

## THE INDIAN TRADITION AND OUR INTELLECTUAL TASK

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In his 'Svaraj in Ideas' (SII) Professor Krishnachandra Bhattacharya (KCB) presents the problem of our intellectual life with simplicity, clarity and strength. True, it was written long ago; true also, that we have been discussing the problem in many ways all these years; one of the ways has been to discuss the problem of our intellectual life in terms of modernization and indigenization — but it is also true that we have found no principle of adjustment between the two, and therefore our intellectual life goes on without any kind of clear orientation. Professor Bhattacharya's discussion of the problem articulates a principle of adjustment and orientation of our intellectual life and thus opens up the possibility of discussing the problem purposefully so that the principle of adjustment and orientation becomes an integral part of our intellectual life.

In this paper, I shall first present KCB's thesis as I understand it. I do this in order to distinguish my understanding from many other different ways in which it can be understood. I suggest that what looks like an advocacy or the acceptance of Indian spiritual values irrespective of comparison and competition with alien values is not so. Professor KCB is essentially giving reasons for holding on hard to one's own values before modifying or giving them up. I think that in the end whether we give them up or not, still the comparison and competition with our ideas is a necessary condition of our having an independent intellectual life. In the second section, I discuss the meaning of the Indian tradition — a problem that arises in the performance of this task. In the succeeding section, I discuss some steps that might facilitate developments which would make an authentic intellectual life possible. Lastly, I end with some concluding remarks.

## I

### The Indian Tradition and Alien Thought

It is important to note that KCB formulates the problem in terms of Svaraj and cultural subjection, and not in terms of modernization and indigenization. Svaraj is to be attained and cultural subjection is to be rejected, whereas neither modernization nor indigenization as such is either to be attained or rejected. Professor Bhattacharya clearly states the principle of orientation of our intellectual life: "...when I speak of cultural subjection, I do not mean assimilation of an alien culture. That assimilation need not be an evil. There is cultural subjection only when one's traditional cast of ideas and sentiments is superseded without comparison or competition by a new cast representing an alien culture which possesses one like a ghost." (SII I)

But for quite a long time, it might be said, the alien and traditional ideas have been in interaction, in comparison and competition, both explicitly and implicitly. True, but is it real comparison and competition? KCB says that there is conflict proper only when one is really serious about ideas, feels each ideal to be a matter of life and death. We sometimes sentimentally indulge in the thought of a conflict before we are really serious with either ideal. And what we have as a result is a patchwork of ideas and ideals. However, we shall distinguish between conflict proper and sentimental indulgence in conflict, not with reference to the subjective seriousness of the participants, but with reference to the structure of the conflict itself. I shall attempt to explain this difference with reference to a point of dispute between Tagore and Gandhi. (See 'Truth Called Them Differently: Tagore-Gandhi controversy', Navjivan Publishing House, Anmedabad — 14, 1961.)

Let me begin by saying that both Tagore and Gandhi accepted the Indian ideal of man and society, of unity or oneness of everything. (It is not important for our purpose to go into the details of the nature of this unity.) And yet they disagreed on many points. One such point of disagreement was

that Gandhi advocated the burning of garments made from foreign cloth, whereas Tagore opposed it and advocated that they be given to poor Indians. To Tagore, this movement was based on a confusion between economics and ethics — calling foreign cloth 'impure' etc. If there be anything wrong in wearing a particular kind of cloth, that would be an offence against economics, of hygiene or aesthetics, but certainly not against morality. To this Gandhi replied: I must confess that I do not draw a sharp distinction between economics and ethics. Economics that hurt the moral well-being of an individual or a nation are immoral and therefore, sinful. It is sinful to buy and use articles made by sweated labour. It is sinful to eat American wheat and let my neighbour starve for want of custom. Thus we find that this difference between Tagore and Gandhi is not superficial. The important question is: is there a sharp distinction between economics and ethics? For Gandhi there is not, and for Tagore there is.

This difference between Tagore and Gandhi could be understood in one of two ways: it may be that the difference shows the different ways the two want to adopt to reach the same ideal; or it may be that the difference shows that the two differ in their very understanding of the ideal though they express the ideal in the same and/or similar terms. A deeper examination of the difference between Tagore and Gandhi shows that the difference between the two is of ideals, and not of means to achieve a given ideal. According to Tagore, if we have a rational approach to problems, say, economic and ethical, we would achieve the ideal of unity. According to Gandhi the broad structure of the ideal of unity requires that reason in order to be reason must conform to it. This means that reason in economics and reason in ethics must mutually limit each other. (This is indeed an oversimplified account, but it helps to illustrate the distinction we are trying to explain. Here we have the echoes of the two senses of reason distinguished in the SII — mechanical reason and organic reason — which we shall refer to later on). More concretely we can see the difference between the two in the difference in their vision of India to come. Gandhi wants an India which has discovered her heritage, but

considers modern developments as a whole destructive of her body, mind and soul. Tagore too wants India to discover her heritage but he thinks that the West will invigorate her bones and shake her out of her lethargy. If we see the difference between Tagore and Gandhi rightly, we have conflict proper; and if we see the difference as merely a difference of means, we have patchwork of ideas and ideals.

The foregoing is indeed a very brief account of the distinction between proper conflict and patchwork of ideas. It can be generally formulated as follows: where comparison and competition is between two systems as wholes, we have real agreement or disagreement; when comparison and competition is partial — limited to parts of the systems ignoring the wholes — we have patchwork of ideas and ideals.

But if we have such discrepancy — incoherence — can we not have a synthesis? But what do we mean by synthesis? If there is a fundamental difference in ideals we can have synthesis only in so far as one ideal can accommodate an application of the other ideal. But there are limits to such adaptation. Such adaptation must not distort or destroy the principle itself. For example, the range and purpose of practices of economic efficiency would be different under different systems or goals like capitalism, communism and Gandhism. Capitalism would seek to maximise economic production and profits, communism would seek to maximise economic production and equality of distribution, Gandhism would seek to maximise economic production consistently with avoiding abject helplessness of individuals and groups. To extend or contract the methods of attaining efficiency of the one so as to assimilate them to the practices of the other beyond a point would not be adaptation and synthesis, but replacement of one system by another. But this leaves open the question of choice between the ideals themselves. It is important to clearly understand the position of SII on this issue. But how are we to choose between such fundamentally different ideals? In our illustration, the two principles are two different interpretations of the Indian idea of unity; but for discussing the foregoing question, we could very well take it to be the difference between the traditional and

the alien ideals. (Professor M. P. Marathe of the Department of Philosophy in Poona University suggested to me that KCB's controversy between Svaraj and universalism in intellectual life reflects the controversy between Gandhi and Tagore. This is indeed a very valuable and almost certainly a true suggestion.) One possible way of dealing with the difference suggested by KCB is that we can accept the application of the alien ideal which can be subsumed under the framework of our own ideal. This is the principle of synthesis already suggested by KCB.

However this does not answer the basic question of how to choose between our own and a fundamentally different alien ideal. Instead of giving an answer to this question, KCB says that such a choice is indeed very difficult. "The ideals of a community spring from its past history and from the soil, they have not necessarily a universal application, and they are not always self-luminous to the other community." (para XV) This is the reason why we should not forsake our own spiritual ideal.

Certainly the choice of the alien ideal may be very difficult, but it may be the right choice; the alien ideal is claimed to be supported by reason which is universal. If so, one must face and overcome the difficulties in the way of the acceptance of the alien ideal. In response to such an argument, KCB distinguishes between an abstract mechanical idea of reason which is superficial and a concrete organic idea of reason which is the result of meditation and long experience. According to him the traditional idea of reason is the organic one, and the alien idea is the abstract one. The choice is therefore between one reason and another. And to KCB, "The only way to appreciate a new ideal is to view it through our actual ideal, the only way to find a new reverence is to deepen our old reverence". Once again what we have is the same principle as before: we must accept what can be adapted to our own spiritual ideal.

But can there not be an alternative which may be better than our spiritual ideal? KCB seems to accept such a possibility, but says: "it is wrong not to accept an ideal that is felt to be a simpler and deeper expression of our own ideals simply because it is different from our present spiritual ideal or be-

cause it hails from a foreign country. To reject it would be to insist on individuality for the sake of individuality and would be a form of national conceit and obscurantism" (para XVIII). And yet we continue to be within the framework of our own spiritual ideal — a simpler and deeper expression of our own ideals.

This may naturally make us suspect that the comparison and competition suggested by KCB are not completely open, or maybe, KCB thinks that there can be only one truly spiritual ideal — in accordance with the true nature of man; and therefore, there cannot be any question of accepting any other ideal which does not fit into any one of the foregoing patterns. It will be impossible here to enter into the controversy whether there can be more than one true spiritual ideal. However, for the sake of argument, we can imagine such a possibility and its consequences for the idea of comparison and competition.

Suppose that there is a radically different alien spiritual ideal such that it cannot be reduced to or subsumed under our own ideal. What would comparison and competition in such a case amount to? It would be a struggle between the two ideals for mastery over the souls of men. This must necessarily involve not only a struggle in the mind and life of an individual, but also a struggle between groups supporting the radically different ideals. During this process the individual and the society will be in utter confusion, and the outcome would be anybody's guess! And whichever of the two wins, is it necessarily better? Whatever may be the outcome, comparison and competition would be a necessary part of the struggle.

Surely, all this smacks of chauvinism and unshakeable attachment to one's own spiritual ideal. KCB does not want to deny that it could be a danger, but he has taken sufficient precautions against such a possibility. And in the then circumstances, the danger rather was from our acceptance of alien criticism which was ignorant and/or unsympathetic. (Is the danger much less even today?)

It might be said that all this was all right at the time the matter was raised by KCB; but is it not too late in the day to

take up all this now? Have we not gone too far in the direction of accepting alien ideals and practices; so that consideration of our spiritual ideals is merely an academic exercise without any practical significance? To such considerations one might respond in the following two ways:

(a) Have we really accepted the alien ideals and practices? Has our soul been transformed so that we really welcome or resist new ideas? Or do the alien ideas still possess us like a ghost? Or is it that the old spirit has become a ghost and is not leaving us? or wherever we are, is it necessary to know from where we have come, in order to know where we are? I am raising these questions to imply that the obligation to have a reference to the past cannot be forsaken, if we are to regain our identity, or even to acquire a new identity. Otherwise we would be where we are because some one else has put us there.

(b) However, this is not all. The theory and practice of alien ideas by the alien as well as by us, in fact, by more or less the entire world, has raised serious doubts about the validity of both the theory and the practice of modern civilization. Is science that all-conquering as it at one time seemed to be? Is it the only science? Is it a true science at all or has its truth got serious limitations? And even if the theory of it were to be granted, can it be worked out in practice in the context of the depletion of the non-renewable resources, and a murderous competition between the nations of the world? Do modern theory and practice not need a reconsideration? And in this reconsideration, are we to presume that the traditional modes of thought must have no role to play? Thus the need for a serious consideration of the traditional cast of ideas by comparing and contrasting them with the alien or modern cast of ideas is a necessary condition of an authentic intellectual life for us, and perhaps not only for us.

## II

### What is the Indian Tradition?

(A) The discussion in the last section sets the task of comparison and competition with the traditional cast of ideas. But

the task needs an explanation: what is the traditional cast of ideas? To this question there is no clear or simple answer. Anyone who talks about tradition, very often talks of some one part of tradition or other which it is recognized is not the whole of tradition. The whole tradition consists of several strands of tradition — Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, Sikh, Tribal etc. — mutually related, mutually interacting both in an oppressive and an enriching manner. This should not present a problem to the task, any specific tradition that is taken for comparing etc. will be related to the other strands and therefore the whole tradition will be considered at least indirectly.

However what is true of these parts of the tradition is not true in the same way in the case of Islam and Christianity and yet they too are now part of the Indian tradition. Here too the question arises, what is the Islamic tradition and what is the Christian tradition? It is true that these traditions go much beyond the border of India. However, what we need to consider is their Indian presence. Certainly the complex tradition that Hinduism is, and Islam and Christianity have mutually interacted in the course of history in a variety of fields like art, music, politics, religion etc. and continue to do so. However, the nature and range of such interaction has been complex and continues to be so. It is important that this mutual interaction is founded on the principles of mutual fairness and enrichment, and not of mutual weakening and derogation. This cannot be done by the Hindus on the ground of their past memories, true or imagined, of Muslim or Christian dominance; nor on the basis of their present political superiority (!). It can be done only by a serious attention to the Indian presence of Islam and Christianity and a recognition of their legitimate problems and their legitimate role. Equally, the Muslims and the Christians cannot establish a proper relationship with the Hindus on the ground of their past dominance, nor on their desire to exploit Hindu weaknesses. It can be done only by recognising their legitimate problems and their legitimate role. This means paying serious attention to the Hindu tradition and not setting it aside as old, religious, anti-secular. Surely what is old is not necessarily wrong or to be forgotten. Secularism in our context involves not only the attitude of the state to religion, but also

the attitude of one religion to another religion. And even when something is specifically local in a religion or a theory, it has universal aspects also. In so far as this is so, the Hindu past will continue to be the part of the consciousness of the Hindus not merely as past, but also as providing coordinates of thought to the present-day India—not only in religion but also in other areas of thought. There are general principles which will need to be carefully worked out with reference to specific issues and situations. There are many such — music before mosques, beef-eating, common civil code, idolatry, conversion, attitude to one's own religion and to the religion of the other. On these and other issues Gandhiji has put forward thoughts and principles which are sound, in any case, which serve the highest consideration.

It might be said that theoretically this may appear to be sound, but practically, it is fraught with many dangers. But surely this is ground for keeping away from such excesses; to claim that it is ground for giving only historical significance to the tradition is so unjust that no one with any goodwill will advocate it. The choice is only between mutual goodwill and enrichment on the one hand, and mutual ill-will, barrenness and destruction on the other.

(B) However, to accept the role of the traditional cast of ideas in our intellectual life is not the end of our difficulties. Now, we are faced with another question: in view of the fact that tradition comes to us through sources which are inadequate and not unambiguous, how are we to get at the authentic tradition? This question can never be satisfactorily answered; but this is not a weakness, it is a strength. It is usual that with changing times, different parts or aspects of tradition get emphasised; the interpretation of tradition is also changed. It is this that enables us to establish authentic contact with the tradition, this enables us to think of our problems in such a way that our understanding illuminates the past, and the past illuminates our problems. We regard this as unsatisfactory only if we think that the role of the study of tradition is purely a historical one.

(C) It might be said, however, that this creative use of the past is no longer possible for us because our consciousness is itself contaminated; and we have lost our capacity to understand the tradition. There can be no doubt that our thinking is affected to a greater or less extent by western ideas and ideals; however this makes our task difficult, but it need not prevent authentic and fruitful contact with tradition.

### III

#### What can we do?

We have stated the task, we have explained it and shown that the difficulties are either no difficulties or they can be overcome. But the question remains; how is the task to be accomplished? How is one to avoid patchwork of ideas and ideals and institute real fruitful comparison and competition between the Indian traditional and alien systems of thought? This is a creative task and can be performed in many ways, as one can see from the way some individuals have attempted the task. It must be a priority task to see how differently and how usefully this has been done. We shall find that this involves many choices backed by a general and special background, hard work and luck. One cannot, lay down rules for this creative task. Then what? Are we helpless? Is this development to be left to chance?

Not altogether. It is possible for us to take steps which will facilitate the desired development. Quite a few individuals have thought that a significant and satisfying intellectual life is possible by work in this kind of direction and have worked as best as they can and with more or less success. Among contemporaries, to name only illustratively, we may mention A. K. Saran and G. C. Pande; among the recent ones, Ananda Coomaraswamy or Nirmal Kumar Bose. And towering above them all and very different is Gandhi. In the context of our academic life, these have been more less systematically ignored, though nowadays some kind of lip-service is paid to them. I think, one useful step we can take is to focus attention on this

kind of work, by these and other authors. Here too there are bound to be differences of judgement. However, this could help in pointing out the problems, possibilities and prospects.

