read in parts years ago when I was thinking of doing a short article on the topic of “Attacks on India”. The man from whom I borrowed was an Indian who approved of the book, as he stood at the top of the list of list of the baiters of India, what with his education in America, his job in Madras Christian College and his lively sense (his abuse of India is hair-rising) of India’s inferiority to the West. She drew a lurid and ghastly picture of India, which is, no doubt, lacerating to the Indian with Indian sensibility, and shocking to a Western reader. One who is incapable of conceptual exercise will be struck by the *truth* of her account of India. But the question with Catherine Mayo and Archer is, whether they have a mind competent to judge a civilization?<sup>8</sup> If we do not raise this question, and if we take them seriously, we will understand them as having ideas, and invite ourselves to argue with them. When there is no basis for argument, we argue to disprove their ‘ideas’. What there is is a crude partisan hostility to India and a journalistic report with ulterior motive. In order to be impressive, they are wild in their opinions and lurid in description. Gandhi’s reply to Catherine Mayo, like Sri Aurobindo’s to Archer is sound, but it implies, as in the earlier case, a consideration for her ‘ideas’.

The basis for their judgment (which we have said comes from an incompetent, partisan mind) is their notion of the superiority of the West to India. It has been, and is still, a

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<sup>8</sup> I do see some point in invoking Lord Macaulay and Kipling here, but it is not necessary.

powerful notion with many Europeans and Indians. To those who hold by it there is so much authority of real evidence in their favour that they are fixed on it forever. The evidence which gives so much authority to their notion is, of course, there for anybody to see; the dominance of the West over Asia, the scientific advance and bourgeois prosperity of it, the individual in the Western social organization being free from the Indian social fetters. From this position of the West certain easy conclusions are drawn and accepted – that India is far behind the west, and hence, backward, that its civilization is responsible for its backwardness, in the same way as the Western civilization is responsible for its progress, and that the Indians must be inferior in their religion, social organization and individual manners. Out of these conclusions comes the spirit of hostility to India, and the Indians, touched by this spirit worship Europe and America. Let this spirit, whether it manifests itself in a European or Indian or Mr.Naipaul, neither European nor Indian, but a gentleman and a celebrated writer, be known as Westernism. And the stamp of it is unmistakable wherever it manifests. For lack of space I cannot discuss here this Westernism at any length. One or two points must be noted at this stage. Comparison between the West and India is inevitable, and on account of it, Westernism is inevitable too. But the question is, is Westernism conceptually valid? No. What is in favour of the West by comparison at one level is found untenable by comparison at another level. The very idea of comparison between the two civilizations does not hold water, though, being historically and conceptually blind, we draw a comparison because we want those things which the West has, and conclude that we are backward and inferior. This topic of comparison between India and the West is a very complex one requiring lot of space, and it has an urgency for the Indians. On another occasion I shall deal with it far more fully but at present I want to point out that, conceptually regarded, the comparison cannot have any validity whatsoever, no matter who makes it if its purpose is to pass a judgment on one of the civilizations. For any judgment condemning Indian civilization by comparing Indian civilization by comparing India with West – though common, and defensible too, according to many Indians and Europeans – there can only be on the basis of feeling, impression, and idea (superficial) but never thought. If there is to be a thought for a comparative judgment, there must be comparable terms which must be independent of feeling, impression and idea which cannot be supported. And comparative terms independent of them are not possible – our mind cannot establish them, for there is so much unique in each civilization, – therefore, strictly speaking, comparative judgment would be wrong-headed. But, comparative judgment will be made, because it can be used for a set purpose. That is the point Mr.Naipaul is as good an illustration of it as any other writer of the same species. We must remember that at the most our mind can only conceive of a thing which is in one civilization, while it is wanting in another, but on this basis no worthwhile concept can be formed. If you still form a concept using one or two details, it is contradicted by what is unique to each. I dare say you can yet compare two civilizations, but you must be, in perceptiveness, intelligence and sensibility, equal to the task. I don't know anybody who is qualified for it. Yes, comparison between India and the West is inevitable which amounts to warring at times for rival claims of being right, and judgment against India too is inevitable. Then, there are two things which follow of necessity. One, to read the Indian past and the Indian style of life in the light of controlling ideas, impression and emotions related to the idolum of the West has become so habitual to us as to be regarded as right and incontestable. It follows, then, that we

deny the value of the Indian past and make all kinds of nugatory assertions to this effect. It is not a question of criticizing the Indian past by asking what is good or bad; if that is so, it is welcome, however severe the judgment would be as a result. On the contrary, the point at issue is our very denial of the value of the past itself. Secondly when we are affected by the comparison habitual to us now, I claim that it is difficult for us to have a character, a mind, a style of life, bearing the stamp of the distinction of the Indian civilization, and we become vulgarized and false, having no standard in the use of language, in behaviour, and in forming concepts. We accept, in the sequel, whatever appears to us attractive from the West, displaying a base spirit. In the matter of this comparison, the Indian mind is either partisan to Westernism, or confused, or sentimental and furious when stung by the insults of adverse judgments on India. But, it is so because it is not guided by thought. We could not be guided by it, for impression, idea, etc. have corrupted mind. I therefore intend here to show what it is like to think of the issue of comparison, but once again it will only be brief, involving some obscurity, unavoidably.

In pointing out the defects of the comparative judgment against India, there is an underlying assumption, which can be expressed as a commonplace, but we must keep the force of its thought distinct from its being degraded to a commonplace. If we consider the passing of a judgment on a civilization, we must remind ourselves that it must be understood and judged in its way. There is, then, room for comparison, but only within defined limits. The emphasis on comparison will overbalance judgment; and in the modern circumstances we habitually lay emphasis on 'comparative merits'. Our guiding assumption is on all hands thrown overboard, whenever comparison is instituted. Going by the assumption we have made, we will argue thus.

A civilization to which one belongs is an absolute, and if one commits a violation of it, one is disfranchised. You will have a mind capable of feeling and thinking only when you are vitally related to it, and through being grown up in it. If you forsake it or change yourself to spite it from whatever motive or justification, you will have no mind, whether you are a world-famous scientist or a writer or a local rationalist. You cannot have a mind on the basis of anything modern – science of philosophy – in negation of the past. If you want to change your species, by all means forsake your religion, your civilization, your past, and your nation too! Some Indians have done it before. Another civilization in relation to its inheritors is likewise an absolute for them. Times are such now that the mind is degenerate in educated men and women, and they compare two absolutes, derive pleasure, and if they are writers, entertain their readers, by the application of superficial ideas on the basis of mere impressions. Comparisons between two civilizations are legitimate, if there is a benefit coming from them, but they are out of court when the intention behind them is to value-judge one or the other in terms of inferiority or superiority for the purpose of flattering one's own vanity. The educated Indians, I repeat, are too easily disposed to condemn India by their image of the west and by their ideas about the backwardness of India. They find themselves attached to the superiority of the West, becoming irritable and nasty about India and Indians. They rely too much on their 'knowledge' and the rightness of their opinions. Even among students, you will find, here and there, one giving oneself airs, thinking that one is superior to others by one's

knowledge of English and one's manners which are not Indian. Such a student already admires Europe, condemns India and Indians. The mind with the habits of comparing India with Europe and of judging the former adversely is an unthinking and unhistorical mind, and so, it is without memory animated by the content of the achievements of its civilization. The value of the civilization is forced out by the newspaper ideas and impressions about the west which are flattering to the Indians with education and good positions, who imagine themselves to be above other Indians without them. To be educated now is to put oneself against India and in favour of the West, and hence, modern education is a menace to the Indian civilization. So, our inference is that Mr. Naipaul's filth, or anybody else's, on India, ideologically slanted towards Westernism is generally understood in images contrasting of the backward and the advanced countries and accepted as a valid critique of India. We see how the Indian readers of Mr. Naipaul are prepared under the Western impact to receive his 'judgment' on India.

So far I have argued that comparison between Indian and the west is not possible, except within certain bounds, that comparison can be misused for ideological purposes, or instituted by ignoramus out of vanity, and that Indians who accept comparison and its sequel, adverse judgment on India are unthinking and unhistorical – of a special species, cut off from the Indian civilization and its past, pervert, superficial, 'sophisticated' and 'progressive'. They plume themselves on being enlightened while in truth they exhibit only conceptual poverty. All this has been the inevitable sequel to the Western impact. We know now how the Indian teacher will fail in arriving at a sensible estimate of Mr. Naipaul. But there are things still beyond his scope making him an incompetent and self-deceived judge of the celebrated author, to which I shall turn presently.

What deserves consideration is first the relation between the journalist, of the type of Mr. Naipaul, in the West and those readers to whom he appeals. The Imperialism of the West has its evangelists, and like the religious evangelists, they are conceptually empty-headed, and are flag-waving journalists. Imperialism makes its low-brow people vain, self-important, vulgar readers of journalistic productions, who would enjoy reading any work of exciting ideas putting their nation above others and flattering to their idea of themselves. If the flag-waving journalist can write dirty things round the theme of the inferiority of other countries, he is sure to have a good run of luck. Mr. Naipaul is just like the flag-waving journalist, though he was not born a European. Mr. Naipaul's background is that of Europe's superiority, its scientific and technological achievements, its social organization with the absence of any fetters, the journalism of the English Language. As far as India is considered he is a journalist of Westernism *a outrance*. Not being a European, but a journalist trained in Europe he will have to emphasize his identity with Westernism, for survival. He can attract readers by offering what flatters them, though in the name of factual observations and reasoned inferences. His main design in the two books of his mentioned above is to turn his idea of India to his advantage, flattering both his Western and Indian readers. Therefore, conceptually regarded, he has no right to a hearing from an intelligent reader<sup>9</sup>. But unfortunately, just

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<sup>9</sup> I had an encounter with Mr. Naipaul some thirteen years ago in Madras Christian College. I still remember his uncouth behavior in the classroom, when I gave my lecture hour at the instance of the authorities. I said to him that I was going to talk on George Eliot, and asked him to choose his topic



as Lionel Trilling is a great critic for the Indian reader, Mr.Naipaul's blague on the Indian civilization would be a substance of profound thought with irresistible appeal to him. If we can ask two questions, we can see through his journalistic bluff. What urge has he for dealing with India as he does? and what kind of readers does he attract? We don't ask them but we are impressed by his writing as he administers insult upon insult to India, and as I have shown, we, of the modern India, think it deserved them. In fact there are many educated Indians, who are morbid haters of India, formed and set on the gospel of Westernism, in need of answers to their complaints against India, and Mr.Naipaul's writing serves this need to the full.

What urge has he, let us ask once again, for writing and judging on India as he does? My finding is that Mr.Naipaul is incapable of any feeling or thought which has a content of a civilization, either European or Indian. He knows English enviably, and writes successfully, but that is a matter of journalism. What is to the point here is that he knows neither Sanskrit nor any other Indian language, and he cannot, therefore, possess the inwardness of the Indian past. But, he might have learnt from his parents in Trinidad enough of Indian life to condemn India. What was character shaping in him was his background similar to that of *evolue* since he could not live an Indian life and since he had been exposed to Westernism from his school days. Settled in England as a writer, he would have nothing deeper than Westernism to draw upon. One or two things deserve notice here. He has to be a writer to the English readers to whom he cannot offer anything worthwhile, and naturally identity with Westernism alone can suit him best. But he has another side; he is a Trinidad Indian, knowing something of India, and therefore as a writer, I mean journalist, he is prompted to make India an object of his exercise. Now Westernism goes down with one class of English readers, and with many English-speaking Indians whose high priest is Mr.Nirad Choudary with weapons of bronze or iron brandishing his hatred of India. This Trinidad writer of Indian origins, brought up in Westernism and having learnt his trade in journalism writes much better than Mr.Nirad Choudary, who is something like a high school teacher turned atheist adopting perverse views, issuing challenges with those weapons I mentioned above, and expressing in bold-face English and quaint phrases from other European languages,

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according to his convenience. HE was seated in the chair, and began saying that he would address the students on 'Imagination'. But instead of going on with his topic, he put a question to one of the girl students; that is, 'what is the difference between a Jane Austen's novel and say, a short story 'The Illustrated weekly?' True, she did not answer, but he went on asking the same girl this question for over six times. She was getting nervous. I had to intervene, knowing the special condition of girls in the Indian classroom. Then I stood up and requested him, no doubt, conveying to him my displeasure, to say something on his topic first and then invite questions. He blew up and insulted me. I answered him back, and I was prepared for any eventuality. But at once he left the room in a fit of distemper and walked out on the waiting hosts – Dr.Chandran Devanesan and his wife, and the fashionable set called 'Motivators'.

For myself I thought he was presumptuous. He talked in a manner as if he could show off to his advantage and get away with it. Of course I had no idea of him before, since I had not read any of his books. HE left us in no doubt that he behaved like a crud. My impression of him, including his delivering (public school imitation of English accent) with an author's gesturing, still remains that he was not cut out to be a better human being. To me he did not look like an author with the mind of knowledge, creative intelligence, and perceptiveness and with manners which go with such a mind, but like an intimidating salesman. And he has the temper of the fascist camp-follower.

including Latin and Greek, to frighten Indians by condemning India and flatter the British by admiring their institutions. Either in condemning India or in admiring British institutions there is no sense in Mr.Nirad Choudary's writing. If you read carefully these writers of westernism (here we must know that Mr.Ved Mehta and Mr.Dom Moraes are of the same tribe, and stand below Mr.Naipaul but above Mr.Nirad Choudary, I mean, not in their age but in rank), there is about their writing an ideological aspect, very sinister, and, of course, it is one of the reasons for their success. But the churlishness of their attacking India or describing it in lurid pictures does, no doubt, pass off as criticism of India (having ideas), because it has the attraction of presumption and assertiveness. Any worthwhile criticism against India is welcome. Let it be as unfavourable as its content requires it to be. But it must satisfy two conditions, if it is to help us: one, it must arise from the urge for the Indian civilization and its past; two, it must be from a mind inward with the true style of Indian life. Mr.Naipaul's 'criticism' of India does not fulfill these two conditions, but, as in the case of other writers of Westernism, Indian or non-Indian or expatriate, it agrees with the interests of a journalist who ransacked India for materials, it seems to me, suited to his readers.

Like the evangelists of imperialism, William Archer and Catherine Mayo, Mr.Naipaul is in essence an evangelist of Westernism, of which the ideological characteristics are the West being superior for its scientific and technological progress, the Western social organization allowing the individual maximum personal freedom, and the Western affluence and liberalism with its far higher standards of living, which other nations could not achieve for being poorer, contemptible civilizations. Westernism is the only identity he can lay claim to, being neither Indian nor European. But it is a Westernism, which for historical reasons, is an easy bait for any educated Indian or Asian. But think of what it excludes. It excludes religion, the achievements of the past and the sensibility related to them, and it abhors revolutionary thought. We get a sense of tragic fall for the human mind when it excludes values, but sets up in their place standards of observation and analysis. Its medium of expression is journalistic and it is averse to conceptual scrutiny. A conceptually poor mind will always be drawn toward Westernism, because in it the force of ideas, impressions, 'facts' and observations-analysis-inference logic is irresistible. The mind drawn towards it thinks of only higher standards of living, ignoring self-blindly all else. The categories of Westernism are ideological and partisan, and self-flattering, so that its evangelist can divide civilizations either into good or bad or into progressive or decaying and can take sides to his advantage. The bourgeois spirit in India or Asia enslaves the mind to these categories, with the result that the more violently an attack is launched on its civilization and past, the more attractive it becomes to one with modern education. Surely, Westernism is the greatest menace India has suffered from its history. In dwelling at length on Mr.Naipaul as an evangelist of Westernism I have at heart the purpose of exposing the Indian teacher's mind and its sad limitations, because to be impressed by this evangelist is to have a mind with no possibility of intelligence and conceiving power, and I have taken in hand this exposure to enable ourselves to come to close quarters with the contemporary India and its spirit. Very briefly now we shall examine Mr.Naipaul's writing and its import to us.

As I said earlier, it would not be the right thing to deal with Mr. Naipaul's ideas. Even if he has ideas they would be worthless, because they have not a strong point of relation to the achievements of the past of any civilization and to the sensibility related to them. Take the following difference he makes between the Indians and Europeans in favour of the latter, and it seems to me it is a difference in favour of himself too.