With the help of these or independently of them, one could attempt another opening. For example, it is possible to consider a number of traditional texts which are central to the consideration of issues say in grammar, political thought, aesthetics, ethics, metaphysics, and so on. Certainly there will be differences of emphasis and choice. However, one can make some suggestions. It is more important to emphasize study in depth of some central texts rather than to go in for exhaustiveness, historical development and causal explanations. It is more worthwhile to look for authenticity of contact rather than for historical authenticity. And it is important to remember that fairly or highly different theoretical systems can be compared more fruitfully and intelligibly in the context of broader and more abstract levels than in the context of details.

The foregoing should give us some suggestions about our studies of western thought also. I think that here too our emphasis on the study of classics will help us in many ways. For example, a study of Kant or Descartes through their texts (in translation) will give a point of contact to the students of Kant and Descartes which a study of them through histories of philosophy can never give. A further consideration gives us a suggestion for the study of contemporary western thought also. One could say that the classics represent a crystallization and culmination of a certain line of thought on certain issues. For example, Kant represents a crystallization of the issues discussed by his predecessors like Wolff, Baumgarten and others. In this crystallization the local and specific aspects of the discussion are left in the background and the universal aspects are brought into focus. In so far as this is so, the contemporary discussions of many issues can be seen as representing a pre-classical stage arising out of the discussion of earlier classics and contemporary thought. Is it not worthwhile for us to have our own pre-classical stage out of which we may develop our own crystallization and classical stage, rather than go from one alien classical stage, through an alien pre-classical stage to the next

alien classical stage? This suggestion will effect an economy of both thought and expenditure, and may help a better grasp and understanding.

However, all these steps facilitate, they do not guarantee: but if we work hard and are lucky, we may strike gold at home!

#### IV

I think it should be clear that in my opinion it is not the attempt of Krishna Chandra Bhattacharya to advocate the acceptance of the traditional thought or the traditional system of values or the rejection of a particular understanding of society like Marxist or modern liberal, without a serious consideration. This is not to say that he himself may not have been inclined towards the acceptance of the traditional after serious consideration. However, what he wants to emphasize is that for a meaningful intellectual life the co-ordinates of reference for our thought, must be provided by traditional thought. I do not think that this point of KCB's is weakened by any other agreement or disagreement that we might have with SII. If so, SII should have momentous consequences for our intellectual life in all its aspects.

What will happen as a result of such a development? It will bring into our intellectual life two or more articulated structures — along with sub-structures — traditional and alien — of thought with their problems and possibilities. This would give depth, clarity and paradoxically, unity and coherence as distinguished from fragmentation and confusion to our intellectual life. In the context of the present state of western thought — no longer full of confidence and certainty — we would be better able to understand its limitations. But would all this enable us to make a confident choice between the two structures and possibly corresponding different life-styles? At this point, it is too late to take on this question.

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## SVARAJ, REVERENCE AND CREATIVITY

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K. C. Bhattacharya makes an obviously persuasive appeal to his thoughtful contemporaries, or rather to all thoughtful Indians, to realise adequately the great importance of what he calls svaraj in ideas. According to him it is indispensable in all spheres of Indian life and the result of our not having properly cherished it is the sad fact that "Slavery has entered into our very soul" (para 10).

In the process of presenting the case for svaraj in ideas he has said several general things about the role of alien and indigenous traditions and cultures, creativity, inter-cultural understanding and appraisal, etc. Most of the issues he has raised are very broad and basic. They have been, and are still being raised by modern Indian thinkers of a certain persuasion, and some of them have characterised, or attempted to solve them, in ways quite similar to Bhattacharya's. In fact, the prevailing intellectual climate of the country seems to assure us that the class of such thinkers is not going to be extinct in the foreseeable future. Therefore, the issues, current mode of their characterisation and their proposed solutions are likely to be reincarnated again and again, in similar or slightly modified forms, without seeming to be obviously irrelevant, and thereby giving the impression that there is in them an element of eternity.

I shall examine in the present essay the picture of these issues as drawn by Bhattacharya and also the solutions to them he has proposed. But I shall also try not to lose sight of the basic factors which motivate such attempts. Consequently my discussion of Bhattacharya's views has become a little more detailed or prolix than a close examination of an individual thinker's views on a particular topic should be. I hope this loss in respect of conciseness would be compensated for by the relev-

ance of the comments made here even to positions other than Bhattacharya's, advanced by thinkers of a similar orientation to his.

By 'svaraj' Bhattacharya means self-determination, and mentions two kinds of it, svaraj in politics and svaraj in ideas. He does not say much, even enough, about what svaraj positively is, but explains what it is mostly by saying what its opposite, to which he gives the name 'subjection', is. He seems to believe that to say what subjection is is to say what svaraj is not, and to say what it is not is to say what svaraj is. To say what a thing is not is sometimes a good way to suggest what it is, but it is not always an infallible method, since it is possible to draw a wrong conclusion about what it in fact is from a statement saying what it is not. Let us see how Bhattacharya proceeds in this matter.

Political subjection, the opposite of political svaraj, is according to him, domination of man over man or, more precisely, the domination of one people by another. Cultural subjection, the opposite of svaraj in ideas, is on the other hand, "a subtler domination exercised in the sphere of ideas by one culture over another" (para 1). It is more serious and difficult to shake off than the former. "There is cultural subjection only when one's traditional cast of ideas and sentiments is superseded without comparison or competition by a new cast representing an alien culture which possesses one like a ghost. This subjection is slavery of the spirit" (Loc. Cit.). When a person shakes himself free from it, "he experiences a rebirth" and that is what Bhattacharya calls 'svaraj in ideas'. It is, thus, emancipation from domination by an alien culture. This characterisation is, in effect, negative since it only specifies what one should get rid of, and not what positive trait he should have, or cultivate, in order to retain, or be blessed with, svaraj in ideas.

Bhattacharya generally uses the negative characterisation when he wants to highlight the status of svaraj in ideas as an extremely important national virtue. Since this seems to be the major objective, or at least one of the major objectives, of his, references to the negative form of the concept naturally

abound in his discussion. Perhaps the reason for this is its built-in normative force. To say that we ought to shake ourselves free from domination by any alien culture is to say something the normative truth of which is obvious or unquestionable. But this is so because of the built-in normative (and emotive) force of the terms 'shake ourselves free from', 'domination,' and 'alien'. Therefore, the sentence 'we ought to shake ourselves free from domination by an alien culture' may be said to express a normative truism or tautology, or at least to possess some important features of a truism or tautology. This becomes more clearly visible if one tries to imagine the possibility of denying it because, then, he finds that he can deny it only at the risk of appearing to be a perverted person, or at least a person with no national self-dignity. Who would dare to say that we ought not to, or need not, shake ourselves free from ... ? Bhattacharya's call for svaraj in ideas derives a large part of its persuasiveness from the truistic character of the form he has given to it.

Bhattacharya thinks that the call is one which needs to be forcefully given and sincerely attended to. He would be justified, however, in so thinking, in spite of its being truistic in character, if and only if he succeeds in elevating it to a position which accords to it some positive, concrete content without making it obviously questionable.

To enable his conception of svaraj in ideas, as presented above, to function effectively as a viable and intelligible principle in the world of thought or action, (a) he should have stated clearly which aspect or aspects of the alien culture, in his opinion, have dominated which aspect or aspects of the indigenous culture. To make the statement pointful, (b) he should have first given an objective characterisation of the basic features of the alien and indigenous cultures, and (c) empirically substantiated the claim that the former has dominated the latter. In addition, (d) he should have also explained, or at least stated, what, according to him, constituted the positive content of the concept of svaraj in ideas, that is specified which positive traits of character (i) one should have in order to be able to shake off the domination, or (ii) which ones

he should acquire, or is automatically endowed with, after he has shaken off the domination, i.e., after his rebirth. To carry further the message of his metaphor of rebirth, it is not the mere fact that one has been reborn, but the kind of life he leads thereupon, which ensures his mokṣa. But Bhattacharya has not done any thing to fulfil any one of the conditions a to d.

He does not present even the briefest characterisation of the alien culture, nor even mention any aspect of it which, in his opinion, has dominated the indigenous culture. He, however, reminds us of the fact that "we had an indigenous culture of a high degree of development the comparative value of which cannot be said to have yet been sufficiently appraised" (para 2). But in this case as well he does not give any account of what this highly developed indigenous culture is, nor mentions any one of its aspects which has allegedly been dominated or overshadowed and which deserves our immediate attention and respect. He has chosen to speak in terms of extreme generalities, with obviously no care for historical, empirical details or justification. It is extremely difficult, therefore, to have a clear understanding of the nature of his call to protect the identity of the indigenous culture, and consequently it turns out to be equally difficult to give an assessment of his position which may not be easily misunderstood or misjudged.

By the alien culture he admittedly means Western culture and by that, in all likelihood, British culture. By the indigenous culture perhaps he means classical Hindu culture, and not the medieval, or modern, Indian culture. It is very difficult, and in no sense indispensable, to say that every aspect of, or every idea contained in, classical Hindu culture is worth respecting, preserving, or protecting. Bhattacharya would have very greatly helped us in properly understanding him had he said which aspects or ideas of the indigenous culture he considers relevant to modern India, or the India of his time. It is not even a healthy patriotism, far from being objective scholarship (or philosophy), to claim or suggest of a classical or ancient culture that every fibre of it is of unquestionable value.

Immediately after putting forth his basic claim, with which he begins the lecture, that it is the domination by the alien culture which has destroyed or very greatly weakened our svaraj in ideas, he proceeds to complain that western culture "has not generally been assimilated by us in an open eyed way with our old-world Indian mind. That Indian mind has simply lapsed in most cases for our educated men, and subsided below the conscious level of culture" (Loc. Cit.). It is not, however, clear how the fact that the alien culture has remained unassimilated is related to the fact that it has dominated over the indigenous culture. Obviously unassimilatedness and domination are not the same thing, nor is the causal link between them clearly visible.

The seriousness with which he refers to the domination by the alien culture generates the hope that he would say something more concrete and specific about it. But unless we are willing to concede that by it he just means that the alien culture has been accepted without being properly assimilated, he seems to have left it and consequently the nature of svaraj in ideas as well, the very subject of his lecture, almost undiscussed. But to concede this would entail that the way to attain svaraj is to properly assimilate the assimilable elements of the alien culture. Such a position can be maintained only if there are compelling reasons for assimilating an alien culture which "has been simply upon us" (Loc. Cit.). But he does not mention any. In fact, the claim about the unassimilatedness of the alien culture, even if valid, is, as I have already said, another claim, and not the same as the one about its domination or consequent subjection, and therefore even if valid, it cannot by itself validate the latter, nor can it show the path to svaraj in ideas.

According to him, "there can be no vital assimilation" (Loc. Cit.) because the old-world Indian mind, with which the western culture should have been assimilated, has simply lapsed for most of us. But he never says what this old-world Indian mind is, why it has lapsed, and what kind of event its lapsing is. It is, therefore, difficult to understand what he means by

attributing the lack of vital assimilation to its lapse, and almost impossible to make any effort to resuscitate it.

One of the major problems with Bhattacharya's essay is that he has left vague and unexplained almost all of his key-concepts. The unassimilated Western ideas "induce in us", he says, "a shadow mind that functions like a real mind except in the matter of genuine creativeness" (para 4), and leaves one at the mercy of his fancy to guess what 'induce' 'shadow mind', 'real mind', and 'genuine creativeness' mean. These and most of his other key-terms look like very attractive, beautiful, keys, but keys one is not told how to use and on which locks to use. Therefore, he may even doubt if they can open any lock at all.

Following him in using his vague terms vaguely, one can even say that earlier he has attributed the failure to assimilate to the lapse of the old-world Indian mind and now, in saying that the unassimilated, or half-assimilated, Western culture induces in us a shadow mind, he is, in effect, attributing the lapse of the old-world Indian mind to the un- or half-assimilation. What else could the shadow mind be if not the lapsed Indian mind?

Bhattacharya's concept of assimilation is a little puzzling in another way as well. After suggesting that the assimilable western ideas should be assimilated with indigenous ones, he adds that "The ideas embodied in a foreign language are properly understood only when we can express them in our own way" (para 25). Therefore, he pleads for "a genuine translation of foreign ideas into our native ideas before we accept or reject them" (Loc. Cit.). But a little earlier, while arguing against universalism, he has said that "no idea of one cultural language can exactly be translated in another cultural language" (para 12). This means that a genuine translation does not have to be an exact translation. Let us grant that it does not. But then he must say how much of inexactitude is permissible in a genuine translation. Unless he clarifies this issue his plea for a genuine translation of ideas would neither carry any weight, nor would it provide any effective guidance as to how to prepare for a vital assimilation. Even without giving precise criteria for the nations involved, one can retrieve thi

situation by giving appropriate examples, even imaginary or model-type, of vital and non-vital assimilation (i.e. hybridisation), and of genuine but inexact translation. But this is something Bhattacharya is not at all inclined to do.

As against universalism, the theory which believes in the possibility of values or ideals commonly appropriate or valid for all humanity, or for several societies, Bhattacharya argues for the individuality, the distinctive genius, of communities and their cultures. He asserts that "the ideals of a community spring from its past history and from the soil: they have not necessarily a universal application and they are not always self-luminous to other communities" (para 16). Therefore, in assimilating a foreign ideal, we have to see that "the foreign ideal is to be assimilated to our ideal, and not the other way. There is no demand for the surrender of our individuality in any case: svadharme nidhanam . . . . .'" (para 16). Obviously he thinks that one who follows this advice of his would achieve vital assimilation. But to me the truth seems to be the other way round. One who starts his work of assimilation with the assumption (or prejudice) that the foreign ideal is to be assimilated to his, and not his to the foreign, that even destruction is to be preferred while protecting the individuality of his culture, is very unlikely to proceed in an open-eyed, objective, manner. If I am willing to prefer destruction to letting my dharma be modified, how can I be expected to be fair to other cultural ideals? If adjusting our indigenous ideals to foreign ideals is undesirable, then doing the reverse should also be equally undesirable.

His entire approach in the paper may seem to be very patriotic, and perhaps its patriotic appearance is its main charm even to-day. But this patriotism, as will be clear from the paragraph that follows, is of a special brand which on occasions seems to be indistinguishable from traditionalism.

While criticising universalism he makes a distinction between two kinds of rationalism, the right kind and the wrong kind. The right kind of rationalism is "the efflux of reverence, reverence for the traditional institutions through which customary sentiments are deepened into transparent ideals"

(para 18). The wrong kind is one in which "the simplification and generalisation of ideals is effected by unregenerate understanding with its mechanical separation of the essential from the inessential. The essential is judged as such here not through reverence, not through deepened spiritual insight, but through the accidental likes and dislikes of the person" (Loc., Cit.). It seems he cannot approve of reason if it is neutral or objective in its approach to traditional institutions, and would definitely disapprove of its being critical of them. It has to be reverential to them. If it is not, it becomes a slave to the user's likes and dislikes. It is obvious now that what he calls the right kind of rationalism is nothing but a dignified traditionalism. There, in effect according to him, only he can rightly assimilate western ideals with indigenous ones who approaches the former only after having inculcated an attitude of reverence for the latter.

Since even the classical Hindu traditions do not constitute a homogenous mass, nor do they contain only elements of universal or unconditional value, a reverential attitude is no guarantee that the traditions one reveres are all desirable, and therefore the ideals one considers representative of the Indian culture all impeccable. If such a thing actually happens, the resulting assimilation is bound to be a greater evil than the patchwork of ideals, foreign and indigenous, Bhattacharya declares to be evil. In fact, in his scheme of things there is no mechanism which may function as a deterrent to the occurrence of the former evil, nor is there any built-in criterion by which it can be judged to be evil. Rather, the adoption of his frame-work can, with ingenuity, be used to defend traditionalism, regionalism, or sectarianism, which are in no way less dangerous than universalism which he has declared to be "our greatest danger" (para 21).