“The child-like perception of reality that results does not imply childishness – Gandhi proves the opposite. But it does suggest that Indians are immersed in their experiences in a way that Western people can seldom be. It is less easy for Indians to withdraw and analyze. The difference between the Indian and the Western ways of perceiving comes out most clearly in the sex act. Western man can describe the sex act; even at the moment of orgasm he can observe himself. Kakar (a Delhi psychiatrist) says that his Indian patients, men and women, do not have this gift, cannot describe the sex act, are capable only of saying ‘It happened’.”

The first sentence is meaningless and vicious; nothing goes before to show that it says: ‘results’ is the most inappropriate verb for its subject. Note carefully ‘The childlike perception ..... does not imply childishness.’ The sentence will be somewhat better without ‘that results’. Gandhi proves the opposite of both ‘childishness as well as child like quality of perception? Imagine what the first part of the sentence means and how it applies to Gandhi; can you see any sense there? To go on like this would be class room work, but I am sure that my readers can perceive that the sentence is not only not idiomatic, but also senseless as, no distinct and forceful ideas is registered, if you take the parts separately and look for units of sense combined into a whole - an idea.

The whole passage is woolly and wild, redolent of the language of shockers. The human mind must be ashamed of such a distinction being made between two kinds of people, and of one sort being held up while the other is scorned on this score. To cite passages like this would be tedious, but one must know that nowhere else is he better; take this again:

“And the heritage has oppressed: Hinduism has not been good enough for the millions.....”

The rhetoric and impudence swells like froth. But, which religion, dear Mr. Naipaul, has been good enough for the millions? Is ‘being good enough’ a standard to judge religions? Mr. Naipaul now raves, but his readers imagine him to be an oracle.

“The past can now be possessed only by enquiry and scholarship, by intellectual rather than spiritual discipline. The past has to be seen to be dead; or the past will kill”.

Here is the journalist of Westernism having no claim of an identity with the Indian or European past. He too talks of the past elsewhere, but emptily without what he calls ‘intellectual inquiry and scholarship’. Oh! Claptrap, this ware is now in demand! The

sentiment in the passage against the past has a tremendous appeal to a shallow mind, that is, to the educated Indians attracted towards Westernism.

Let us take one or two passages from his earlier book and see if he was then a better author. For many authors decadence sets in later, and following it they talk rot. If Mr. Naipaul is like these, there can be a good excuse for a kid-glove treatment of this work. Let us not be in a hurry to rejudge him, till the evidence provides us with an idea how to estimate him.

“With the British, continuity was broken. And perhaps the British are responsible for this Indian artistic failure, which is part of general Indian bewilderment, in the way the Spaniards were responsible for the stupefaction of the Mexicans and the Peruvians. It was a clash between a positive principle and a negative; and nothing more negative can be imagined than in eighteenth century of a static Islam and a decadent Hinduism. In any clash between post Renaissance Europe and India, India was bound to lose”.

It is nothing more than a journalistic mumble. But note the positive principle being identified with the British (whom he is flattering) in contrast with the conjunction of static Islam and decadent Hinduism! The only compliment he deserves is that he knows his trade well. In a foot-note, he says, I think, in order to appear scholarly, that had he read Camus's 'The Rebel' earlier, he might have used his (Camus's) terminology like 'capable of rebellion', instead of his own. Let us further see how he deals with India; he says,

“India, it seems, will never cease to require the arbitration of a conqueror. A people with a sense of history might have ordered matters differently.”

And he goes on to say, still more penetratingly,

“The Taj Mahal is exquisite. Transported slab by slab to the United States and re-created, it might be wholly admirable.”

This guff is intolerable, and he is making an ass of himself. It seems obvious to me that Mr. Naipaul was rotten much earlier than I thought he was. If you are not a reader of good writing, with your head full of newspaper ideas and with zeal for progressive measure, looking after yourself, Mr. Naipaul strikes you as a serious writer. Let us see how he himself gives the impression of being a serious author.

When he writes like this,

“The medieval mind, which saw only continuity, seemed so unassailable. It existed in a world which, with all its ups and downs, remained harmoniously ordered and would be taken for granted. It had not developed a sense of history, which is a sense of loss, it had developed no true sense of beauty, which is a gift of assessment.”

because he appeared to dwell on serious things, he appears to us profound. The air of saying something deep here takes us in. But we are too shabbily educated (trained) to notice his vacuity. The turn of sentences is meretricious and their 'sense' is more difficult to catch than the easier sentences; for instance, 'The sense of history is a sense of loss' which has no content, but which is not easy to know what it seems to say. That is, either you see it has no content or you are impressed by its 'sense'. The point is that we are far more likely to be impressed by its 'sense' (the journalistic trope is a little overwhelming) which has a surprise for us (the effect of "sense of.....") than to find out its emptiness. No remark on history can be meaningful unless history suggests it.

I wonder if there is a single sentence in the two books under discussion with a reference which is conceptually valid. There is a good deal of scenery description to focus our attention on India's inferiority. He chooses his details, his words, to insult India and I have already pointed out that his design must be ideological. True to his type he wrote these two books on India, in which you never find yourself contemplating an insight or a feeling or thought from the author, carrying you to his deeper resources. When Mr. Naipaul talks of India, he is presumptuous, impudent, meretricious and empty; is he the same when comments on Britain? Let us close with an example of his commentary on Britain.

"In the beginning of this period we can see the swiftness of change, from stage-coach to railway, from the essays of Hazlitt to those of Macauley, from 'Pickwick papers' to 'Our Mutual friend.' In painting it is like a second springtime. Constable discovering the sky, Bomington discovering the glory of light, of sand and sea; youth and delight that can communicate to us even today. It is a period of newness and self-discovery. Dickens discovering England, London discovering the novel; newness even in Keats and Shelley. It is a period of vigour and expectation. And then abruptly, there come fulfillment and middle age. The process of self-discovery is over, the English national myth appears, complete. The reasons are well known; the narcissism was justifiable. But with this there was loss. A way of looking was weakened. What was English was settled; by this the world was to be assessed, and in the travel-writing of the century we can observe a progressive deterioration, from Darwin (1832) to Trollope (1859) to Kingsley (1870) to Froude (1887). More and more these writers are reporting not on themselves but on their Englishness."

Read it over again, and tell me if he talks sense, if he *can* talk sense. About the period and its achievements he is writing, he says nothing worthwhile. What he actually says is really shameful. It is unmistakably the turn of journalism with its knowing gestures and meretricious tropes. I shall not run over each sentence and demonstrate the absence of sense. Surely what can be greater offence against expression than to say 'newness even in Keats and Shelley', and 'a way of looking was weakened'. No word which is here used to represent or suggest a characteristic of the period had any reference and content; but it is a praise-word for Britain, carrying self-importance and appeal. There is every chance that a low-brow reader would be impressed by such writing, and if it is not so, an

evangelist of Westernism as Mr. Naipaul could not have been in existence. At the same time he cannot say anything on Indian without insulting it, without the superior stance of being qualified to judge the Indian civilization. Note how he mentions Kalidasa with indifference as so-and-so, regarded as a great dramatist whose 'Sakuntala' according to him, reads (in translation) as a romance of recognitions! To continue discussing Mr. Naipaul would be a torture to us, and I admit that my study of him is too long for the conclusion it warrants. Perhaps, I will be excused if the reader knows that I have in view the menace of his journalism acclaimed by the Indian teacher who is too ill-trained and ill-formed, like any educated Indian, for making a true appraisal of the type of Mr. Naipaul's writings. This type of writing, striking us as being forceful with ideas, turns up frequently and we will have more of it in the future. I felt, in the circumstances obvious to the reader now, the necessity of dealing with him rather than the point of showing him up. He could have easily been bypassed if there had been a force of intelligence condemning him as another worthless pulp-writer, and dismissing him as such by a sense of Lawrence's magnificent achievement and by his concept of western civilization and its possibilities for living. I felt the call of putting Mr. Naipaul in his place as a type author and dismissing him; but if what I set against him to convince ourselves that he has not claim to a standing as an author is an open matter, I have, however, no need to recognize him as a worthwhile writer deserving a discussion of his merits and demerits. Mr. Naipaul is a globe-trotter carrying English journalism with him, like a camera, and taking snap-shots for the sake of appealing to corrupt taste. In this venture, success is crucial and it depends upon the demand created.