Bhattacharya's suggestion for having reverence for the indigenous traditions and culture may, however, be construed as filling in an important gap in his theory. It has been pointed out that he has given primarily a negative characterisation of the concept of svaraj and therefore needs to provide to it a positive content. It may be said, in his favour, that the above

suggestion has been made with this end in view. That is considered as a positive concept, svaraj in ideas consists in assimilating the alien traditions with the indigenous traditions having first inculcated an attitude of reverence for the latter. Then, in order to have svaraj in ideas, one should shake off the domination by the alien traditions, generate in himself reverence for his indigenous traditions, and assimilate the assimilable elements of the former. This is a positive enough characterisation of svaraj. But one needs to remember that one's reverence may not only create blocks in the way of fair assimilation, it may also lead to his domination or subjection by his own, indigenous, traditions. Any tradition can dominate an individual, and even an indigenous one can dominate him to the extent of destroying, or very greatly weakening, his judgmental, decision-making ability, his ability to think freely, objectively and dispassionately. If such a thing happens, it will be nothing less than the annihilation, or at least the suppression, of svaraj in ideas. Therefore, reverence for the indigenous traditions is not the right kind of material to be fed into the negative characterisation of the latter to give to it a satisfactory positive content.

One's reverence for a tradition is very likely to increase the latter's power to influence and mould his life-style, to make him receptive to the influence, and to weaken his ability to resist it. If the tradition is indigenous, its influencing power will get fortified by his nationalist, patriotic, sentiments, which may act as a shield to protect it and glorify his subjugation to it as the fulfilment of a national duty, his svadharma, his devotion for the cultural heritage of his country, his right response to all that he owes to his forefathers, etc. Besides, the indigenous traditions Bhattacharya wants us to revere are our ancient traditions. Generally the ancientness of a tradition adds to its prestige, sustains it against occasional attacks and increases its hold on our psychology. Therefore, reverence for traditions which are both indigenous and ancient is likely to exercise on us a very tight grip, making it seem almost unnatural or derogatory to question their sanctity.

In a country open to the influence of an alien culture, one's subjugation to his own traditions may be treated by some as a safeguard against his possible subjugation by the former. One may feel tempted to believe that it will not let him be (re-) subjugated by the alien cultures. This may be true, but it is like the belief that a dead man cannot re-die. But it is not to be forgotten that the dead man certainly can stink.

One who enjoys being subjugated by one tradition can be prone to subjugation by another if he finds the latter more enjoyable or convenient. Even in philosophy, one who thinks it is good philosophy to reverentially recount the views of Sankara will very gladly do the same thing with respect to Kant if he finds Kant equally, or more, convenient, or satisfying to his taste, or fashionable. If he is more generous, he would present a comparative study of the two philosophers, recounting with equal reverence, the views of both in the same work!

Bhattacharya makes his conception of assimilation further prone to converge towards a kind of Indian traditionalism by his associated doctrine of the eternity of the spiritual ideals. As he says, "In spiritual life, however, there is no demand for compromising our ideals in order to have a smooth sailing with the times. Here, if possible and so far as lies in our power, the times have to be adapted to our life and not our life to the times" (para 13). Since we have to have reverence for our spiritual ideals and they are not to be adapted to the times, if we come across any spiritual ideal of the west not cohering with them, we have to simply reject it, or adapt it to suit ours. In this region, since the ideals are unalterable, we have only to revere and protect our, Indian, spiritual traditions. Real, meaningful, assimilation, of the Western ideals, is, thus, ruled out in a region which is, on Bhattacharya's own admission, the most important one.

The chances of an indigenous tradition dominating one's thoughts and action-patterns in a much more gripping manner, therefore, would be greater than those of an alien tradition. Since it is indigenous, he may not even feel that he is dominated by it, and even enjoy and take pride in his subjection.

If the domination by an alien culture is "subtler", "ordinarily of an unconscious character", and therefore "implies slavery from the very start" (para 1), domination by an indigenous culture is likely to outdo the latter in all these respects. Bhattacharya does not realise that it is more difficult to emancipate oneself from the domination by an indigenous tradition than from that by an alien one, and that any domination can weaken one's svaraj.

He contrasts cultural subjection with political subjection but does not take note of indigenous political subjection and perhaps therefore misses to note the importance of indigenous cultural subjection. A people can be dominated quite severely by a powerful indigenous group or individual, with all the undesirable consequences, or even more, which a foreign domination can bring about. If emancipation from foreign domination, political as well as cultural, is to be prized, emancipation from indigenous domination, political as well as cultural, is not to be less prized.

One may take the stand that an indigenous tradition cannot dominate, but this will be empirically untenable. Or, he may refuse to call its domination domination. Traditionalists quite often seem to take the latter stand. To them bondage is not bondage if it is to an indigenous tradition. Using a satire by Bharatendu Hariścandra, it amounts to declaring that 'Vaidikī Himsā Himsā Na Bhavati'.

In provoking one to resist or shake off cultural domination, whether alien or indigenous, man's reason, or rationality, plays the most important role. It makes him realise the shortcomings of the dominating tradition and prompts him to assert his independence. But this can be done only by a critical, unbiased, objective, reason, by one which has not lost its ability to see both sides of the issue, and not by one which has already lost its objectivity by having become reverential to the dominating (alien or indigenous) tradition. Reason, which is reverential to the indigenous tradition, is the genuine reason for Bhattacharya, and therefore in his ideal world reason cannot contribute to emancipation from indigenous cultural sub-

jection if it ever takes place. But no one can deny that it had taken place even in Bhattacharya's times.

Reverence, whether it is for a person, principle, or practice, may sometimes destroy, distort, or unduly restrain, the use of one's svaraj in ideas if he already has it, and if he does not, it may make him incognisant of the latter's worth. It is dispassionate reason which prevents reverence from doing all this. When reason itself becomes reverential, the distance between rationalism and dogmatism (or conservatism) becomes too short.

For Bhattacharya reason is either reverential to the indigenous traditions, or unregenerate understanding working through one's accidental likes and dislikes. It is really surprising that he could not think of the possibility of reason functioning as an objective discriminator, as a neutral agent, which is neither reverential nor arbitrary. If non-reverential reason is only kutarka, then to make use of only that sort of reason which is reverential to the (indigenous) traditions is the best thing for the wise to do. As Vidyāraṇya says, "tasmāt Kutarkaṁ Saṅtyajya mumukṣuḥ śrutiṁ āśrayet" (Pañcadaśī, Chap. VIII, 68). Bhattacharya's approach to the role of reason is, thus, being in conformity with a dominant strand of classical Indian tradition, not non-traditional. To say that reason can deliver the right kind of goods only if it is reverential to the traditions is only stylistically different from saying that it can only if it is reverential to śruti.

He seems to be almost echoing the ancient voice when declares that "progress in the spiritual world is not achieved by a detached reason judging an old god and a new god. The way to know facts is not the way to know values" (para 20). He does not seem to realise that if objective reason is declared incompetent to be employed in the spiritual world, it does not follow that reverential reason is. Nor does he realise that very much depends upon how the spiritual world is conceived and that his way to conceive it is not the only possible one. The way to know facts is definitely not the way to know values, but the knowledge of facts need not be irrelevant to, or may even be necessary for, acquiring a sound knowledge of values.

Here again, to repeat, very much depends upon how facts and values and their relationship are conceived, and Bhattacharya's way to conceive them is not the only plausible one.

That one's reverence for his indigenous traditions can also take away his svaraj in ideas is very vividly illustrated by Prāṇeśācārya, the hero of Ananthamurti's *Śaṅskāra*. He typifies a very sincere, erudite, scholar, steeped in traditional wisdom, reverentially devoted to his traditions. But when he is confronted with the problem what to do with the dead body of Nāraṇappā, the social-moral rebel who flouted the traditions in his life-time, he finds himself in a helpless situation. This happens because the śāstras, the repository of the traditions, give him no answer, and his reverence for them has enslaved his mind to the extent of depriving him of man's natural equipment of reason by using which, in an objective manner, he could have found out a solution based on the relevant facts. The question of his having been dominated by the alien, Western, culture does not arise because he is a 'pure' Indian, uncontaminated by any non-Indian culture.

To regain his svaraj in ideas, his ability to exercise his self-determination, what Prāṇeśācārya needs is to shake off the domination by his own traditions, and not by any alien one. He starts realising the need of self-determination and experiencing a little taste of it only after having a new experience, occasioned by his unsolicited, unexpected, physical, amorous, relationship with Caṇḍrī, the low-caste, untouchable, woman, the concubine of late Nāraṇappā, even whose accidental touch was considered to be defiling.

The truth exemplified by Prāṇeśācārya cannot be glossed over on the ground that he is a fictional character, since he exhibits a genuine possibility which no theory about cultural subjection can ignore. Moreover, real examples of his type can be easily located, both among the educated and uneducated, in Indian society even today. I believe they were not more scarce in Bhattacharya's times.

If one's reason becomes habituated to work under the censorship or supervision of reverence for his indigenous traditions,

however ennobled he may feel, it becomes extremely difficult for him to be reborn as a free-thinking, or a free, individual, or for the scales to fall off his eyes. Any such thing may happen to him, if it happens at all, only if he receive a severe jolt, a big shake-up, affecting his whole being.

In case his reason has not completely lost its power of critical reflection, he may get the needed shake-up even if confronted with certain things or events belonging to the external world. He may then start examining, in an independent and objective manner, the strength and weakness of his traditions and their influence on him and other members of his society. Something of this sort seems to have happened to the prince Siddhārtha. His reason had become reverential to his indigenous, the then Vedic, traditions and culture, whose influence on him, consequently, was very great. But his reverence for them had not become powerful enough to make his rationality completely subservient to them. That is why his experience of certain things in the external world — the sight of an old man, a sick man, and a dead body — shook his whole being and provoked him to critically reflect over the merits and demerits of the Vedic way of life, its prescriptions and prohibitions, principles and practices, ideals and utopias. Since his was an extra-ordinary personality, equipped with a mind not satisfiable by an ad hoc solution, what he gave to the world was not a patchwork, but an all-pervasive cultural revolution, installing a new set of traditions. To treat him as the mere founder of a religion is to insult his genius and underestimate his contribution to the history of India. His rejecting the authority of the Vedas which amounted to rejecting the very foundation of the Vedic culture, rejecting the validity of śruti as a pramāṇa and replacing it by Pratyakṣa and Anumāna, questioning the utility of the Varṇa-vyavasthā, including the supremacy of the Brāhmins who were the chief custodians of the Vedic culture, and establishing a casteless society, questioning the existence of God, etc., to mention a few of the things he did, are in no sense less than revolutionary.

It was the later revengeful resurrection of reverence for the Vedic culture and the consequent employment of reason, as

exhibited in the literature of the time, in its service which rubbed out quite a few of the good effects of the Buddhist revolution. The result was the return of the Hindu Society, at least of a large sector of it, to a stage very similar to the one it occupied in its pre-Buddhist existence. It became re-subjugated to the Vedic culture, which, even today, of course with some modifications, by and large, constitutes the Hindu culture.

When one's personality is not very strong and his reason has become so greatly reverential to his traditions that it has become almost impossible for him to entertain any doubt about their (so-called) eternal utility, something happening in the external world is not likely to administer him the shock required to wake him up. If there is any chance of his getting it, it is only from something extraordinary happening to himself.

Prāṇesācārya is a good example of the above type. His reason is reverential to his traditions to the extent of becoming completely subjugated to them, to the traditions of which he is an acknowledged ācārya. What gives him the required shock, which makes his erstwhile inert reason exhibit some signs of life, is his own, personal, experience of physical relationship of the most intimate kind with the woman he considers too lowly to be associated with. Not the sight of the stinking dead body of Nāraṅappā, nor the problem of its cremation to which the śāstras offer no solution, nor the suffering of the Brāhmins of the village caused by their remaining hungry till the dead body is cremated, nor the sight of the helpless, hated, widowed, Caṅdrī, nor even the devastating epidemic of plague entering almost every house, whips up his reason to question the competence of the Śāstras, the reverence of his traditions, in respect of such matters as how the dead body of a rebel against the traditions, an outcaste, should be cremated.

He does not find any instruction in the śāstras, but still goes on pondering over them. When his body and mind get completely tired, he goes to the temple of Māruti to seek guidance from the deity. When after Māruti's aid and encouragement he

the so-called traditional wisdom which has befogged his vision, and that therefore it is time to emancipate himself, his reason, from the domination of his mind and soul by his traditions. Only after having the extraordinary experience of enjoying the body of an untouchable woman, only after doing, or having got done by him, what was prohibited by his culture, his reason starts showing some signs of its dogmatic slumber having been disturbed. It is not yet completely awakened and still lacks the ability to function as a fully alive reason ought to. His subjugation to the traditions has become loosened, he has realised the desensitizing effect of his reverence for the traditions on his reason. But he still presents the picture of a man groping with half open eyes, feeling the need of a new, hitherto untrodden path, but not clearly seeing it.

I have discussed the case of Prāṇesācārya in some detail because it very concretely illustrates that the danger of an individual, or a society, getting subjugated by a culture is independent of the latter being alien or indigenous. To lose one's svaraj in ideas by being subjugated to either one is to lose it, and to regain it is extremely difficult in either case. In all probability it is more difficult in the case of subjugation by the indigenous culture. And, in either case, a dispassionate, critical, reason can play quite effectively the role of a prophylactic as well as of a curative agent. Without the reason's prompting, one may not feel the need for svaraj, and with only a feeble one he may feel the need but is not likely to attain it.

It is not maintained here that one ought not to revere his indigenous traditions. The members of a community should respect their traditions, otherwise their cultural survival may become difficult. In fact, they have a natural feeling of respect for them and every community has a distinctive set of traditions evolved in the course of its history to meet the demands of its struggle for existence. But it would not be fair to make one's reason necessarily reverential to the traditions, since that would cripple or curtail reason's freedom, its preparedness and perceptiveness to take note of the dark as well as bright aspects of the traditions in an objective manner. If reason has to be

reverential to anything, it should be to truth, and not to any tradition, and if respect for truth, for the facts and demands of life, requires it to declare that a tradition needs to be changed, or discarded, it must not hesitate to do that. On the other hand, if it finds that another tradition deserves to be strengthened, it must put its weight on its side.

In the course of their life history, some traditions acquire new significance, some outlive their utility but still continue to exist in the culture as dead wood, some need to be modified, some neglected ones have to be given greater prominence, some prominent ones need to be kept in check, some new ones have to be initiated, etc. All this requires a continuous and cautious critique of traditions which only an unprejudiced, objective, reason can give, and not one which has compromised its independence by becoming reverential to some tradition or traditions, alien or indigenous. In case of conflict between tradition and truth, it must take the side of truth. Only then it can function as an important agent of cultural progress or advancement.

Bhattacharya, on the other hand, believes that reason can suggest a new departure only if it is reverential to the old tradition. As he says, "the only way to find a new reverence is to deepen our old reverence" (para 20). But to find a new object of reverence, to initiate a new worthwhile tradition, i.e., one worthy of its reverence, it may have to criticise, lay bare some of the serious weakness of, the old, existing, tradition, and not to deepen its reverence for it. If it has always to remain respectful to the latter, it is very unlikely to help the coming into being of a new one.

*In what Bhattacharya says towards the end of the essay, making a point in his final conclusion, one may take an interest in his view on the value of the existing tradition, in that a new tradition is not to be initiated unless the existing tradition is first critically examined. While pointing out that in politics educated men have been forced by the logic of facts to realise the importance of carrying the masses with them, in the social sphere and in the sphere of ideas, he says, the importance of the latter has not yet been adequately realised. Since, according to him, "We*

can think effectively only when we think in terms of the indigenous ideas that pulsate in the life and mind of the masses." he urges, "let us come back to the cultural stratum of the real Indian people and evolve a culture alongwith them suited to the times and to our native genius. That would be to achieve "svaraj in ideas" (para 26). That is, to attain svaraj in ideas we should evolve a culture by thinking in terms of the ideas pulsating in the life and mind of the masses and this we can do only by going back to the cultural stratum of the real Indian people.