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## II

In the first part of this chapter, what chiefly engaged our attention is the spirit of the teacher as a man, and more important, that which lies beyond his scope in judging authors when confronted by their work. In all that I said you will find no over-emphasis anywhere, if you know the Indian teachers well. In illustrating, however, how to set about making a sensible estimate of authors, I seem to have overrun the limits of space, but anyone who could see the urgency of the problem, will only welcome my procedure for two reasons; one, it provides a basis and an idiom for a saner discussion, than we ever had in the classroom, regarding our abilities; two it is a challenge to our self-assurances, following the Western impact, on the vital issue of our civilization. True, my procedure is open to dispute, and I want a thorough discussion of it to clear up our confusions. We have never disentangled our confusions, because we have never learnt anything well in the interests of mental improvement.

In this second part, I will consider what kind of being the Indian teacher is in his institution, in particular, in his department. Once again, the teacher is the representative philistine of modern India, in whom, peculiar to these times, we find very little other than those nasty characteristics related to careerism, money-making, and bossism, and in

whom we rarely meet with qualities suggestive of humanity. There is very little admirable in the Indian teacher. We must have a true consciousness of this phenomenon, which is historical as it is ubiquitous. To hold in consciousness the teacher's characteristic mind is to possess a true consciousness of the modern times.

In the last hundred and fifty years, the major social force has been the opportunity sought of getting a job through success in modern education. Like the status of a hero in a great tragedy, it has the status of being related to every part of the social fabric. It means that making a living has always been tried first in securing a place in the Government service, and failing here, one goes elsewhere in search of money-making<sup>10</sup>. This major force, it needs no emphasis, created the middleclass philistine in the 19th century.

There are three results of this force. One, modern education is valued for a career that degree is the only thing demanded of it. Two, cultureless educated people are produced by thousands year by year. Three, competition is so high among them that they become savage to one another; men now harbor only ill-will for each other. The teacher is as much representative of this philistine as any other educated Indian, and belongs to the type of the Indian official in the British Raj, who was nasty and secretive, toadying to the higher authorities and inviting pity for himself, but showing off his superiority to the subordinates and riding rough shod over them. It is into this mould of philistine that every educated Indian, like the teacher, is cast and the Indian independence has settled the type so that anything thoughtful and demanding is inimical to this philistine spirit. For us, the modern philistines, prestige and power alone matter, and everything else is mere form. Therefore, in learning we do not exhibit a mind of character and intelligence. The mind becomes an ugly instrument for getting degrees, securing positions and making money. Obviously in such a condition, there cannot be a true urge for anyone to devote himself to his subject. Modern education therefore remains a shoddy affair, or at best, a formal procedure, excluding every benefit of real education to the mind. Compare a musician with his urge for his art, in spite of having no social prestige, with us studying English literature. The like of his vital contact with his art through *Abhyasa* is something denied to us in the modern education<sup>11</sup>. For all the novelties and changes introduced in our education, be they from America or Antarctica, we are never any closer to the knowledge of our subject. The present ambience in which we teach our subject stands out by our loss of character and intelligence. It may be unpleasant to swallow charges, which are true, against us, but still, this work is only intended to bring them out into full relief. Very few teachers are an exception to the general type of teacher who is twisty, crabby, and mendacious. This type middleclass philistine is, further, inquisitive, lazy, superstitious, (some are rationalistic now, but it doesn't matter) and disposed to evil doing and covering his tracks, with the absence of any significant relation to English and its literature. Ordinary emotions in us related to money, careerism, etc. remain ever the same. They are left untouched by our (supposed) reading of classics. The study of literature, if it is serious and engaging, must affect and alter them. The real glory of the achievements of the past lies in changing an ordinary emotion into a feeling charged with the content of

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<sup>10</sup> Cornpradorism, the job of company executive, the profession of medicine and engineering and accountancy compete with it but it means a different philistine of the same spirit, is produced.

<sup>11</sup> Our study of English literature does not presuppose or bring about any meaningful relation.

the civilization. When such an alteration does not take place, human mind is self-blind and self-destructive. What happens now is common to all of us; the ordinary emotions are relentlessly at work, but for any occasion we have fine sentiments and ideals which we express in the crude language of generalizations and commonplaces. If we express them in our mother-tongue, the language is crude, but if in English, it is crude as well as awkward. What sustains the teacher is not something substantial in learning, but the ordinary emotions - their force is often disguised for form's sake - attached to money, careerism, etc. If you hold that the standard for the teacher must be to learn and teach his subject well in the interests of his civilization, that is, to improve the students' mind and make him an inheritor of the past, I am sure, you will find that the Indian teacher is the most unsuited to achieve this standard. Contemporary history and education has set him against it. The point is that you can convince him of a standard of higher scholarship in his subject -- in the sense of higher degree or of someone he thinks a great scholar but you can never make him see the standard I set up, namely, that learning is the improvement of mind in relation to its civilization, which must be the only basis for the teacher as well as the student. In fact, this standard is the only basis of any worthwhile education. I must show now how this is nonexistent among us teachers, who are salary-drawing philistines, cast in the mould of the salary-drawing philistine official of the British Raj. As I said at the beginning of this section, we now turn to the English department in India, and to the teacher as its constituent part.

Usually, members of the English department are lazy -- with them gossip is a greater part of life now -- and can never bring themselves to work hard enough to teach well. Besides, they nurse ridiculous and self-indulgent opinions about their own English. Some young teachers pass off as heroes by poses. Some others get popularity for saying things to students quite different from what they do. When they are, for instance, with the students, they are angry with the authorities, but when they are confronted by the authorities they are submissive in abject spirit.

Now, some of the new recruits in teaching never understand the text but they teach it by dictating notes consisting of borrowings which they do not understand either. But they are jealous of anyone who can give a good exposition of the text and they vent their spleen by saying that he is not scholarly, that they can do better, that he borrows from X, that he is only pretentious, and that he is not 'well-equipped'. No one in the world can equal an Indian in throwing insinuations at someone to blacken his character. Among Indians the teachers are the most shameless in laughing someone to scorn by self-important gestures.

You often meet a Head of the Department whose relation to the subject is the same as the relation of a head-clerk to his office work. He will know little about his subject but essentially he is a nasty teacher far more interested in other things than in the subject. He will be very busy with administrative work self-importantly. In this way he can assert his superiority. He will be involved in the university politics but pretends to be a 'pure' academician railing at others for being 'more politicians than academicians'. Hiding ill-will behind a pity-drawing, face, he tries to impress everyone in power as a good man. There is always a mean and selfish joy or rancor when he is proud or envious of others.



This makes him detestable. He is certain about his well-deserving' superiority. But on account of his cowardice, he is very humble before the authorities, very assertive to his subordinates, and cynical about his equals. He is secretive about everything touching his interests, but he is loud about his 'literary opinions' and 'rightly' contemptuous of others who express their opinions. He is very intolerant of anyone's success in the profession, he is so squeamish that his heart fails if any of his students is talking to his colleagues. He makes himself a little precious by mean reserve and by never going too near to his students and subordinates except when he tries for their good-will through patting on their back. And this arises from his sense of failing to be a hero to them. He would say characteristically to his colleagues, "You must not be close to the students nor let women students talk to you. You must maintain your dignity"<sup>12</sup>. Benefactors above him, slaves below him, and admirers around him please him very much, though he still desires more! He runs down others cautiously through ambiguous talk. He loves to be popular as a speaker, and if he has no gift for public - speaking he shows reserve and keeps himself unapproachable. He is irritable, sentimental, 'liberal' and pig headed in turns. He is the most unfit for his job in India. He is up to all evil .practices in selecting yes-men for teaching jobs in the department so that he can enjoy the enserfment of his subordinates in work and praise. But he will never appear anything but appealing and pitiable to a superficial observer, and getting on like this, he is a wretch to his own colleagues and students.