The above is indeed a very positive characterisation and apparently different from the one given in terms of reverence, assimilation, synthesis, etc. Therefore, one may feel extremely grateful to Bhattacharya for not concluding his lecture without giving to his concept of svaraj in ideas an obviously positive, rich, content. This characterisation has also the virtue of a popular appeal, since it involves the notion of going back to the grass-roots, to the real Indian people. But, as in the case of his other descriptions of svaraj, troubles begin when one tries to ascertain what exactly he means by some of the key-terms he has used, e.g., 'thinking effectively', 'ideas pulsating in the life and mind of the masses,' 'the real Indian people', 'native genius', 'evolving a culture . . . . .', etc. All of these are highly emotive and vague in their denotation as well as connotation. The apparent appeal of the characterisation owes a great deal to their emotivity and vagueness. But to ground the claim of the adequacy of the characterisation on them would not be fair logic. Bhattacharya would have helped us a lot even by giving some examples of what he meant by these terms. But he does not, nor does he say anything even by implication from which we may get any help in understanding him.

We are left even here, thus, to guess and speculate. Evidently the ideas pulsating the masses are not to be ascertained by vote, or induction of any sort, but then in which other way? Are all of the ideas, like those pertaining to caste-discrimination, untouchability, religious dogmatism and fanaticism, sati, child marriage discrimination against women etc., which did pulsate in the mind of the masses in Bhattacharya's times, and

are still alive, to be treated as distinctive of Indian culture and to be retained in the culture to be evolved? Which is the real native genius, the one determined by Vivekananda, M. N. Roy, Nehru, Subhash Chandra Bose or Dange? How should one proceed to think effectively in terms of ideas pulsating the masses or to evolve a culture along with them? Unless these and some other relevant questions are given clear answers, one would not know, even after accepting the above characterisation, how to go ahead to achieve svaraj in ideas, or even to rightly apply the concept.

It seems, then, that in this attempt as well Bhattacharya does not succeed in giving even a workable, let alone a precise, specification of the positive content of his concept of svaraj in ideas. What he has given can at the most be treated as the skeleton of a positive-looking characterisation which cannot do the job of a really positive one unless it is supplied with some flesh and blood. His failure to give, or not caring to give, a satisfactory account of the positive content of his central concept is not of negligible consequence. It makes the concept a poor theoretical tool and an unusable principle of action.

Bhattacharya complains that there is very little of creativity in the works of his (Indian) contemporaries in almost all spheres. The complaint may be genuine, but, as usual, he takes no pains to show that it is. He does not even mention the name, far from examining any work or view, of any one of them. He seems to be satisfied with a summary, or intuitive, judgement. To ignore the works of contemporaries, to complain of their uncreativity without discussing their views, is a delightful pastime of modern Indians, particularly philosophers. Bhattacharya seems to be no exception in spite of his strong plea to revere the indigenous traditions. But his attitude towards his contemporaries need not look strange to us since ours is not different from his. We all follow the same (indigenous) tradition.

He seems to be suggesting that an important cause of the lack of creativity is the lack of vital assimilation of Western ideas. Indians have achieved what he calls assimilation in a *hollow*, which he contrasts with vital assimilation, though

without explaining the nature of the contrast. Assimilation of the vital ideas of one culture by an alert mind belonging to another culture is likely to be a good promoter of creativity in the latter, and patchwork or hybridisation, if that is what he means by assimilation in a fashion, is not. This is an obvious truth. But that assimilation is neither a necessary, nor a sufficient, condition of creativity is also an equally obvious truth. It is not a necessary condition because there are several thinkers, all over the world, who, without having any contact with an alien culture, have produced what can be called paradigmatic examples of creativity. It is not a sufficient condition because there are also, several scholars, all over the world, who, even after having assimilated ideas from different cultures, have been able to produce only good, descriptive, expository works, since they lacked the required innate abilities to have done something really creative. Therefore, the link between assimilation, or even authentic inter-cultural understanding, and creativity cannot be considered to be very close. To be genuinely creative one needs the ability to make a new departure, and this he may lack even while possessing the ability to assimilate ideas from an alien culture. The assimilative ability may at the most be a helping condition, i.e., one which, in conjunction with some other conditions, helps one to realise his creative potentialities.

Assuming that assimilation can be conducive to the promotion of creativity, it should not be forgotten that it can be conceived in more than one way and it is not that in whichever way it is conceived it is going to promote creativity. It seems to me that the kind of assimilation which Bhattacharya proposes is not the one which we can hope would be an un-failing aid to creativity. Rather, some of its important components seem to be positive hindrances to creativity.

According to Bhattacharya, in order to properly assimilate alien ideas one must have (a) reverence for his indigenous traditions and (b) determination to assimilate the foreign to the indigenous ideals. The indigenous is not in any case to be assimilated to the foreign. His reverence may not let him ignore the genius of his traditions or superimpose a foreign

idea or ideal on them, and may therefore be considered to be a very desirable equipment. But it may also not let him see, or, be fair to some of those features of the alien culture which though worthy of his attention in their own right, conflict with some features of the indigenous culture, or notice those features of the indigenous which need to be modified or dropped, or after noticing them have the required courage to make an honest effort to modify or drop them, in the light of his authentic understanding of some alien ideas, or even in the light of his understanding of some pressing realities. These are not mere possibilities; they can be met with in the actual practice of several Indian thinkers.

His determination to assimilate the foreign to the indigenous will also, in all likelihood, take him in the same direction. Since only those foreign ideals can be assimilated to the indigenous ones which cohere or have affinity with the latter, he needs to look only for such ones, and not for those which threaten the validity of any one of the latter. But then he would be very unlikely to get a challenge to his deep-seated convictions even if they were not wholly justifiable or retainable. We cannot, therefore, hope that such a person would be really creative, or make some significantly new departure in thought or action.

Suppose an Indian, who has reverence for his *varṇa-vyavasthā*, comes in contact with the British social structure and is motivated to achieve an assimilation of the Indian and British social ideals. He would, and rather should, then, proceed, if he follows Bhattacharya, to look for such aspects in the British traditions which already cohere, or which may be suitably modified to become coherent, with the Indian *varṇa-vyavasthā*. In case he does not find such aspects in the former, he can rightly declare that the British social structure is against the genius of the Indian culture. Such a thing can happen even in matters concerning intra-cultural assimilation. Some Hindu scholars did try to present Buddhism as a cousin of Hinduism, Buddha as an *avatāra* of God like Rama or Krishna, and the practising priests very gladly provided a place in their temples for the idol of Buddha. The result may be called a vital

assimilation of Buddhism into Hinduism, but is certainly neither a creative development of Hinduism nor of Buddhism. In the world of learning as well such things have happened. Some eminent Indian philosophers, including Bhattacharya himself, who had a reverential attitude towards some kind of Vedantism, turned towards those Western philosophers of their time or of the past who were idealists, or had some affinity with some important aspect or aspects of Vedantism, and then tried to assimilate some Western idealistic ideas with some Vedantic ones. And, quite naturally, what they produced was very seldom creative or predominantly creative. New departures are made by men who subject themselves to some challenging influences to influences which force them to question their most cherished convictions, which force them to have a transvaluation of their old values, and not by those who consider their indigenous traditions or ideals unalterable.

Even if it is admitted that reverence for one's own, or any, tradition may not stifle his creativity, of course, if he is blessed with it, it should also not be forgotten that generally it is not a good stimulus for doing something creative. Similarly, in spite of the difficulties discussed earlier, if it is granted that it can facilitate the assimilation of ideas from different cultures, the outcome of the assimilation may turn out to be a good example of synthesis and not of creativity.

Perhaps by doing something creative Bhattacharya means the same as achieving some synthesis. For example, in connection with his claim that the lack of creativity, in several areas, has resulted from that of vital assimilation, when he comes to philosophy, his own field of work, he complains that "In philosophy hardly anything that has been written by a modern educated Indian shows that he has achieved a synthesis of Indian thought with western thought" (para 9). It seems, then, that he would call an Indian philosopher creative if he has achieved such a synthesis. But to synthesise some ideas or trends of thought is not necessarily to make a new departure, and therefore it need not be genuinely creative. And, in any case, it is not the only form in which one's creativity may be exhibited, and its absence therefore cannot be considered a conclusive

evidence of the absence of creativity. Since one can be creative even without achieving a synthesis of Indian and Western thought, it cannot be obligatory for an Indian philosopher to make it the goal, or even one of the goals, of his philosophising.

Some other Indian philosophers of this century, besides Bhattacharya, have also considered philosophical synthesis as almost the best kind of philosophising. But the surprising thing is that none of them, including Bhattacharya, argues for the necessity or desirability of synthesising some different but synthesisable (classical) Indian trends or thoughts, though diversities in Indian philosophising are in no way less conspicuous, nor are their synthesis, if achieved, bound to be poorer examples of philosophical synthesis.

It seems to me that, behind Bhattacharya's (or anyone else's) insistence on the importance of synthesising Indian (or Eastern) and Western thought, there exists his unavowed or undeclared belief in the superiority of the Western thought and culture, that the latter continues to be his point of reference: Indian thinking has to assimilate and synthesise Western thinking, its svaraj has to be judged in terms of its relationship with the latter, it is self-determined if it effects a vital assimilation of some Western ideas, it is creative if it achieves a synthesis of some Indian and Western trends, etc. One can legitimately question why it should do all this. Why cannot it proceed, freely and creatively, by taking its inspiration from indigenous sources alone? Why should it be required to always maintain at least some relationship with the West? It may turn to the West if the need be, or use a cue from the latter when available, but all this should be optional. There is no justification for making assimilating or synthesising Western with Indian ideas its obligation.

While asserting that "the most prominent contribution of ancient India to the culture of the world is in the field of Philosophy," KCB declares that "if the Modern Indian Mind is to philosophise at all to any purpose, it has to confront Eastern and Western thought with one another and attempt a synthesis or a reasoned rejection of either, if that were pos-

sible" (para 9, italics mine). It must not, thus, ignore, or be indifferent to, Western thought; it must either try to effect a synthesis, or reject some of the latter's ideas after a reasoned examination.

All this Bhattacharya says in the same context in which he says that "It is in philosophy, if anywhere, that the task of discovering the soul of India is imperative for the modern mind; the task of achieving, if possible, the continuity of his old self with his present day self, of realising what is nowadays called the mission of India, if it has any" (para 9). It is unintelligible why to "philosophise at all to any purpose" one "has to confront Eastern thought and Western thought with one another", if philosophising to any purpose has anything to do, which it has to for Bhattacharya, with such noble aims as "discovering the soul of India", "achieving the continuity of his old self with his present day self", or realising "the Mission of India".

For an Indian who suffers from a feeling of some sort of national self-diffidence or inferiority complex, or has been brought up exclusively or largely on an one-sided diet of Western philosophy, it is natural to keep Western thought or philosophy at the centre of his attention. But none of these deficiencies can perhaps be attributed to Bhattacharya, and not definitely a one-sided diet. Therefore, it is puzzling why he gives to Western thought or philosophy so central a place when his main objective is to make his countrymen realise the importance of svaraj in ideas.

No Western philosopher or thinker has exhibited any serious concern for assimilation or synthesis, for confronting Western with Eastern thought (or English with German, or French, or Russian thought, or vice versa) in the name of, or as a means to, creativity. If it is considered to be a sign of narrow regionalism, it may be considered to be a sign of intellectual maturity and national self-confidence. On the other hand, the concern for maintaining a close liaison with Western thought, which Bhattacharya and many other Indian thinkers have expressed, may seem to some to be a sign of colonialism in ideas, which is, in a fair sense of the term, a good contrary of svaraj in ideas.

Those who argue for synthesis seem to forget that achieving synthesis is parasitic on someone else's having produced the materials to be synthesised. Primary creativity consists in generating new ideas, initiating new methods of thinking, etc. If synthesising some ideas given by some important thinkers, or available in some important Eastern or Western traditions, is to be called creative, it would be creative only in a secondary or watered-down sense. Anyone who synthesises Kant's doctrine of the autonomy, or spontaneous freedom, of the rational will with the witnessing consciousness (sākṣī caitanya) of the Advaita Vedānta to get the doctrine of the self, the pure subject, as freedom, has done something creative, but certainly that is not creative in the same sense in which, or to the same extent to which, what the Advaitin philosopher, who gave the idea of the sākṣī caitanya, or what Kant, who gave the idea of the autonomy of the rational will, has done is. Bhattacharya seems to have great fascination for synthesis, and his own philosophising exhibits his very serious and sincere efforts to achieve it in respect of some classical Indian, mainly Vedantic, and some Western, philosophical viewpoints, particularly metaphysical. But my feeling is that he has proceeded in a freer manner, without having been so impressed with the ideal of synthesis, his creativity would have soared to greater heights. Perhaps he would also have become a little more intelligible. An undue regard for the ideal of synthesis has hindered some other, very competent and thorough scholars, like D. M. Datta and P. T. Raju, who had the necessary equipment, from making any significantly new departure in their philosophising. It is still one of the major causes of the lack of, or low creativity in modern Indian philosophy. It is also responsible, when it becomes the obsession of poorer thinkers, for the prevalence of what is called comparative philosophy.

Bhattacharya considers it a lamentable fact that Indians have not been able to have "distinctively Indian estimates of Western literature and thought". No Indian, according to him, "has passed judgements on English literature that reflect his Indian mentality", or on Western philosophical system "from the standpoint of Indian philosophy" (para 7). As in other

cases, here also he does not say what sort of judgement on Western literature or philosophy he will consider as truly reflecting the Indian mentality. Does it mean that one should judge Shakespeare according to the principles laid down in Bharata's Nāṭyaśāstra, Hegelianism in terms of the Advaita, Aristotle's theory of syllogism in terms of Gautama's Pancāvayava Vākya, or Wittgenstein's theory of language in terms of Bhāṭṛhari? It does not make much sense to plead for the study of a thinker or system from an Indian or Western standpoint. Any genuine study should be from the student's own point of view, and its worth will depend on the maturity, objectivity, insightfulness, etc., of the standpoint. It would not matter which traditions and thought-systems he studies to acquire his standpoint, or whether or not he had reverence for his indigenous traditions and culture.

Though Bhattacharya considers it extremely desirable for an Indian to approach Western thought and culture from an Indian standpoint, surprisingly enough he also holds that "it is very difficult for a foreigner to understand the mind of a people from whom he is widely removed by tradition and history unless he has intimately participated in their life for a long time." Therefore, "the people in question should receive his judgement about them with a certain amount of mental reserve" (para 22). Concerning our reaction to a foreigner's evaluation of Indian culture from the standpoint of his own culture, he says that "our first impulse here should be one of self-defensive resentment" and also that this would be natural and "need not imply an uncultured self-conceit" (para 24). But if all this is fair for us, why should a foreigner honour an Indian's evaluation of his thought and culture from the Indian point of view? And, how can it be not so difficult for an Indian to understand the mind of a people in whose life he has not intimately participated for a long time? Bhattacharya forgets that if it is sound logic to say that a foreigner would misunderstand Indian culture if he approaches it from the point of view of his culture, it would be no less sound logic to say that an Indian, even a K. C. Bhattacharya, would also misunderstand a non-Indian culture if he approaches it from the point of

view of his (i.e., Indian) culture, since he is also a foreigner in respect of any non-Indian culture. Obviously Bhattacharya's recommendation to appraise or understand Western thought and culture from the Indian standpoint, thus, not only seems to have no good reason in its favour but also to smack of self-inconsistency which no amount of patriotism can wipe off.

It should not be forgotten that the appraisal of Western culture by some Indians also can be said to be unfair or incorrect. Not all of the things which Mahatma Gandhi, for example, says of an institution like the English parliament, or of the Western civilisation in general, in his *Hind Svaraj*, can be considered to be fully justified. It is true that every culture has got, as Bhattacharya says, its own "distinctive physiognomy". But it must be accepted as genuinely possible to transcend the boundaries of one's own culture and take an objective, unbiased, look at a foreign culture. Unless this is done it would be impossible to have any worth-while inter-cultural understanding or appraisal, and not only the appraisal of Indian culture by a non-Indian. It is (almost) a truism to say that the life-style of a people has to be determined by their culture, but from this it does not follow that their inter-cultural understanding (or attempt at it) must also be, in point of logic, determined by their culture.