If you look into the departments of English in our Universities, you will find that most of the Heads are undesirable for their capricious display of egotism and for boorish manners, and that they are most undesirable for their ignorance of the subject, Equally, the rest of the members are most undesirable for their lack of understanding of the subject or for their insane or fashionable or potted ideas about it. The atmosphere of the department is that everyone considers himself to be an angel against the devil in everyone else. In all the departments everyone (from the professor down to the tutor) is so puffed up with 'I am a bigger fish than others' regarding the mastery and teaching of English, that adverse remarks concerning the quality of teaching wound everyone's vanity or are received as being applicable only to others and not to oneself. No one in any profession is so self-deceived, so used to bragging, so false in self-estimate, and so pig-headed or confused as the English lecturer. The rumors one English teacher spreads about another are: (1) He cannot speak two sentences in English correctly; (2) He makes very ordinary mistakes in grammar and spelling. If a teacher has a good grade he has to suffer from "I know he got a First class because the professor belongs to his caste" or from some other 'cause' showing that he has no talent. The Heads always favor henchmen in the department and are spiteful to those who are not nebbish. The truth is that usually a Head is an incapable person who worked over long years for a phony doctorate, and who, in addition to the value of such a formal degree obtained, became the Head through the local influence of communal or political solidarity. Therefore, he can either be a coward or an

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<sup>12</sup> What this exhortation means, I need not say when it is addressed to the younger members of the department. Always unctuous words such as 'dignity', 'sanctity', etc, come easy to him on any trying occasion, and insinuations against others too, implying his 'superiority'.

aggressive being conscious of his power. You can only deal with him by intimidation or flattery, or submission. If he is not a coward he is an autocrat. If he is a coward, he is cunning and very cautious, being sensitive about his power. Power relation is what he desires with everyone, and holds back tactfully from any other relation. He is happy as long as it is a power relation of being flattered and obeyed.

If the professor of English hears someone making a remark which exposes his own defects, first, he looks at it self-exclusively and, though ruffled by it, says (patronisingly) that it is a true observation and that one should not take offence at it because it is a general (self-exclusively) statement made with no one in particular in view. He may even talk about it touching on its truth and may illustrate (but, of course, betraying himself) how he is free from the defects exposed by the remark with a face-saving 'glee' in such a way as to make others believe that it cannot apply to himself. Then, he looks daggers at the one who has made such a remark. He is like one who praises someone and dispraises someone else self-righteously for the purpose of hiding his own shortcomings.

Really bad and inefficient people with formal degrees acquired by turning out a botched-up thesis (for Ph. D degree) capture the Headships of the departments by hook or by crook, and no one will ever be thrown out for want of ability let alone for want of character. Moreover, they enjoy false reputations through lying or posing or through their talkativeness. Once a Head, he will come into line with selfish secrecy, partiality to his henchmen, communal favoritism, foxy liberal gesturing, and base humility before the authorities, and cheap pride before his subordinates. Strangely, he thinks, and says too, that he alone holds his position by virtue of his merit but that those who hold such positions and still higher ones, are unscrupulous men without merit in comparison with him. He is cynical about their shortcomings and speaks ill of them either cunningly or naively, as a matter of habit. Whatever experience he has of the literary texts and of their interpretation, it means nothing to his mind in point of conduct, and in the manner of his living. Most professors in India live a penny-pinching life only. Look at this example, and consider how mean a professor can be. I have heard it said that, in one of the very well-known colleges in Madras, the professor of Chemistry shouted at a post-graduate student for being a late-comer to his lecture, calling him a fool while other students were watching him, and when the student pleaded to the professor that he should not be called a fool, he lost his temper and called him again a fool but, this time, the student told the professor off. And the quarrel cost the student a year as he was not promoted: all this, because the professor took a pique against him. When the student represented the matter to the Principal, the latter asked the professor to promote him, but the professor threatened resignation, because he was asked to be fair<sup>13</sup>.

A case of this kind is common with one who holds power in India. The professor, at first, ill-treats the student out of spite or for the sake of showing off his power, and when the student answers him back he is bestly revengeful. There is another case of a different kind, equally deplorable: a professor going late to a staff meeting, in the campus of a

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<sup>13</sup> Even the autocratic professor occasionally affects regard for the students, helps them in trivial matters, and takes them into confidence to beguile them into honoring him.

university finds his way through the crowd, enquiring as to where the professors were seated in order to take his place among his peers only for avoiding his being identified with lecturers. Many are so pettily anxious about their prestige. A professor is not usually kind to his colleagues. He is not only secretive but also boastful. For instance, when there are invitations for in seminars in India and abroad, the professor never allows any of the colleagues even to know about, them beforehand, but would go himself to all the places and save money on allowances and crow about his 'exploits' afterwards. At present the bounty of America serves the need of professors for prestige at home.

The composition of any department has very little to do with the aim of true education; one of the most difficult things is to enquire into the competence of the university teachers. The enquiry is difficult since they have become a strong, unshakable institution and they can resist any attempt to evaluate their worth. One way to know that our students have been unintelligent is that there has not been any agitation against this impregnable institution of ill-trained teachers. Yet, you will find occasionally some of them writing on evaluation techniques of the teacher's work.

In any case, what one English professor says about another is true but what one thinks of oneself is sadly untrue. An account of the Indian teacher in his relation to the subject cannot ignore the fact that nowhere at any time in educational history, the subject is 'taught' and 'learnt' with understanding. Both the teacher and the student have the illusion, ignoble though comforting, that they' have grasped it thoroughly and they make incredible claims for themselves.

The popularity of the 'literary criticism' of third rate academicians is partly responsible for the poor teaching of many university teachers. Everyone likes to comment if only because it is possible, here to assert one's opinion since one need not care for standards, and the temptation to comment leads one to say something either ridiculous or unacceptable. I have known this type so well in seminars and conferences and I know also another type of those who are either cowardly or too clever and cautious to take a chance because they would not like to incur the ill-will of anyone. A commentary can be the result of thought because one knows and feels passionately, but it can also be the result of exhibitionism just as the absence of it may imply coward ice or tactics. Those who are cowardly, secretive, and clever are afraid of those who are passionate and indignant. These cowardly sort of people try always to make the latter unpopular by all kinds of insinuations and scandals, and actually misidentify them with the exhibitionists.

When, the teachers assemble for a meeting or a conference, it is interesting to see who will dominate, who will snarl, who will be genuine, who is shrewd and cunning, and who pretends to be a scholar and would not care to waste his breath for even a small remark! Most of our conferences are attended by those who 'are incompetent but enthusiastic, or by those who are either too talkative or too malicious to be purposeful, or by those who take the conference as an outlet for their enthusiasm for commonplaces or take it as a matter of prestige to attend it. It is rare for any teacher to raise a real problem in his subject because he is serious, is absorbed in it, and thinks out a solution by the right application of mind. Red herring, misunderstandings, misrepresentations, and ill-temper

are common and create tensions on such occasions. Yet often what one finds in such conferences is favor-begging, self-effacement before a big-wig, and liability to misplaced appreciations through false impressions, which degrade the very proceedings, but if we find anything else it would be more shocking. In any conference, the university teachers look more like journeymen than scholars involved in their subject.

For the middle-class philistine holding a powerful or powerless position, one who is honest, straightforward, and outspoken is admirable, but at the same time dangerous and is therefore treated as a menace. For this philistine to part with his self-regarding, cunning self is as hard as it is to part with money. You will find a few mean people at any conference who think meanly, though they splutter a few high sounding words of idealism and spiritualism, and babble in the American idiom of projects, programs and workshops and computer language.

There are a few sophisticated ones among English teachers, with a better accent (now American) and with a greater facility in sentence construction, who do not repeat the same ideas and expressions monotonously - they are showmen. There is also another class of teachers who try to imitate these sophisticated few but succeed in imitating them only for the first few sentences and then, lapse into their native habit with fluffs in speech.

Unless a professor of English is given importance, unless, for instance, in group-discussions and seminars in which he participates, there is a smooth unruffled flow of deliberation, that is, all the participants reading papers full of excerpts from ever so many critics and discussing without arguing or arguing without disagreeing and unless he is flattered by some so that the others may think highly of him, he will not scruple to call anyone quarrelsome, cantankerous and proud. If anyone refutes him, he would hate the very sight of him. He cannot bear disagreement or refutation because he cannot make a real point. Anyone who makes a real point will not be afraid of disagreement. But our professor of English is so timid, so niminy-piminy that even a slight over-emphasis in expression can unsettle him and bring him to the verge of a break down.

Some of us who take up teaching for want of better prospects have to depend for promotions on the caprices of the Head rather than upon genuine work, which we won't do in any case. If the Head enjoys prestige because of his power, some members of the staff will make up for lack of it by ironical or scholarly poses; these suffer by self-conscious comparison with the Head. A few others do get a standing by being good to the students, but quite a few assert their superiority by lively affectations. Usually one university teacher talks ill of another teacher's ability, but when a University professor is admired by the teachers, the admiration is the same as that of the student for the teacher on account of false impression, the inability to judge, and the instinct for idolatry. The relation between the Head and his subordinates is mainly a power relation. It can also be a relation of intimidation, of pathetic admiration, or of malicious animosity.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> We must recognize a common type in the power relation. I have known a Reader behaving like a dog before his Vice-Chancellor - obviously, for the next promotion.

The language of the English teacher, when he speaks English as he does, is most often nauseating for his affectation, punning, plebeian spirit, self-admiration as much as pitiable for being stuck for the right words, and for using wrong words. Babu English is the common discourse. If an English teacher begins with 'inculcating discipline and 'imbibing knowledge' and so on, you must avoid him like the plague. Those of my generation employing American idiom of discourse are not any better.

In any English department there is not at all readiness for discussion and collaboration. One other thing distressing about the department is lack of any continuity owing to the reason that what the predecessor has done is not crystallized into a convention for he could not do anything of value, and that the successor with the job-grabbing instinct will do nothing good except following his own caprice; the relation between one and the other is not that of succession but of replacement.

As you watch the teacher, in India, you pity him and want to do anything in your power to improve his lot. But you would feel sorry for the kind of mind he has, and despair of his improvement, inasmuch as bragging and bogus assumptions are the commonest among teachers in our universities. And his trait of humble, affable or pleasing behavior according to the occasion secures him against bad luck<sup>15</sup>. His teaching cannot appear as bad for no one else has ever taught the subject well. But, I see that if an English teacher is cornered, he will meet his opponent by a show of challenge, "define this or that, or substantiate your point of view", which is, of course, a warning against any further discussion.

Our terms of argument, even of any kind of communication between one teacher and another, are terms of abuse limited to "He does not know anything", "He thinks he knows a lot", and "I challenge him write or speak two sentences correctly" or terms of adulation in which one admires another teacher on account of wrong impressions or of communal solidarity. One is either ready to prostrate in admiration or to show animus for self-importance. If there is a third posture, it is an affected reserve to look big. I heard once a professor calumniating another who seemed to do better than himself at a seminar. "He is always picking holes, he is like that. He is not a mild type. He will talk nineteen to the dozen. He is a cantankerous fellow".

Nothing now prevents professors and teachers from being stupid, from going about their interests, aiding illusions, inviting themselves to the limited range of inhuman relations of suspecting and backbiting others and of admiring someone, of being slavish to the authorities and autocratic to the subordinates; from talking ill of anyone they misunderstand and misrepresent anyone who opposes their interests, and from being irritable, affected and corrupt; in short, they are very unmanly.

No professor of English seemed to have ever reflected on an English classic with an improved mind and to have arrived at an individual estimate of it. When one here, reads

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<sup>15</sup> A university teacher in India, if he is not petty, gassy, wordy and high-sounding like an astrologer, or like Browning's Mr. Sludge, is no teacher at all.

a classic, one is impatient to dismiss it by getting summary ideas of it from elsewhere, and for the classroom they are woven into a web of idealism, spiritualism and universalism. The habits of an English professor are unequal to the challenge of a classic, he being a philistine, anxious for prestige and disposed to saving money, with little grace. He does not mind not knowing anything of the text, but he must be known to be a scholar for whatever he pretends to know.

It is certain that the English teacher never has the good sense to be frank. Once I watched a university professor speaking on the Romantic Age to an audience of students for over an hour, and I found him often referring to 'negative capability' and such expressions; but I did not find him either admitting his own limitation in grasping them or dwelling on the sense in which their application is possible. This teacher made a summary dismissal of some authors -- here as emphatic as the audience would take him to be impressive -- praised too highly others -- here as ecstatic as he could rouse a feeling of admiration for himself. The English teacher thinks nothing of lying and boasting!

A university English professor with illusions about his knowledge of English literature, who is a methodological philistine and who readily cites a few critics on any author and writes out long extracts from them -- will come to think that he alone is an authority on the subject because he suspects others of not having the patience to do what he is capable of doing. Every poor effort he makes for plundering critics is followed by a false and flattering estimate of himself. He will always recommend some books for reading in order to know that he is 'up-to-date'.

The vanity of some teachers is comical. I know many who boast of their ability in teaching the post-graduate students, and of being able to teach more than one subject. I know, for instance, a lecturer in Economics who resigned his job and set up a tutorial institute coaching students for M.A. degree in Economics, History, and English. Imagine the versatility of the Indian teachers!

I must here bring out in relief the villainy of Indian teachers. Once I spoke on T. S. Eliot at a meeting of college and university teachers. Some of them crossed swords with me neither knowing what Eliot said nor what I meant. They passed nasty and vicious remarks on me. Some months later a wealthy lady of social standing who was studying for her M.A. degree in English was invited to speak to the same gathering on the same topic. This time one after another praised her for various qualities of her speech the foremost being, according to them, originality. They did not care to know that she read out the same speech, which I had delivered before; their flattery was fulsome and the point is obvious. They could not have found it to be the same, for it was not their business to know what was meant and said. At the same time, they would, in praising her, compare her 'critical' remarks with those of some other famous critic who was alleged to have "expressed similar views".

Here is another example of the teachers' nastiness. In a seminar on Modern Poetry under the auspices of USIS attended by professors of English in Madras State, I found that none

of them were interested in the subject, while doing a lot of gossip and comparing their emoluments in different places. At one session, Allen Ginsberg's poem on Whitman came up for discussion. Not many participated in it, for the general reason that the teachers were incurious about the subject, and for another reason that an American professor presided over the session<sup>16</sup>. Among those who participated there were one or two young lecturers who had come to the seminar in place of their professors, who were enthusiastic made loud evaluative remarks. I was annoyed, and I stood up and said "Whatever evaluative comments you make, you must first of all show that you have understood the poem by offering us its 'sense' in your own words. Till you prove this ability, your remarks, however impressive, are out of court". One of the lecturers impatiently made a point directed against me, "Prof. SubbaRao is side tracking us". Another professor with his about-to-retire look passed this remark on me during the intercession, which I overheard: "Why is he imposing his views on us? and I don't like him, he is a fighting type." If we are among ourselves so nasty and self-willed, how are we in our relation to the student ? The teachers are essentially evil, possessed by the instinct of making the student afraid of them. In this education, the teachers being so miserably trained and so poor in knowledge, it is the guiding instinct for them; the more inefficient the teacher, the stronger the instinct in him. Besides there are vulgar forms or relationship also. One teacher, for instance, seeking the students' admiration, may get closer to them in matters unrelated to the subject. Another may, for the same reason invoke a partisan appeal to communal solidarity or to political common ground. Some lecturers may at times enter into sordid relations in order to spite their colleagues in the department or even to put them up to do harm to the latter, and so on. But all the teachers are afraid of the upper class students, and the fashionable lecturers, in general, make up to them, and form associations in the name of literary activities, whatever they are, but mostly fruitless. Some professors are insistent on form and it leads to quixotic practices. One professor in a college in a small town made it a rule that English M. A. degree students should attend their classes in bow-tie, so as to look distinguished! There are Heads who would never allow students to have any association or a club, and among these I can point out one or two who would be revengeful to boys who are well-dressed, though tolerating or liking fashionable girl students. I know a professor who goes to the classroom bathed in scent, but it is surprising if you know how careless he is otherwise about his appearance! He must be apprehensive of the effect of his person on others around him, if his body is not anointed. I heard of another professor who goes to the classroom like an actor in his make-up (the rumor is that he even applies lipstick without, of course, making it too conspicuous). What must be observed is that since the English teachers cannot afford to be like pacesetting wealthy dandies looking spruce and trim, they put us in mind of Don Quixote or Malvolio when they dress for fashion's sake. In this connection, one more point must be observed; some lecturers are so anxious to preserve their dignity that they are hawk-eyed and ever watchful if the students make all the observances essential to keep the sanctity of the classroom -- such as getting up as the teacher enters. Any omission of a single observance, if watched, is an occasion for a heroic rage on the part of the teacher. It means a curtain-lecture in epic manner to the students, followed by a

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<sup>16</sup> It means that some are apprehensive of their short-comings being noticed if they talk in the presence of the American professor

suitable punishment, and a mental note of the student for showing him what the teacher is!