As regards the possibility of one's indigenous culture-determined standpoint affecting his understanding of a foreign culture is concerned, it is no less existent in the case of intra-cultural understanding. Every culture consists of so many different strands. A person approaching his own culture from the standpoint of a particular strand of it is quite likely to have an unobjective (even unfair or incorrect) understanding of it, or an understanding very different from that of one approaching it from the standpoint of a different strand. This can happen even in one's understanding of the literature, philosophy, etc. of his country. It may be said not without some justification that the conception of the nature of classical Indian philosophy prevalent today is very much due to the fact that almost all of the early writers of the histories or text-books of Indian philosophy (e.g., Radhakrishnan, D. M. Datta, and

S. C. Chatterji, M. Hiriyanna, etc.) approached it from the spiritualist point of view, a point of view they read in the Upaniṣads and saw culminating in the Vedānta. Perhaps that is why some of them even thought the Vedānta to be the culmination of the entire classical Indian philosophy, and interpreted those strands which were not obviously of a piece with the Vedānta as accidental diversions from the main stream. The modern Indian students' understanding of the spirit of classical Indian philosophy is derived very largely from this, the spiritualist, Vedānta-biased, interpretation of it available in the text-books, which has acquired the status of the most popular, or official, conception.

It is only lately that the plausibility of a non-spiritualist interpretation has been given the seriousness it deserved. Perhaps M. N. Roy is the earliest thinker, and definitely one of the early thinkers, who has, in a forceful manner, drawn our attention to it.

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## REMEMBERING THE PROFESSOR

SISIRKUMAR GHOSE

'Svaraj is our birthright', the slogan has soured. And thereby hangs a tale, of promises unredeemed. The Renaissance rhetoric has evaporated and we are now living in what a sociologist described as a fatherless society. Where have the father-figures gone? For an orphan, uncertain, imperilled India are there no "elders in the pain-field" to show the way, the way to courage, criticism, and creativity?

A refined and retiring scholar, a Professors' Professor, Krishnachandra Bhattacharya (1875-1949) could fill that role better than others. Apart from his pithy, professorial works on Kant, Advaita, and Aesthetics, of special importance to us is his brief, brilliant but little known address of Svaraj in Ideas. Presented "some time during 1928-30" before the Hooghly Mohsin College, a few miles from Calcutta, it is a seminal text to which one returns with profit. He would have liked nothing better than that we re-think his thoughts arising out of one world dying, the other powerless to be born.

We speak today, begins Professor Bhattacharya, of Svaraj or self-determination in politics. For himself he would prefer to concentrate on a less immediate but more far-reaching aspect of the situation—svaraj in ideas. For a Bengali remarkably unsentimental, there is a cool, unhurried logic in all that he writes. Distinguishing between political and cultural domination, he questions the "subtler domination" that has still not ceased. Willing slaves, in some ways we have made it worse.

The thesis is bold and explicit. "When I speak of cultural subjection, I do not mean the assimilation of an alien culture. That assimilation need not be an evil; it may be positively necessary for healthy progress and in any case it does not mean a lapse of freedom. There is cultural subjection only when

one's traditional cast of ideas and sentiments is superseded without comparison or competition by a new cast representing an alien culture which possesses one like a ghost. This subjection is slavery of the spirit; when a person can shake himself free from it, he feels as though the scales fell from his eyes. He experiences a rebirth, and that is what I call Svaraj in Ideas."

While sterile and hybrid thinking, else chauvinism, are taken for the genuine stuff, rooted, complex and honest ideas will be understandably in short supply. As Bhattacharya put the plain truth: "Slavery has entered our very soul." Nothing proves the point better than the dysfunctioning of de-nationalised, so-called intellectuals, who import their gods, including blueprints for revolution, from abroad. Such being the case, there is little to exult. One remembers Coomaraswamy's lament that modern India has created nothing. Bhattacharya's stance is less nostalgic. His respect for what he called "indigenous culture" was a critical reverence. Between unthinking conservatism and unthinking progressivism he found little to choose. His own position was less dogmatic and more difficult to locate. Indeed, behind the limpid surface of a slow and sure analysis one senses almost an elegant ambivalence, a hooded Hamletiana, typical of a sensitive commuter between cultures. It is a pity that his essay on Anarchism is lost. Apparently a non-activist, beyond the need for criticism and self-criticism, he would not posit anything too strongly. How one wishes for an encounter with, say, M. N. Roy or Herbert Marcuse. There is no doubt that he would have been able to hold his own.

The continuity of culture, an examined life, calls for re-appraisal. A hotch-potch 'synthesis' is not so essential. "A synthesis of our ideals with western ideals is not desirable in every case." There is a case for the pure and the unique, for minute particulars that need not be lost in a universal grey. Internationalism is not necessarily better than nationalism, not in every case. The deepest values of life may be like that, themselves, without hurting others. As for the western social, political, educational, and economic ideas and institutions, their heedless application has spread miscegenation all around.

The reasons are simple. First, these have come from outside; secondly, we have responded with nothing of our own. The barrenness is reinforced by the nullity of our reaction to English and European literature and — in a field where we are supposed to excel — even philosophy. How many of us have come out with distinctively Indian estimates of Western literature and thought? asks Bhattacharya, and goes on to add that since these do not differ materially from the judgment of our English critics, it raises the suspicion whether it is our judgment at all.

His straight recommendation: "Let us think resolutely in our own terms" and the appeal to the Indian intelligentsia, — "a caste more exclusive and intolerant than any of the traditional castes" — still holds. The minority, he suggests, should return to the mainstream and evolve a living culture, "suited to the times and our native genius". To think productively, not reproductively, there is no other way, *nānya panthā*. With such a voice of experience and openmindedness there can be little to differ.

Also — a nice distinction, if not the statement of a preference — while in regard to the smaller details of secular life and its interests there is a pressing need for adaptation, in matters of inner, spiritual values the case is opposite. Here "it is the times that may have to be adapted". But why? He does not fully explain. That too is typical of his unassertive, withdrawn character, perhaps an aristocracy of intellect. If he believes in timeless, archetypal categories, he does not say so. Undemonstrative by nature, and not given to polemics, a suggestion rather than an *ipse dixit* was the language that suited him. The hesitations, a homologue of the integrity of his mind, are more heuristic than the hortatory recipes of lesser minds.

Adjusting the traditional modes to modern pressures will be the test of our life and thought. Here conflict itself may deepen awareness. But, as he points out, acquiescing in confusion is not enough. To talk of conflict (and now dialectics) without being serious about any values, any ideas, is an empty emancipation.

The rational thinker does not, by the way, extol reason, unduly. In dealing with the realm of values it does not take too long to find out the limitations of the rational approach and process. Bhattacharya would not say openly that the mind, a reality-killer, is not an instrument of knowledge. More simply he says that a partial rationalism has little special authority to decide matters that obviously go beyond its ken. All the same, he quietly adds, worthwhile ideals should be welcome, irrespective of their source or place of origin. To believe him, the Guru may come from any background, culture or community. This is a rare attitude, more than liberal. Here his only proviso is that the value or message should be genuine and adaptable.

It goes without saying that an imported, and infructuous, education — a blessing, he admits, in certain ways — of which we have been victims for long needs to be altered, if not replaced. But educational reform has been rumoured long enough without anything being done so far.

## II

What strikes one, even in this bald summary, is his modest but firm mediation between alternative claims. Though he distinguishes between political and cultural subjection, he is not against assimilation. Unfortunately, much of what passes for assimilation — like yesterday's coat over the dhoti — is just not that. As for political institutions, natural in the west, these cannot be hastily grafted here without causing strain, as we are learning a little late. As for the inwardness of the Indian institutions, these are often missed by naive, even native reformers, who do not know what it is they are reforming.

Altogether when one surveys the cultural scene it is clear that our western tutelage has not helped us much to lead a better life, socially and intellectually. We have still to find our identity; or, as he says, find "our real position in the world". Modern Indian culture looks like a huge shadow-play dominated by "a shadow-mind that has no roots in the past and in our real present", a description too true to be good.

The world confronts us not only with interests but also with ideals. Some ideals may be respected without being imitated and vice versa. Historical difference, plurality and uniqueness have to be admitted. The hope of a universal reason or a universal religion guiding and uniting mankind is now discarded. The ideal of human unity is not the same as a non-human uniformity. As the Professor parries with his usual brevity, the way to know facts is not the way to know values.

What about science? Bhattacharya is too wise and widely read to give it an uncritical accolade. For some reason he does not involve himself directly with the limitations of science, but is content to drop a hint: "even here there may be some doubt", a subtle summary by a student of Kant, who had his own ideas of the noumenal. The single, qualifying phrase is enough to indicate a cultured scepticism about the quantitative and impersonal methods of science.

The suggestions made in "Svaraj in Ideas", cautious, cumulative, open out in several directions. Such a clear thinker cannot be easily tempted or blown off his feet. As befits a civilized dialogue, he shuns rhetoric, and does not speak in terms of any easy Either/Or. His tone usually an undertone, what impresses is the "critical reserve, not docile acceptance" either of the home-made or that made abroad.

Avoiding patchwork or the flimsy, the range and depth of his mature, musing mind is as remarkable as the simplicity of his language. He could think like a polymath but write with becoming naturalness. If it was now and then aphoristic, that was his way of thinking, of packed rather than packaged thought. Too intelligent to be popular, he had no pet dogma or facile formula of his own. Words like 'religion' and 'spirituality' are generally avoided. This in spite of the piety of his personal life. Even when he holds some things in esteem — *the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita, the Vedas, the Ramayana, the Mahabharata* — he is chary of readymade, holier-than-thou postures. Neither cranky conservatism nor rootless cosmopolitanism was a model for his exploring mind. The thinker has to see every side of the question. As he saw it, the only cure for cultural conflict

and confusion is the primacy of thought, wherever it may lead. At bottom his plea is inextinguishable: "I plead for a genuine translation of foreign ideas into our native idiom before we accept or reject them." Who can quarrel with that?

These reflections of a detached academic, deeply sensitive and responsible, could be the beginning of a dialogue of an examined life. If there were more men and thinkers like him, the shape of our society and education might have been more achieving as well as self-respecting. His total neglect by today's intelligentsia is a sign of our racial amnesia.

Viswa Bharati,  
Santiniketan.

Comments and Communication

A. K. SARAN

... I have read the Bhattacharya discourse several times. It is full of profound insights and far-reaching ideas and undoubtedly deserves the most serious attention. Your idea of devoting a special number of the IPQ to this discourse on "Svaraj in Ideas" is marvellous and augurs well for the intellectual health of our country giving me a faint ray of hope in my despairing moods. I am, however, not at all sure if in a serious way Bhattacharya's "Svaraj in Ideas" could be compared to Gandhi's *Hind Svaraj*. In my view the comparison between the two made by the IPQ guest editors is overdone when it is said that Bhattacharya's discourse "is no less fundamental in its analysis of Indian bondage and its possible cure than Mahatma Gandhi's tract of 1909", which latter has earlier been described by the editors as a revolutionary text. Gandhi's *Hind Svaraj* is a revolutionary text — more really and profoundly revolutionary than Marx's Communist Manifesto. Bhattacharya's discourse is not revolutionary in the right sense of the term — nor even in the currently common usage of the term. Remarkable and full of the most significant insights, distinctions and truths, "Svaraj in Ideas" is unfortunately flawed in certain fundamental aspects. This is why it deserves the most careful and systematic critique. I am sure that though it is not possible for me to make this attempt at present, some of the distinguished contributors to the IPQ will certainly provide the kind of critique the discourse really calls for.

It does matter whether or not KCB's discourse is truly comparable to Gandhi's *Hind Svaraj*. KCB's discourse does not belong in the class of *Hind Svaraj* nor reach the level of thinking attained in *Hind Svaraj*.  
A-33, Nirala Nagar,  
Lucknow.

Comments and Communication :

INSTEAD OF AN ARTICLE  
(A juxtaposition of KCB and MKG)

S. S. DESHPANDE

MKG :

1 A The English have not taken India; we have given it to them. They are not in India because of their strength, but because we keep them — the causes that gave them India enable them to retain it.

*Hind Svaraj*, pp. 38-40.

KCB :

1 B There is no gainsaying the fact that this Western Culture which means an entire system of ideas and sentiments ... has been simply imposed upon us. I do not mean that it has been imposed on unwilling minds ... we ourselves have asked for this education.

*Svaraj in Ideas*, para 3.

KCB :

2 A When I speak of cultural subjection, I do not mean the assimilation of an alien culture; that assimilation need not be an evil; it may be positively necessary for healthy progress and in any case it does not mean the lapse of freedom.

*Svaraj in Ideas*, para 1.

MKG :

2 B The introduction of foreigners does not necessarily destroy the nation; they merge in it. A country is one nation only when such a condition obtains in it, that country must have a faculty for assimilation. India has ever been such a country.

*Hind Svaraj*, p. 49.

**KCB:**

... one is tempted to express a doubt: .... till now vaguely felt but suppressed as uncultured — how far generally we have assimilated our western education and how far it has operated as an obsession ...  
... certainly there has been some sort of assimilation — at least by some of us — but even of them it may be asked whether the alien culture has been accepted by them after a full and open eyed struggle had been allowed to develop between it and their indigenous culture.

3 A

*Svaraj in Ideas, para 2.*

**MKG:**

Carried away by the flood of Western thought we came to the conclusion, without weighing pros and cons that we should give this kind of education to the people.

3 B

*Hind Svaraj, p. 88.*

**MKG:**

... we want the English rule without the Englishman. You want the tiger's nature but not the tiger; that is to say, you would make India English .... this not the Svaraj that I want.

4 A

*Hind Svaraj, p. 80.*

**KCB:**

This subjection is slavery of the spirit. When a person can shake himself free from it, he feels as though the scales fell from his eyes. He experiences a rebirth and that is what I call Svaraj in Ideas.

4 B

*Svaraj in Ideas, para 1.*

*Hind Svaraj and Svaraj in Ideas demand a much fuller study even in juxtaposition than what the above quotations pretend to do. I reproduce them only to show the reader's appetite. I hope you will require the source of a complete study of MS in the theme of Svaraj in Ideas and of Svaraj in Ideas in the theme of Indian Independence. But even the quotations reproduced above are sufficient proof of the catholicity of*

Mahatma Gandhi's and Krishnachandra Bhattacharya's intellectual patriotism. But lest we forget our slavery continuing slavery to not-self, I offer two clarifying quotations, one from KCB and the other from, MKG which clinch, I think, the case for Svaraj in Ideas.

**KCB:**

Our education has not so far helped us to understand ourselves, to understand the significance of our past, the realities of our present and our mission of the future. It has tended to drive our real mind into the unconscious and to replace it by a shadow mind that has no roots in our past and in our real present ... The result is that there is a confusion between the two minds and a hopeless Babel in the world of ideas. Our thought is hybrid through and through and inevitably sterile. Slavery has entered into our very soul.

*Svaraj in Ideas, para 10.*

**MKG:**

My Svaraj is to keep intact the genius of our civilization. I want to write many new things but they must all be written on the Indian slate. I would gladly borrow from the West when I can return the amount with decent interest.

*Young India, 25.6.24*

Department of Philosophy,  
Poona University.

Comments and Communication :

## SVARAJ IN IDEAS OF GOD, MAN AND NATURE

J. P. S. UBEROI

Svaraj in ideas (1928) is a rather trite statement of K. C. Bhattacharya, considering what it contains as well as the time when it was written, and in no wise to be compared with the radical critique of *Hind Svaraj* by Gandhiji. I am astonished that anyone should take it so seriously, and expect others to do likewise. It was written one hundred years after the decision to introduce English education was taken with the support of Rammohun Roy. Intervening in the debate between the Anglicists and the Orientalists, Rammohun Roy wrote to the viceroy against the idea of a Sanskrit college, arguing in general that no great benefit to mind or society was to be expected from the continued teaching of "grammatical niceties and metaphysical distinctions", Vyākaraṇa, Vedānta, Mimāṃsā and Nyāya-śāstra. He wanted instead the dawn of knowledge as promised by the Baconian philosophy, and had indeed "already offered up thanks to Providence for inspiring the most generous and enlightened nations of the West with the glorious ambition of planting in Asia the arts and sciences of modern Europe" (1823). Twelve years later Macaulay's well-known minute on education finally secured the benefits to England as well as India flowing from this programme of the man who is rightly known as the "father of modern India".