It is here worth mentioning how a professor makes use of his power in pushing his own interests. One History professor himself sells his own books to his students year by year. I don't think that if they are not his students they will buy his books. He sells his books himself so as to pocket the commission also which would otherwise go to the book-seller. Another English professor who was once in charge of a summer institute forced his recently published book on the participants by making deductions for their price from the U.G.C allowance due to them without their knowledge, let alone their consent. Look at this atrocity. One Tamil Professor got his own five books prescribed for M. A. degree students. Indian teachers know these atrocities to be too common, but unfortunately they do not see them as such.

Let us see how some of us are defective in habits on account of the Time-spirit, and how some of us are mean and vicious. I had a colleague in Madras Christian College (an exceptionally efficient teacher with a fine mind) who was a good reader of fiction, but he was so accustomed to shockers, that he could not read a novel of George Eliot, however much he tried, convinced by my opinion that she would be very rewarding. He was quite intelligent to see the difference, but he admitted, knowing it to be a severe limitation, that he could read only the fiction to which he was used. One must be trained to read a classic and benefit from it, but such a training has never been intended as the essential part of modern education. Take another lecturer who knew just the outline of the story of 'Tess of Durbervilles' from a published summary and lectured on Hardy, reminding his students that he was an authority on the author. No doubt the students could not have refuted him. Take another case, quite similar. Once I was listening to a member of my department who was happy talking on how he was teaching 'Vanity Fair' and how many critics he consulted; and he added saying to me that the students were 'electrified' by his lecture. I looked as if accepted his estimate of himself. I complimented him in the conventional Indian idiom "Well, you are setting an example for us to emulate." It made him unself-conscious. I enquired, giving him the impression that I had not read 'Vanity Fair', "Tell me how big is that novel and how many pages it has. Can I finish it in a week's time?" He was not bad enough to be patronizing and he replied, "No, sir. You can finish it in two days. I did so, it is about 300 to 350 pages...that is all." I led him downstairs into our library asking one of the assistants to fetch the novel. He returned with the Everyman's edition of it; which I handed to the lecturer; pointing to the number of pages in it. He had a suspicion that I had tested him. I had dropped the matter at once therefore. The point is that these two lecturers are shameless dodgers, leaving us in no doubt as to how they managed their classes.

Not all university teachers are as bad as these two, but I have no doubt that they are as severely limited, if only as teachers. I will relate here another case, quite different this time. Once a university teacher, who was about to finish his doctoral thesis in comparative literature, paid a surprise visit to me with the first part of his work in typed loose sheets. He requested me to go through it. I thought he would leave it with me; but he wanted, or at any rate, expected my opinion on the spot. I ran over the first few pages;



but then I gathered that he was very enthusiastic about the high quality of his work, and expected my opinion to correspond to his enthusiasm. However, I saw no reason for compliment. As far as I read it, it was as bad as any Indian teacher's writing-it was plain nonsense. But he was a good and straightforward man, and we were on friendly terms. It was too delicate for me to pass an opinion. Nevertheless, I did not like to be false either. I said, thinking that I was making an inoffensive remark, "Do you think Arnold would have approved of your work?" I miscalculated the effect. He was embarrassed, nettled and furious. If I had added a word more in my defense, we would have come to exchange words, but I knew it would not be the right thing, for he was a visitor in my house. I kept my counsel. He however took a chance to retort as if to put me to shame for my presumption, "After all, Arnold is one of the several literary critics". Seeing the point of his retort, I forfeited any right to explain my position concerning his thesis. I made up to him by admitting that I ought not to have said such a thing, and our meeting ended with a small talk.

I said that our habits are vicious. By it I mean that we do as much harm as possible and protect ourselves in any disguise that can muffle our actions from being suspected. Take these two infamous examples of two university teachers. One of them, a lecturer, dictates to his M. A. degree students from Albert C. Baugh's 'History of English Language' habitually, like any other teacher, but he removes all the copies of this book from the library in order to let no student know from where his notes comes -- in order to enjoy the prestige of being 'original' unlike 'other teachers' who steal from authors and pass it off as their own. Such a piece of work suggests the nature of a hoodlum, for certain. The second one, a university professor is more infamous; once he received another university professor, who was a paper-setter, at the railway station, fixed up for him a room in a hotel, reserved a place for his return journey, took him home as his guest, and finally saw him off the next day at the station. The guest professor must have left heartily with due thanks to his host. But some months later, it was found that the host, that is, the more infamous university professor, wrote a letter to the Vice-Chancellor saying that the paper set by his guest professor was very 'substandard' and requesting him to appoint another paper-setter. It is necessary to know the implications here. Our host professor impresses

the Vice-Chancellor that he is a better sort of scholar. Secondly, he intends to have someone else as the paper-setter. However, we must note here that 'substandard' is not employed for what it means, but, like what I called the unctuous words (dignity, sanctity etc.) it is used habitually (the vicious habit to create a good impression about himself). Words in such a professors hands have neither content nor meaning, but are used according to the habits of a poor mind or according to the vanity of a self-important mind<sup>17</sup>. Let it be that this more infamous professor is not found out; and what is more, that he enjoys a reputation for his scholarship no less than for his character. I ask what state of affairs this is? Anyway, it seems very congenial to the English departments in India. This form of the philistine and vicious working of the Indian mind is not evident to us, because there is no deeper strain in us, with the energy of the mind learning the subject well.

If we demand of the teacher intelligence and character it is not surprising that he comes very short. The bourgeois spirit for attaining success or for making a living has ruined our character, and the modern education in English answering to this spirit, intended for the Western kind of progress, sought by so many but received so poorly has left us little above being imbecile. You have a poor education, but you have a self-elevating sense of being an educated man (the force of degree-holding). However there is no true basis for such a presumption in terms of qualitative learning, that is, in terms of the impact of learning on the mind. This education has only cheated us with a phony Western form. Once we go through this education, it means we go through changes far worse in character and intelligence. First, we will have shabby learning, and an ill-formed mind with an attractive degree. Then we are full of ideas, thinking of career only. They are ideals which all of us bold in the circumstances, but we are utterly incapable of putting them on paper, and of checking if they make sense -- that is if they have some incontestable basis. We pick up ideas, which is easy but we are failures in expression and communication. And what are we like when we are thinking of our career? We are over-ambitious, self-willed, ruthless, prepared to go to any length to do every harm to others in our own interest.

Confront this teacher such as I have described with power, he will be humble and obedient, expecting favors. Bestow upon him power, he will be nasty, suspicious, and willful, officiously standing on ceremony and doing harm to you but justifying it by 'rules' and 'principles' or 'ideals', Confront him with thought, he will either backbite you or agree or disagree without understanding it. Argue with him in earnest, he will avoid you or quarrel with you. Well, it is hard to find an Indian teacher in a state of mind self-critical and favorable to argument; for, testing ourselves by questioning our knowledge and our abilities is misconceived as a shame to us. Since our learning is poor and our knowledge shabby, since we have no ability in expression, and since our mind is plunged in the scramble for success in the world of bourgeois production - exchange with the motto of ' Devil take the hindmost'; character and intelligence with us are much to seek,

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<sup>17</sup> In the classroom he uses in the same spirit 'Imagination' and if one uses this, one must invariably employ also 'Intuition.' He often borrows from journals those expressions or words, which, elevate his 'personality' in the eyes of his students.

and we become either irrational, holding modern ideas or enthusiastic and elated being credulous or tactical and opportunistic being thorough-paced villains.