After his return from South Africa, Gandhiji reopened the whole question of svaraj and culture, and recast the framework of the Anglicist versus Orientalist debate, arguing for vernacular education. He said in Calcutta that, in this ancient land of thinkers, the presence of a Tagore or a Bose or a Ray ought not to excite wonder: "the painful fact is that there are no Tagores or Boses or Rays" (1917). In the same year, he had addressed the Congress advocating uniformity and integration, and was warning of the dissociation of the elite and the masses, and to the dualism of the school and the home: "we are unable to

take home what we receive in our [English] schools". "He who thus snaps the cord that should bind the school-life and the home-life is an enemy of the nation". Therefore, "it is the first duty of the learned class now to deliver the nation from the agony" (Broach, 1917).

Bhattacharya completely ignores the discussions of his predecessors and his contemporaries, for example what A. K. Commaraswamy was saying at the time about art and svadeshi, and speaks instead from apparently only contemplating his own navel, the Hooghly college. It may be said in his defence that he has simply assumed the philosopher's privilege to proceed from first principles, so we must try and examine what they are, implicit and explicit.

Bhattacharya does not stand outside, let alone bring into question, the master system of classification of the "arts and sciences of modern Europe", or the classification of knowledge, belief, and action into the three distinct, not to say disconnected and independently variable, spheres of science, religion, or art and politics. He naturally accepts the two underlying and intersecting epistemological dualisms that have come to define the whole field of modern European culture in the period from the Baconian philosophy and Descartes to the modernist Kant: (a) that "the way to know facts is not the way to know values", along the fact/value axis (para 20); and (b) that the "world of ideas" is separate and different from the conditions of "practical life", along the theory/practice axis (para 18). Bhattacharya's argument moves only along and within this structure of modern dualist positivism, in which the essential meaning of "ideas" is that of non-scientific ideas, and which can only result in the happily pre-arranged divorce of the universal science of nature in modern times from varied local schools of poetry, art, religion and politics. After some hesitation and delay, the inevitable happens as it was fated to happen, just as in Bombay films, and then behold either (a) at worst, the Indian mind is confined to the "routine of family life" and "religious practices" (para 3), or (b) at best, a distinctive Indian style is to be cultivated in the humanities, specially in history, philosophy, and literature (para 4). At the very utmost,

(c) something called the local "form of practical life" is to be consulted on behalf of the masses before the foreign ideal is properly assimilated (paras 16, 26).

What I expect, on the contrary, from the philosopher after Gandhi is to look at the set of ideas or truths of God, man, and nature in modern European culture as a whole; and to explain the two intersecting dualisms of fact/value and theory/practice, by the combination of which the modernist epistemology proceeds to establish the (primitive) homogeneity as well as the (modern) heterogeneity of the elements of the set. I should point out that this logic excludes and smothers the utterance of two other human possibilities, namely, those which posit a complementary distribution and/or a competitive distribution between the elements of the set. Lastly, one might then look into the costs/benefits of striking out on our own path, defying the European monopoly of the scientific method of knowledge as well the political method of action, i.e. the alternative svarajist programme of self-rule and self-reform for freedom of mind and society.

In the name of svaraj in ideas, Bhattacharya's line of thought would yield the theory of nature to the West and recover the praxis of man for India, while all the time failing to notice that this precisely is the positivist programme and its division of labour among nations. I am afraid that, in this sense, his argument is likely to appeal to the modernist and the fundamentalist alike, whereas, in my reading of Hind Svaraj, Gandhiji was the enemy of both in his method. After all, it was Rammohun Roy writing as the father of modern India in the world of ideas, and not the Mahatma, who brought up Providence or God in support of the positivist programme. Svaraj, or the freedom and the sovereignty of self-rule and self-reform, will be achieved through a simultaneous re-examination of the foundations of science, art or culture, and politics, their divisions and interrelations with philosophy, or it will not be achieved at all in the world of thought.

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Comments and Communication :

SUNIL SAHASRABUDDHE

KCB's analysis of the nature of our bondage in the area of politics, literature, philosophy, education and language shows rather precisely where exactly we have erred and 'in what manner. It is enlightening to read through the pages. His discussion on universal ideas is especially noteworthy. His contention that universal ideas grow as part of the healthy and critical growth of a people provides a theoretical basis for one of the major points that he is making, namely, that lack of svaraj in ideas involves first and foremost the lack of creativity.

It is in the context of his concept of universals that his idea of a healthy interaction of two cultures takes shape. He is absolutely right when he says that we have not assimilated the West but have blindly borrowed and copied to the extent of not remaining ourselves and becoming hybrids who are useless. Assimilation involves having one's own basis for acceptance and rejection. He argues forcefully and primarily against borrowing and accepting alien ideas thinking that they are universal ideas. There are no such universal ideas for him. But unfortunately and somewhat surprisingly he himself does not adhere to his own criterion sufficiently strictly. He makes an exception in the case of mathematics and the natural sciences.

KCB makes a somewhat strict distinction between facts and values. At one place he says that 'The way to know facts is not the way to know values'. He appears to think that the concept of culture-independent universals has been wrongly imported from the realm of facts into the realm of values, which has led to non-critical attitude. It is in such a spirit that he exempts science from culture rooted critical evaluation. However, he does not seem to be too sure on this count. At one

place he writes "But barring the concepts of the sciences — even here there may be some doubt — all concepts and ideas have the distinctive character of the particular culture to which they belong". It is rather a weak doubt and Svaraj in Ideas is so much the less.

The question of science is a somewhat difficult question. Although one can reconstruct Gandhiji's views on it, he had said rather little on science directly. Such a reconstruction through the text and context of *Hind Svaraj* shall only place science as part of a package colonial deal. Without a radical critique of modern science no critique of modern civilization can be complete. Svaraj in ideas can be a viable proposition only if there is Svaraj in ideas without exception. KCB's 'doubt' about science expresses a dilemma in which, perhaps, the radical Indian intellect had found itself trapped for a time. But now a favourable turn may be seen.

Science and its concepts have now become the object of culture-rooted criticism in this country. Dharampal's book on Science and Technology in 18th Century India has provided quite a definite basis for saying that we had a live and competent science and technology in this country before the British onslaught. According to Dharampal societies appear to develop sciences and technologies in tune with their seekings. Indian society sought after different kinds of ideals than the West and therefore had a science and technology different from Western science and technology. A group at Madras called *Patriotic and People Oriented Science and Technology (PPST)* group has said much more in the last three years. They have shown through documentary evidence relating to agriculture, forestry, architecture etc. that several disciplines of Indian science and technology were flourishing till 19th century and even later and that the indigenous knowledge was uprooted by force. There never was any competition between Western science and Indian science. Indian science was first made unviable by completely eroding its socio-economic basis and in the vacuum thus created Western science stepped in. The universality of Western science was a function of the worldwide domination of the West. As colonies expanded to fill the

globe, Western science became universal. Western science is in fact not universal, but in the conditions created by the worldwide domination of the West it appears so.

The colonial venture not only disorganised and uprooted the indigenous institutions and systems but also divided the whole world into two broad categories. There were the 'advanced' people, comprising the Westerners and the Westernised among others; this was the small homogeneous mass, as opposed to the large numbers of heterogeneous people called 'backward' and 'primitive' who constituted the other category. The heterogeneous population served the homogeneous mass facelessly. Modern science and technology was, and still is, the consistent and systematic bearer of this service. Thus, for the small homogeneous mass, modern science brought greater wealth and greater knowledge and opportunity for more productive work and more efficient exploitation of natural resources. To the extent that the heterogeneous people were not to be counted as human and the homogeneous mass became the whole world, modern science became universal, objective, and value-free. But science shall cease to be all this when the faceless majority attains an identity and rises to be counted as part of the world. It is in the ideas of the enlightened representatives of this large majority that the embryos or the germinal ideas of a non-western science may be found. Gandhi's not recognising the fact and value realms as two separate and independent realms gives one clue. Whether in terms of mind-body or otherwise, the value-fact separation has been one of the foundational pillars of all modern western philosophy. And this is also one of its fundamental errors. Curiously enough, Gandhi cannot even talk about his Charkha without talking about cooperation among individuals. A new science, however, is not a master of philosophical conjecture. Philosophy definitely can, and must, clear the conceptual obstacles, but concrete work on rough ground alone shall lead to a new indigenous science — a necessary component of a new life. Work being done by Dr. C. V. Seshadri in Madras may a pointer. He has extensively challenged the concepts of modern natural science,

particularly those related with energy, efficiency, etc., and proposed an alternative concept of 'Shakti'. More is certain to come.

In the end, just this: such a challenge to the concepts of natural science is only in tune with KCB's idea of universal concepts which is the centrepiece of his lecture.

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Comments and Communication :

THE AGONY AND ECSTASY OF SVARAJ

K. RAGHAVENDRA RAO

Both my positive and negative interpretation and assessment of this brief paper ('Svaraj in Ideas') by one of India's penetrating philosophical minds, should be seen as not only an intellectual exercise but also as a moral-political act.

I

In many ways, the first paragraph of the paper sums up Bhattacharya's essential position and problematic. The first point made in that paragraph is that political domination of man over man is less subtle and more visible than cultural domination, and hence more easy to identify and contest. The second point following from the first is that it is more easy to formulate political strategies to fight political domination in the cause of political non-domination or political Svaraj, than to fight cultural domination or cultural non-Svaraj. The third point is that cultural subjection or loss of cultural Svaraj is to be distinguished from free and voluntary assimilation of alien ideas and values, predicated on the model of a free competitive market of ideas. This seems to suggest not so much an ideational content as modality-procedure process. *It is not what it is but it is how it is acquired that imparts to an idea its Svaraj quality.*

The rest of Bhattacharya's paper is an attempt to apply this frame of analysis to the Indian historical-empirical reality. The first proposition of his paper is that Indian adoption of Western culture is a negation of intellectual or cultural Svaraj because it is not the result of an assimilation filtered through the perspective of Indian culture and tradition. In other

words, the traditional culture has been suppressed rather than given a historical opportunity to compete with the alien system on at least on a footing of equality, if not of privilege. It is not the content of the Western culture that the paper specifically attacks, but the mode in which it came to us. Though Bhattacharya does not specifically point this out, it is clear that this process of imposition and suppression of the indigenous system could have been inconceivable without the historical back-up of the political process of colonialism and imperialism. But this is not an important omission insofar as the author's position presupposes it. However, the author's position does not work out the implications of such a presupposition.

Secondly, Bhattacharya advances the paradoxical proposition that it was an imposition on willing minds; But his analysis of this situation, the situation of imposition without unwillingness, seems to be fruitful. Here, Bhattacharya makes a distinction between a fully or adequately conscious act of willingness and an act of willingness that is pragmatic and theoretically lazy. Hence, the issue is not whether we accept it or not, but that we simply do not know, we haven't done the necessary homework. It is weak Westernization or, if you will, modernization, that lacks the resource to overpower the subconscious indigenous cultural undercurrents and their tidal violence. Bhattacharya assumes a certain contextuality within a totality for ideas, and argues that Western ideas in India are functionless or meaningless because they lack this contextuality, this totality. Hence, our contribution and impact in terms of this ~~unambiguously clear system of ideas and values makes you~~ ~~viewed and marginal, perhaps even grotesquely caricatured,~~ ~~excepting in the case of an odd local genius, appropriately~~ applauded for doing the incredible and appropriated intellectually by the West. As a result, even our conservatism, like our progressivism, is rooted in imitative and debilitating operations. Using this critique of Indian modernization Bhattacharya rightly ruminates over its character of being unalive, being uncreative, of being unrelated to anything whatever, East or West. His devastating attack on our achievements

in modern fields of scholarship and ideas, seems to be entirely just, if perhaps a little uncharitable.

The third theoretical prop of his position is a notion of cultural relativism. Each culture will have to find its own historical destiny in its own distinctive way, and all international cultural exchanges should be through one's own cultural prisms. Bhattacharya identifies two types of intercultural exchanges — a conflictual/confrontation one and one in which there is peaceful synthesis. In India, he argues, the first is hardly present and the second is very often no more than *pragmatic adhocism and shameless opportunism*. While pseudo-competition leads to spineless shadow-boxing, morally and intellectually lethargic synthesis leads to ideological synthesis.

Bhattacharya concludes his dissection of our intellectual despair and death with two positions. First, in the political realm, Svaraj has been adequately forced on us by the logic of circumstances. Second, in the cultural domain, we have not even begun this process of evolving our cultural modes of perception and expression, our own cultural reality.

II

I shall now advance my own critique of Bhattacharya's critique; I shall not indicate where I agree with him, this may be inferred by looking at my points of disagreement. My first dissenting point is that Bhattacharya runs into a structural self-contradiction when he postulates a totality-contextual model of cultural analysis without following its implications. Let me explain. I think he separates too much the political aspect or rather culture as a political process from culture as a system of ideas. Even if he may do this for the legitimate purpose of analysis, he must provide some clue to the interconnections between the separated categories. Secondly, and as part of this same point, he does not try to relate the ideas to their material matrix — the context of livelihood, of physical survival, biological reproduction. This is all the more surprising in a thinker who is so acutely aware of the context of total-

ity, of the interconnectedness and relatedness of things. Thirdly, he does not offer us even a highly simplified notion of the central leitmotifs of the two cultures he argues about — the Western and the Indian. This is why he does not see the theoretical and historical possibility of one culture overpowering another culture, and more importantly he fails to make clear his own commitments — to “modernism”, “Indianism”, or “Indian modernism”. No doubt, one could perhaps interpret his position as gravitating heavily towards some paradigm of “Indian modernism”. But of course, these issues can, and should be, sorted out, and the supreme strength of Bhattacharya's work is precisely that it forces us to raise and face such issues. As a matter of fact, we have in Gandhi's *Hind Svaraj* a work that goes far beyond Bhattacharya's literal academicism into substantive and strongly committed positions. I suggest that Bhattacharya's work read together with the Gandhian text should illuminate our path towards *Svaraj*. But as a Marxist, I do feel that, given the fact that the modern world is a political product of international, Western-dominated capitalism, we should be ill-advised to ignore Karl Marx's incisive analysis of the process of capitalistic modernization, whether in the West or in the Third World.

P.S. I must add that Bhattacharya overestimates our political capacity to assimilate as the crisis-to-crisis career of our republic since its birth in 1950 amply testifies.

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Comments and Communication :

HIREN GOHAIN

I am not sure I can share Bhattacharya's conclusions — even though I admire the force of his logic, the happiness of the rare empirical observation, and the keenness of the incidental cultural insight. The 19th-century Eurocentric scheme of progress has now been rejected by the Europeans themselves. But Bhattacharya anticipated the intellectual revolution with his courage and strength of intellectual character.

No one will dispute that there had in fact been a ‘slavery of ideas’ imposed from above by imperialist political forces. There was nothing unconscious, haphazard, or spontaneous about the trend, as is borne out by the debate between ‘Orientalists’ and ‘Anglicists’ on the educational policy of the rulers in the first half of the 19th century in India. What K. C. Bhattacharya regards as a voluntary servitude of Indians had in fact been induced. The cultural slavery had been due to political factors, which again demonstrates the danger of separating culture too rigidly from politics.

Apart from the original motivation, the context in which the interaction between British and Indian culture took place was also unfortunate. After the Mutiny all free mixing between Europeans and Indians stopped. Englishmen in India started cultivating a distant superiority and culture became a badge of domination. Acquisition of Western culture thus depended on external imitation rather than human intercourse. Secondly, the class-room where Western culture (or its fragments) were transmitted was insulated from all living contact with the practical forms of such ideas and values. Not only was rote-learning the rule, but it was not possible to demonstrate to the pupils, or refer them to, any experience outside the class-room to confirm those ideas. Further, the new education remained confined to a microscopic minority who were surrounded by an ocean of

social practice and cultural value radically different from ideas acquired by them. The circumstances of acquisition of that new culture not only drastically circumscribed its impact but also seriously deformed it. Yet the wonder is that it had a vivifying role even in such inhospitable surroundings. That indicates that Indian society (Bhattacharya probably would have used the word 'soul') had a need for those new cultural acquisitions.

The vernacular literatures were never patronised by the rulers who did not understand them. Yet these bloomed into new consciousness of standards and human values. These had to be based on a synthesis of the Western ideals and the Eastern heritage. And these proved viable, alive, with a capacity to move thousands of readers through generations. This itself is an indication that there is nothing inherently sterile in the contact between the East and the West. What vitiated matters was the colonial context, which has not been abolished completely.

Bhattacharya seems to swing between a Spenglerian view of the unique, organic, completely isolated character of each culture and a more cosmopolitan notion of a traffic between two cultures. Accordingly he sometimes holds communication between two cultures almost impossible, and argues that we receive what we give, that we can only receive finer versions of our own cultural values, insights, achievements from other cultures. Elsewhere he talks about ensuring that we really *acquire* and assimilate, not merely imitate. The former function apparently requires independence and cultural enquiry.

What Bhattacharya does *not* say is that it may be both possible and desirable to *modify* our existing heritage in the light of the achievements of other cultures. Unless this is admitted a self-critical review of our own intellectual habits and cultural ideals becomes impossible. Indeed I fear such an attitude may perpetuate inherited injustice and inhumanity.

True, we may abandon wide-eyed external imitation. Since we have a heritage, even after assimilating foreign elements we can never become their duplicates. But if the new questions we face in the business of life has nothing to do with the

give them a positive hearing. But we had also better be aware that there is much dead wood, much sterile seed, in the heritage we call our own.

How can Bhattacharya be certain that Indian culture was a homogeneous whole? Were there no conflicting strands? Were there not also historic periods where Indian culture flowed along unexpected directions? Do not subterranean channels still exist? Long before the British came, did not ideological orthodoxy suppress *Lokayata*? Do not some Sanskrit romances breathe an urban and sophisticated milieu that would have shocked Gandhians with a rural orientation? What then is the representative form of the Indian personality? Or are we to arrive at the forbidding conclusion that the Indian personality is multiple and therefore formless? Let us beware therefore of cultural determination.

A living culture is the production of a living society. If politico-economic factors cripple that society, its culture cannot thrive. Though K. C. Bhattacharya believes that geniuses are above laws, it is more likely that they concentrate in themselves the power of millions. (Geniuses were more common in India from the twenties to the early fifties, because of the ferment generated by the freedom movement.) If creative individuals in India today are becoming sterile, it is because they are being turned into functionaries of several overlapping powerful systems — the defunct-Eastern the imitation-Western and the mechanical-Marxist. These appear to be exploitative and parasitical, rather than productive systems. Hence their function is not to stimulate questions, but to smother them. How can a living culture emerge and grow out of such a milieu? Indeed, K. C. Bhattacharya's paper itself may be used by the powers that be to kill off any creative unrest.

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*Comments and Communication :*

M. S. GORE

The feeling that the members of the educated middle classes, the intelligentsia, are caught between the cultural values of our own country and those of the west; the feeling that we have not been able discriminatingly to accept and harmonize what is best in both the streams; that as a result we either become 'slaves' to western cultural goals or meaninglessly repeat by way of assertion those values which are characteristic of our own — this feeling is not new. This finds eloquent expression in Bhattacharya's lecture.

Unless we are clearly able to identify what western cultural values are and how they differ from Indian traditional cultural values, this discussion can become self-defeating. It may sometimes only reflect the sense of guilt of the urban middle class that they have moved away from the material life conditions of their rural brethren and have, in a sense, become parasites on them.

Bhattacharya does not provide such a clear enunciation of the differences, but he seeks to make his points by giving examples of 'superimposition' and 'confusion' in different aspects of life.

Bhattacharya's first point is that despite long contact with western culture the latter has not been assimilated by or creatively interacted with the ideas and sentiments of the Indian educated elite. It has remained a superimposition. He says that if assimilation had taken place it would have led to "a vigorous output of Indian contribution in a distinctive Indian style to the culture and thought of the modern world."

To my mind, Bhattacharya has set too high an aim for the generality of the Indian educated elite. If one is to point to the contributions of Gandhi, Tagore, and Aurobindo to world

thought, he would count them out as men of genius who are in exception and not the rule.

I think creativity at the societal level, as distinct from the creativity of exceptional individuals, is closely related to the material conditions of life achieved in society. In a society where the majority is struggling for bare sustenance it is difficult to expect a vigorous creative output.

Yet, since 1928, when Bhattacharya wrote his paper, India has thrown up many creative minds in physical sciences, in literature, in art, and in the medium of the film — individuals whose contributions compare with the best in the world. C. V. Raman, Bhabha, Mahalonobis in the world of science, Sharat Chandra Chatterjee in literature, Jamini Roy in art, and Satyajit Ray in films have stood out as men of great integrity and creativity. R. K. Narayan as a novelist is also unmistakably Indian though he writes in English.

Bhattacharya's doubts about how far we have absorbed the concept of a democratic polity in its western connotations are probably more valid. We have had several general elections and we have maintained so far the structure of representative democratic institutions. Yet, there is a sense of fragility about these achievements. Decision making by the majority is still somewhat superficially orchestrated. The Indian mind seems happier when searching for a consensus rather than for a victory based upon a majority vote. The 'good' Indian is not sufficiently extrovert to stand for an election and ask for popular support. He waits to be invited. This is particularly noticed in the functioning of associations and small groups where the politics of power is not accepted as legitimate.

There is also another sense in which "democratic" values have not come to be established. The individual in India does not have the confidence that what he thinks or what he can do really matters. There are no spontaneous group formations — except along the traditional caste lines — which would reflect group opinion or group interest. To some extent in urban areas organizations of occupational groups have emerged — professional groups and workers' groups. They are also powerful in

some areas, but on the whole this process has not spread to rural or even to all urban areas.

Another point that Bhattacharya makes is 'the hybridisation of our ideas' (para 11). He thinks this is best expressed by the fact that most educated Indians, in 1928 (when he wrote) were unable to conduct a discourse in their own language and that their conversation was marked by a "strange medley of vernacular and English." This situation has certainly changed between 1928 and 1984, at least for some of the language groups. Bengali, Marathi, Malyalam, Tamil — to mention only a few — have shown substantial growth of serious literature written originally in these languages. They have published multi-volumed encyclopaedias, if one may take this as an indication of growth.

It can, however, be still argued that there is very little of world-wide import that has been published in these languages. But that may be a reflection not of cultural confusion but of the state of overall development of science and technology in our country and of the increasing internationalisation of science compelling the use of English for original writing in the various disciplines.

In para 15 and 16, Bhattacharya speaks of the glib talk of a conflict of western and traditional ideas and also of the synthesis of the ideals of the East and West. I find his discussion in these two paragraphs imprecise. For example, in the middle of para 16 he says, "There are ideals of the West which we respect from a distance without recognizing any specific appeal to ourselves. Then again there are ideals that have a partial appeal to us, because they have an affinity with our own ideals". What exactly does he have in mind? One wishes that Bhattacharya had specified the two types of ideals which do or do not appeal to him.

Bhattacharya himself seems to recognize the difficulty in choosing discriminatingly between different ideals that are presented to us. He says in para 18. "Decisions as to what is essential have indeed to be taken, for time carries not and mere historical sentimentalism will not avail. In practical life, one

may have to move before ideals have clarified; but it is well to recognize the need of humility and patience in the adjustment to the world of ideas."

I agree that the task of choosing between different sets of ideas and ideals is indeed a difficult one. It is precisely for this reason that a generalised statement that a people should try to preserve what is best in their culture and accept from others only that which is reconcilable with this culture becomes unhelpful, if not redundant.

Very often these choices are made by individuals in response to exigencies in their own life. Sometimes, more generalised efforts may be made by a Vivekananda or a Gandhi to reinterpret traditional cultural elements in the context of the clash of values they see around them. But, to my mind, even such re-interpretations have significance only in terms of their particular time and place.

The goal of "a single universal religion and a single universal reason" (para 17) is certainly a distant one in so far as the whole of humanity is concerned, yet individuals may succeed in overcoming the bounds of their particular culture and find elements of universality in different cultures. Their insights, and even more importantly, the manifestation of their insights in their own behaviour, will influence others who come in contact with them or with their ideas.

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Comments and Communication:

MOHINI MULLICK

K. C. Bhattacharya's lecture certainly raises, directly or indirectly, a number of questions that fall within the major debates still current in the philosophy of the social sciences: voluntarism vs. determinism, instrumental rationality vs. absolute rationality, universalism vs. particularism, the issue of the translatability of culture-specific concepts — to identify just some. All this he achieves without smacking of erudition, in a style that is as simple as the thought is deep and sincere.

I shall attempt to respond to this discourse in a similar manner. My concern will not be to enter into theoretical controversies but to examine the position that Bhattacharya takes, first, in order simply to understand it and then to see whether it is a viable one that can be translated into action. For the idea of 'svaraj' is not merely, not even primarily, a theoretical one, of taking a view of things, but one that provides us with norms for action, in this case the act of thinking. To determine whether 'svaraj in ideas' as Bhattacharya advocates it is a coherent and practicable concept, one needs to tease out the issues that lie between the lines.

Bhattacharya tells us that western education was imposed on us — yet it was not an imposition on unwilling minds: "we ourselves asked for this education." We were already in the process of political slavery; we became cultural slaves as well. This latter is even more insidious as it has an unconscious character. It is a slavery of the spirit of which one is not even aware. It has created in us a false consciousness as it were, and only through a thought revolution can we be set free, can we attain *svraj*. Bhattacharya pleads for such a revolution when he says: "Let us everywhere resolutely think in our own *svraj*" (para 25). This is the major message of the discourse. And it leaves me bewildered.

For what can it mean? Is it not inconceivable that I think in any but my own concepts? What are my own concepts but the ones in which I can think? The author realises this, hence he introduces into his argument the idea of 'soulless thinking'. Again, though he also concedes that there has been some assimilation of western concepts, it is not a 'vital assimilation' (para 4). Let me confess I have difficulty with both these concepts. But for the moment I prefer to raise (in my view) an even deeper question. What brought us Indians, willing or unwilling, to this state of cultural slavery? What is this malady, the cure of which seemingly lies in resolutions to think in a certain manner? My answer is: the social and political forces operating at the time. For clearly in the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries our political institutions were already crumbling (with the Moghul empire) and could not withstand theirs; our internal disunities could not contend with their single-minded purpose; the indolence and avarice of our feudal lords could not match the discipline of their armies. These are some sordid facts about our political slavery. We sold our country bit by bit then; we are again doing the same today. Cultural slavery was a foregone conclusion. In fact Bhattacharya puts it very neatly when he says that those of us that were exposed to western ideals — the masses have never mattered in this country — received their western education with an indigenous cultural mind-set, with "the old immemorial habit of regarding what we are taught as sacred learning, and the habit is not easily altered..." (para 22). Thus we accepted uncritically the foreigner's ideals and even his view of us.

The social and political forces have changed and now we begin to see things in a new light. But in the meanwhile, the historical process has not stopped and we have already changed — our culture, our concepts and ideals have already been transformed. (Indeed I am not sure if the very awareness of our nationhood, our Indian identity, is not part and parcel of this transformation.) Again Bhattacharya is not oblivious of this. He says: "In practical life one may have to move before ideals have clarified". Indeed one must. The historical process does not wait for the 'open-eyed debate' between two cultures,

for the deliberate and selective assimilation of facets of one culture into another. No, as he himself notes, "Time does not tarry". And when the Indian people (west-educated ones no doubt) 'chose' democracy, secularism, socialism, industrialization, and what not, there was no time for all these niceties. The result is of course the reality as we all know it and live it from day to day: caste and region-ridden politics, a veritable communal and religious backlash, economic elitism of the most pernicious kind, injustice and corruption of incredibly monstrous proportions.

Can we lay all this at the door of imposed foreign institutions? Bhattacharya's own thesis will not permit this. As he says, "ideas are carved out of (reason) differently by different cultures according to their respective genius. No idea of one cultural language can exactly be translated in another cultural language" (para 12). Thus every western institution that was either imposed on us or that we adopted, today, bears the stamp of our indigeneous culture. We *have*, thus created new concepts that are truly ours and we cannot cast them off by fiat. It is unrealistic to believe that we can set the clock back (how far back?), to pretend that we can wipe out the effects of at least two centuries of foreign domination. *We must go on from here.*

I reject the metaphor of a svaraj that results from the peeling off a veneer of foreign institutions, from the scales falling from our eyes to use Bhattacharya's language, revealing the light that still shines beneath. Possibly I am a slave to the concept of history . . . .

*How then svaraj? My answer is: through self-education and self-criticism and a realistic appraisal of what we are today, capable of. (By this I refer to the tempering of our national goals and aspirations with a realistic and serious appraisal of the deep structure of our society as it is today.)* It is the sad irony of Bhattacharya's discourse that though he too pleads for an inculcation of the critical attitude — for accepting things "with a critical reserve", he limits his exhortations to the criticism of the foreigner's view of us. For our own indigeneous cul-

ture he preaches only reverence. Genuine rationalism (rationality?) for him springs from reverence for one's own traditional institutions. This demands that only those foreign ideals that bear a real affinity with our own should be accepted. "What is universal is only the spirit, the loyalty to one's own ideals and the openness to other ideals". But quite apart from the patent inconsistency in this stand the concepts of reverence and loyalty are quite misplaced in the light of everything else that he has said. Let me ask: why should I regard my own culture with reverence? Because it is good? Perhaps the best? (Then all must revere it.) Because I belong to it? Not to say, am condemned to it? Is it not in the last analysis impossible for me to reject it? And is not saying that I should have the attitude of reverence to it like telling the (indigenous) Hindu wife to worship her husband for the sole reason that he's the one she's got? (Except that he is identifiable whereas Indian culture is not!)

Again we meet this image of a 'real' Indian ethos/culture standing outside time, 'lapsed' but untarnished, just beneath the surface, waiting to be uncovered. In fact it has not lapsed. It is right there and quite visible in Bhattacharya's plea, on the one hand to cultivate the critical attitude and on the other, his insistence that "rationalism is the efflux of reverence, reverence for traditional institutions". Somewhere Bhattacharya says "The result is not even conflict but confusion".

And he is surely right. . . .

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Comments and Communication :

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For Bhattacharya 'svaraj in ideas' is essentially freedom from the subjection of one culture by another. This cultural subjection he defines as the supersession of "one's traditional cast of ideas and sentiments without comparison or competition by a new cast representing an alien culture" (para 1). He distinguishes cultural subjugation from "assimilation" which he does not regard as an evil and accepts as positively necessary for healthy progress. For Bhattacharya cultural subjection is "slavery of the spirit". Shaking this slavery off is svaraj in ideas.

There is no doubt that subjugation of any sort is an evil and that it should be one of our final goals of life to structure society in such a way that each human being can think and decide for himself and thus be an end-in-himself. Critical and independent thought is one of the highest virtues and to work for inculcating it in each individual should be the first principle of any civilised education system.

However, some notional and thematic clarifications are needed in this context. Historically the genesis of the consciousness of Svaraj, political or ideal, in the minds of Indian thinkers was such that its only enemy was conceived to be a foreign culture. This had its point and utility at that time when nationalism and national identification were greatly needed to throw away the yoke of foreign rule. But for real svaraj the danger to be guarded against is not only the subjection of one culture by another but that of an *individual* by any culture. Our intellectuals have been sensitive only to the danger of the subjection of our country's culture by a foreign culture, but the danger of the subjection of an individual by his own heritage and culture is equally, if not more, grave and alarming. In fact I find the latter not only far more real and relevant today but also far more powerful and consequently much more crippling

In general, this danger becomes very real if a culture is stagnant and has the tendency of basking in the glory of the past with an all-perfect attitude. Any petrification is injurious to svaraj in ideas, and so is cultural petrification. All slavery is alien to svaraj, and so is the slavery of the culture of one's land.