There are a few important verbs like 'know', 'argue', 'think', 'write', 'act', 'feel', and 'criticize', which have special Indian connotations; to know which is to know what kind of mind the modern Indian has; that is, it helps us to see how he is lacking in intelligence and character. '

*Know* - you hear someone usually talking of himself. "I have read all the novels of Dickens" but if you ask him for any reference to the characters or themes, he flings in your face this reply "Do you think you alone know Dickens, and what do you think you are?" Obviously, he thinks he has a sound knowledge of the author, and if he thinks so, it is enough; surely he doesn't require any test.

*Argue* - Arguing in India is a run-in to a quarrel.

*Think* - This is all we meet with, in a language some times roaringly, sometimes impressively, "You must think for yourself. You must have independent views. You must die for what you believe to be right. You must not bow to the public opinion". Obviously, when anyone 'thinks' in India, no thought is produced.

*Write* - Writing has been reduced to request, ordering and exhortation. Apart from these three modes, the rest of our writing consists of the notary's language and expression. The whole point of any academic thesis is this 'humble request'. "Let me have my Ph.D., degree, dear sir, do not mind whatever I write."

*Act* - "People only preach ideals, they do not practice them. I agree with what you say, it is all right and wonderful, but you must suggest ways and means of putting it into practice. Let us sit down and thrash out a program. You say this is wrong, but what is your alternative? In fact the same idea occurred to me the other day. I was saying the same ... but we want something pragmatic."

*Feel* - The inside of any middle-aged or an older Indian now is filled with accounts only, but that of a young man or woman, with scenes from films, with the result that they have no room for feeling. The emotional state of the first is concerned with their claims to their right to do this or that and with complaints against the government (in general, against taxation). They regard their 'virtues' highly but think ill of others. The emotions of the young spring from their film experiences and selfish drives, stamping their mind with the modern characteristics of perversity and hatred of the Indian past.

An Indian feels only physical pain when it is caused by physical injury. Feeling in any other sense doesn't exist now. Since the ideas of entering into..... of having a vital relation to..... are alien to the Indian mind, usually it is satisfied with emotions roused under any stimulus. Feelings with the content of the Indian civilization cannot now be evoked and sustained in nearly all of us on account of our being grossly unhistorical. Feeling presupposes mental power, which can only be acquired from our relation to

heritage, but such a relation is unthinkable now. I rarely find an Indian with a mind in which feeling and the value of an achievement of the past are inseparably combined, becoming a force for choice and action.

*Criticize* - "Why should anyone criticize anyone else? Criticizing is attacking, which is very, very bad. It is something to be frowned upon rather than encouraged. Therefore, it is much better to think [j] of others and backbite them than criticize, implying their exposure".

I must add two more verbs, '*prove*' and '*define*' to the above list, as in using these two words, the Indian mind discloses itself more richly to us. 'Prove' is very often used, like 'define' in India in demanding a proof for what you state. But the Indian employing both the verbs is an Indian with poor learning in English affecting not a little superiority or sophistication, who cannot ask any sensible questions in argument. Such an Indian betrays easily his poor English and his poor mind by self-important affectations. Also, his imitating the B. B. C. accent (now, American mainly) and journalistic tropes to meet a trying situation or to be impressive is the most ridiculous side of his person.

But even when someone wants, in earnest, proof and definition, he cannot see that there are other questions which could be prior or be equally important. In one sense, such a demand for proceeds from conceptual poverty as it is more an affectation than an attempt towards clarity. To such a mind demanding them, proof or definition amounts to reducing a statement to physical images which it can follow, or general ideas and sentiments which are acceptable and soothing. When one writes and cannot meet the demands of proof and definition in one's writing, it is not worthwhile demanding them. The point is that about certain kind of stating, there is no question of proving and defining, because it is a writing defining and proving something. What, if any writing is worthwhile, must be looked for in it is its thought and the determinations of the progress of thought. Here what must be proved is the same as what standards are implied. Nothing can be proved without raising the question of standards. If we do not know that the question of proof is the question of standards, we ask silly questions. In fact we go on asking silly questions.

When one asks for proof and definition, suppose they are offered in reply, do you think one will be satisfied with them? No, unless it is proving by witnesses or statistical figures, proof would be slender to the Indian mode of thinking in the teachers. So also with definition, since defining, is a short-cut for anything you wish to present by explanation, suggestion and appeal to understanding. True writing is not writing in legal terms requiring definition, but in ordinary terms with a content sharply defined. .

A distinction between a demand for proof and definition as an affectation and the necessity of demanding them for clarity must not be obscured. I remember that once when, talking on Yeats to a small gathering, I made a remark to the effect that he was a passionate poet, a university professor challenged me with the question "Define passion". Since I knew his real intention and his inability to ask any intelligent questions, I made a rude reply "You are either passionate and know what it is, or you are not passionate, in which case, a definition of passion will be lost upon you". I was rude, of course, because

he thought of challenging me rather than raising a relevant point for discussion.<sup>18</sup> What comes easy to the Indian mind in English out of ill-training or malice or vanity must be resisted. Indian English comes from the mind to which the discipline of reading, learning, thinking and writing, habitual to the student is wanting, since modern education is too empty to offer it.

Take, for instance, what I discussed at length in the first chapter, the case of a university English teacher who is regular, has a reputation as a scholar, and on that account makes claims to success. Suppose I hold that he cannot be a good teacher. You, at once, demand proof for my opinion, as if I am a downright liar, when, truly, to all appearances, the teacher is a proven case of success for over a long time. Let us first note carefully how you come to think that the teacher is far from deserving my opinion. And, of course, you will begin blaming me for my fortuitous reflection on him. First, he has been long enough in his profession with such a record of good service, which weighs decidedly in his favor. Secondly, you make enquiries and find him even admired on all hands, which makes your impression still stronger, that he must be a good teacher. Thirdly, you yourself might have heard him speak at some club or other when he was hailed as a remarkable speaker. I must then appear nothing less than a malicious gossip to think ill of his abilities and dare express my opinion. Fourthly, there is nothing to blame as far as his work of going to the classroom and teaching his subject is concerned, because the results, uniformly good each year, are a conclusive proof of his efficiency. Fifthly, there is the general report of his abilities, that he is, if not famous, a well-trying reliable scholar (Opinions like this, that he is an eminent scholar, has something to say on every thing...and so on, are spread). Sixthly, you respect him because he is in a noble profession without social importance. Had he enjoyed some importance or status, it could have been a stimulant to dislike him. Lastly, his degrees - the last in the series being from America -- are eloquent in his defense, exhibiting his worth and value to the nation itself. Also, is it not still more creditable to him to have published his thesis, written some articles, edited a few texts and visited America once or twice? Now, you retort with indignation, if not contempt, "Prove your case, lest You should be shamefaced by your willful opinion on so worthy an English teacher". Such an eloquent defense of the teacher's good reputation is intimidating, and it nearly drives me to save my face by doing penance. However, I shall do nothing of the sort, but take pains to explain' my stand.

In your defense I notice that nothing is said about his real work of teaching the text in the classroom. Mere references to his person, formal degrees, and efficiency are not what I want. No university teacher exists without 'them'. But, they do not show how he does his actual work. Even if you watch him teach his students you would not suspect what I am looking for. What gives you away is that you could not ask the crucial question, which would have settled the dispute between me and you; namely, could he teach a text well? You would not ask it because you yourself did not go deep enough into what is implied in the teaching of a text. What is implied would have suggested itself to you, if you have standards. You could not set up standards, and you, therefore, have other ways of forming

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<sup>18</sup> He would, of course, interpret my reply as an evasion, and say to himself and to his admirers that I could not answer his question.

an estimate of him-which are misleading. Suppose you could set up standards, that is, knowing how a text must be taught and being able to see when it is not taught well. You would, as from a sure instinct, ask then "Could he teach well?" and follow it up by two other questions, "What has been the history of teaching since modern education was introduced?" and "Are there conditions making for a good teacher?" The answer to these questions would be decisive, ending your distrust of my contention. From my account of the Indian university teacher showing him to be without character and intelligence and unfolding the conditions for his failure, it should be clear that there is very little chance for him of making good now. Nothing can be greater self - deception than to put trust in our ability to teach our subject, as we are *trained* in modern education.