Bhattacharya does allow for the growth of a culture by "assimilating" some elements of a foreign culture. But on the one hand his condition of assimilation is too strong as it tends to regard all socialisation as slavery, and on the other hand it really does not allow for any assimilation of a new or foreign idea at all. By "assimilation" Bhattacharya means critical assimilation, that is, adoption of ideas after conscious comparison and competition. Assimilation for him is consequent upon what he calls "open-eyed struggle" and anything short of this is slavery. However, assimilation need not always be critical and through full, conscious struggle. Ideas or cultural patterns or values can be assimilated uncritically and without open-eyed struggle as is actually done in most of the socialisation and education processes. It is true that these processes are very effective social instruments in the hands of the policy makers, educationists and parents which can be both used and abused. But these are inevitable processes and have to start before the child can think critically. Indoctrination can be minimised but not eliminated. Of course, the best socialisation and education would strive to maximise critical thinking and minimise indoctrination. Nonetheless, indoctrination is different from slavery. The indoctrinated is no slave, although he can be wrong or misguided and therefore undesirable. If all uncritical acceptance is slavery, even though it is assimilated in one's ethos and not imposed or planted as a patchwork then much of socialisation and education would be slavery, and to remove slavery and to achieve svaraj all socialisation and education will have to be removed which is both impossible and undesirable.

If the above is correct, Bhattacharya's definition of slavery will have to be modified. A slave has the idea of an imposed superiority of somebody over him and lacks freedom to pursue his desired goals and objectives just because of the arbitrary

power of the imposed authority over him. If any individual's desires themselves are modified due to culturisation or some similar process, that would not make him a slave. If svaraj is taken to require uncaused desires then it seems worth questioning if an autonomous individual is not a myth.

Bhattacharya repeatedly admits the need and the desirability of assimilating new ideas and new culture, and of a synthesis between "Indian thought" and "western thought". But when we look into the prescription which he recommends for synthesis and assimilation, we find that all genuine synthesis and entry of new ideas is in fact negated. While criticising universalism he says: "What is universal is only the spirit, the loyalty to our own ideals and the openness to other ideals, the determination not to reject them if they are found within our ideals and not to accept them till they are so found. The only way to find a new reverence is to deepen our old reverence" (para 20). This in fact leaves no room for genuine change or synthesis since this allows only the reassertion, or at most elaboration, of what is already handed down to us by our heritage. If we have to accept only that which is already found in "our ideals" then what are we synthesising with what, and what is new or foreign which we are assimilating? How does it amount to development and progress and change? More importantly, what happens to the virtue of critical thinking the absence of which Bhattacharya has himself regarded as slavery? One also wonders how one can avoid the dangers of "national conceit and the unthinking glorification of everything in our culture and depreciation of everything in other cultures" if Bhattacharya's aforementioned prescription is accepted.

No doubt, the adoption of an ideal or a way of life which conflicts with, or does not cohere with, the general ethos of the person, is wrong since it would be artificial and would produce conflict in his psyche. But restriction of all thought and development to the framework of one's heritage would amount to the imprisonment of the individual in his cultural historicity as well as the stagnation and dwarfing of a culture. Rootlessness in the sense of possessing nothing as one's own and blind imitation of others is certainly the surrender of one's indivi-

duality and soul. But we must also remember that in the name of rooted education, if not managed with sensitive imagination and broadmindedness, much greater sins can be committed and the foundations of fundamentalism and revivalism can be laid which incapacitate both the individual and the culture. Our ultimate values should not be curbed by any limits — geographical, social, communal, or cultural — except those of universal human values. Anything short of that is pregnant with dangerous consequences for humanity.

As rational and enlightened persons what should be our grounds for the appreciation of, or loyalty to, a culture? To me the only genuine ground seems to be its great values and ideas, and these must be adopted and accepted no matter which culture or historical setting they come from. Suppression of a culture by another or annihilation of a culture is evil only because some great values or thoughts or techniques may get lost and forgotten. It is these values and ideas which should be the criterion for the adoption or rejection of a culture rather than the other way round. Causal historicity or genesis in geographical or ethnic or national boundaries does not make a culture sacred; nor does it become inevitable for an individual.

I do not find the idea of the cultural relativity of values acceptable. Similarly I do not agree with the view that philosophical problems or solutions are relative to any culture or nation. Likewise for the literary appreciation. The essence of literature is not so much the incorporation of a life-style as the sentiments of people, their love and hate, joys and sorrows, their crises and dilemmas. These can be commonly appreciated just as love can grow between persons of different cultures.

If there has not been any original (I am not saying "Indian" or "culturally rooted") response from Indians to western literature and ideas, this should surely make us ask why this is so. And we must make an honest attempt at finding out whether (or to what extent) this has been due to our cultural subjection or due to the absence of methodological training in our tradition. Is it not a fact that investigation into the methodology of inquiry did not get priority in our tradition, and if so, does

this fact not explain, at least partially, the lack of originality which Bhattacharya laments? The importance of methodological inquiry for svaraj in ideas must not be underestimated. If we take wrong routes in our quest of knowledge, we are more likely to meet failures than not; and the more we do so, the more we are likely to depend on others for judgements.

There are several other issues worth our attention which I have not mentioned here, for example, the notion of 'Indianness' and interlinguistic translatability of ideas. If a seminar on this theme is planned, I suggest the following questions for its deliberations :

1. What is meant by svaraj in ideas and whose svaraj should it be (nation, culture, or individual);
2. What are those forces which are potential dangers to svaraj in ideas (Politico-administrative forces, culture, religion, nationalism, economic deprivation);
3. What is 'Indianness';
4. What is "the inwardness of our traditional social structure";
5. What is to be counted as one's own culture and what as that of 'others';
6. Role of one's community's or nation's history when the continuity of ethos has broken in important ways;
7. Areas of one's identification and its limits;
8. Relationship between values and culture;
9. What is 'universalism' and whether it is correct.

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## THE IDEA OF SVARAJ

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Krishna Chandra Bhattacharya's discourse "Svaraj in ideas" is as relevant today after more than fifty years as it was relevant when it was delivered around 1928-30 at a time when India was still about twenty years away from the goal of political Svaraj. Its current relevance redounds greatly to its author's credit (combining as it does an impassioned plea with keen analysis), but, what is more to the point, also to the discredit and shame of contemporary Indians. More than three decades of political independence have not seen us even substantially nearer the goal of Svaraj in ideas. In all conscience the discourse by Bhattacharya should have become by now only a document of successful struggle for that second Svaraj. A re-consideration of the discourse is certainly welcome therefore, but the occasion should not be permitted to degenerate into one of collective breast-beating or one of a rehash of the latest slogan of "ideational decolonization" currently fashionable in the West or, more insidiously, one of pleading for "Svadeshi in ideas". Though "Svadeshi in ideas" was far from the author's intention, there is a real danger of that sort of misreading of Bhattacharya's discourse — not because the author is in any way unclear or ambiguous on the point but because the misreading is an easy way out for the tired mind or the lethargic mind.

What I propose to do on this occasion is two things, namely, first, to block the way to the misreading, and, secondly, to consider the circumstances that led to the situation lamented by Bhattacharya and to the lamentable continuance of that situation. But let us first present Bhattacharya's argument (as far as possible, using his own phraseology). This would also help me to set out more clearly the points on which I have some reservations about that argument.

(1) The domain of ideas is the conscious level of operation of culture. So any consideration of culture processes is also applicable to processes that have to do with ideas. (Bhattacharya nowhere says this in so many words, but it is an obvious presupposition underlying his argument.)

(2) Cultural assimilation is acceptance of alien ideas in place of (or in addition to) indigenous ideas as a result of conscious and free choice. This process is typically accompanied by critical sifting and fair competition between the alien and the indigenous.

(3) Cultural subjection is submission to alien ideas without any critical engagement either with the alien ideas being accepted or with the indigenous ideas that are being replaced. This process is typically unconscious.

(4) Cultural self-determination is more than a desirable goal—it is the natural condition of a community in a state of health. Its absence or loss is life-harming not only to the community but also to the very soul of its members.

(5) Cultural assimilation is compatible with cultural self-determination; indeed in a given case it may assist progress. Cultural subjection is the antithesis of cultural self-determination and therefore an evil, especially when, in its acute form, there is even no consciousness of the restraint on freedom.

(6) An initial resistance to alien ideas is natural and even a healthy defence against cultural subjection. One associates such resistance with folk wisdom. (Bhattacharya perhaps should have explicitly added: The initial resistance should remain initial, a symptom of critical reserve and not a symptom of blind rejection of the alien.)

So much for Bhattacharya's controlling ideas. It may be noted by way of a historical footnote that these ideas of his seem to be a reflex of the anti-Benthamite, idealistic trend of European thought and thus an instance of healthy cultural assimilation on the part of Bhattacharya. As assimilated alien ideas they get linked up in his mind with the indigenous idea underlying the Sanskrit adage about svadharma and paradharma.

Now let us see how he brings these controlling ideas to bear on India under British domination. He accepts the received division of that society into "our educated men" (cultural élite in today's jargon) and the masses. (Men presumably do not include women.) The cultural élite are usually further divided into the conservatives or revivalists on the one hand (the two terms possess overlapping but non-identical ranges of application) and the reformists or Westernizers on the other hand. Bhattacharya offers a somewhat different account of this customary subdivision of "our educated men".

(7) Indian society under British domination presents an interesting case. Given the rich, indigenous, pre-British culture of India, one would have expected cultural assimilation. Instead one finds cultural subjection, especially among our educated men.

(8) Such being the case, one finds among them, especially the Westernizers, hybridization rather than synthesis, docile acceptance of the alien idea rather than a critique of the fundamentals, unawareness of the inherited or hasty comparison between the inherited and the alien rather than critical comparison between the two, passive survival of inherited ideas as marginal relics rather than a lively sense of continuity between the past and the present, patch-like addition of the alien to Indian culture rather than a translation of the alien into indigenous terms. Even the use of a hybrid language rather than alternating between English and the Indian language appears to reflect this state of affairs.

(9) Even the conservative or revivalist stance stems from an important resentment rather than a critical and therefore selective rejection grounded in a true appreciation of any conflict between the alien and the indigenous. (One wishes that Bhattacharya had developed this insight further and brought out how uncritical conservatism/revivalism and uncritical reformism are but two sides of the same coin; namely, a basic sense of insecurity, loss of nerve. Freud would have called it the unconscious inferiority complex, which sometimes parades as boasting about the superiority of the indigenous.)

(10) How to account for this strange and sorry state of affairs? The primary cause is of course the crippling sense of helplessness in the face of a foreign power from which only a genius may escape. But there is a secondary cause also. It appears that our educated men have uncritically swallowed the Western idea of a brusque rationalism, a plea for the rational and therefore universal conceived in abstract terms without any organic relationship with the inherited and local.

(11) One should rather conceive of the rational and therefore universal in terms of the concrete universal and so brought into organic relationship with its particular manifestation. Thus, an alien idea if found acceptable after critical appraisal will have to be thoroughly assimilated to the indigenous if it is to have its expected beneficial effects. While brusque rationalism may do for science and technology, only mature rationalism will do for human sciences and humanities.

Again, a historical footnote, Bhattacharya does not use the expressions "organic" and "concrete", but clearly means what these expressions say. The two alternative versions of rationalism—universalism correspond to the utilitarian-British-empiricist-mechanistic-Benthamite version and the Romantic-Continental-idealistic-vitalistic-Coleridgean version that we have mentioned earlier. (Compare Mill's essays on Bentham and Coleridge.)

Assuming that this is a fair and correct account of Bhattacharya's plea for a Svaraj in ideas addressed to his contemporary Indians, one can see how it may give comfort but no justification to the misreading, namely, that Bhattacharya is pleading for nativism, for Svadeshi in ideas. The parenthetic observations under items (6) and (9) are critical—they lead us to see both how the misreading may arise and also how the reading is indeed a misreading. So much for plugging the leak, blocking the escape route. Now for a critical assessment of item 10, which offers Bhattacharya's explanation for the sad state of affairs. In my opinion Bhattacharya's explanation is correct in so far as it goes, but it does not go far enough. It does not tell us, for example, why there were not enough geniuses around to escape the paralysis of political slavery and so to rescue the other geniuses, if not the rest of the élite, if

not the masses. The embarrassing fact is that even some geniuses could not wholly escape cultural subjection. (I am sure that Bhattacharya would not have defined such figures out of the class of geniuses to save his hypothesis!)

I now offer a hypothesis supplementary to Bhattacharya's hypothesis, with which I have no essential quarrel. (For ease of reference, I shall continue numbering items).

(12) The Indian response is puzzling if we recognize the high degree of development of the indigenous culture as inherited from the distant past, but not so puzzling if we recognize the high degree of degeneration of the Indian society and culture of the recent past. While the alien ideas of the West sprang from real minds functioning in a rich and strong life, the indigenous ideas of pre-British India had already lost this support of real minds and a rich and strong life. The paralysis of political slavery under invading Muslim rulers and indigenous but partially de-Indianized Muslim rulers cannot wholly account for this loss of support.

(13) There was an earlier atrophy of Indian culture. Indigenous ideas couched in highly literary languages like Sanskrit and Pali and Prakrit had already lost touch with the life as it was lived from day to day in the vernaculars. On the one hand the vernaculars had no prose of ideas; for the masses and even for most educated men the indigenous ideas were either a sealed book or available in attenuated or garbled versions. On the other hand, even for those who could wield the literary languages the expressions in these languages had become overly abstract terms with no organic contact with everyday life or, worse still, mere names to be repeated parrot-like.

(14) The Indian response to the West involved, among other things, the replacement of Sanskrit by English. No wonder the first attempts at a prose of ideas in the vernaculars were very often couched in English in the guise of Sanskritized translations imperfectly fusing with the vernacular.

(15) The Medical resurgence (associated with the bhakti poets) and the Indian awakening (misnamed the Indian Renaissance) were two attempts to counteract this atrophy.

Both these attempts fell short of the job on hand, but this should not detract from their spirit and partial success.

"Our educated men" have too often been made the whipping-boys by the various physicians, Marxist or otherwise diagnosing the malaise of this wounded civilization or giving the "native" civilization a clean bill of health.

I still have no answer to the remoter question, namely, why the Indian civilization atrophied in the first place, and why the two indigenous attempts to pull it out and up by its bootstraps fell short of the job. (For a brave attempt to tackle the first subquestion, see D. D. Kosambi's writings on the Indian civilization.)

In any case I feel that we shall gain a better perspective on the problem that was the occasion of Bhattacharya's anguish, if we compare the Indian response to the West with the response of the Islamic World, of China, of Japan, and now of Africa. Again, before we glibly plug for "roots" and "going native" and "authenticity", we must realize that in India with its regional, religious, caste-based, and class-based heterogeneity these terms are relative. If "cosmopolitan" universals can be suspect to the rooted Indian, "pan-Indian" universals are equally suspect to the particular Indian rooted in his region, religion, caste, and class. Finally, as I have hastened to point out earlier, Bhattacharya's diagnosis and remedy are no more free from alien ideas, well assimilated Western ideas to be sure, than the thinking of the whipping boys is, at least some of whom achieve cultural assimilation some of the time.

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Comments and Communication :

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Aspiration for "Svaraj in Ideas" is a search for freedom from imposed problems and inflicted solutions. This can happen only when we can identify our problems and then are prepared to struggle on our own to find their solutions. But this endeavour involves coming to terms with the present and not a retreat into the past.

A contact or encounter between different cultures and communities may provide an occasion to their members either for examining and reconsidering their outlook, practices and institutions, or for dogmatically reaffirming their respective traditions, or to blindly imitating and conforming to the other's perspective. The people of the Indian sub-continent faced such moments during the colonial period and tended to move towards the options of dogmatic reiteration or blind imitation rather than that of critical reappraisal of their own practices and institutions. But to regard these various alternatives as equally plausible is to implicitly assume that the communities involved in such an encounter or contact would always have the capacity and independence necessary to make a self-conscious choice. But this assumption neglects the conditions of subordination and subjugation which are coextensive with the exploitative and oppressive character of colonialism.

The crisis of cultural identity and the various aspirations for indigenous development are stages in a pattern of conflict which has arisen out of the western domination in the socio-economic and the technological fields. Various forms of colonial plunder resulted in the collapse of the Indian economy and acute impoverishment of the people. The misery, inflicted by the colonial masters was so intense that Indian society continues to remain in a prolonged state of relative economic stagnation and social

paralysis. A recognition and understanding of the heterogeneity and uneven character of the social formation in the sub-continent is a prerequisite for initiating the task of regeneration. The complexity of the situation demands that we take cognizance of real life and not cling to a romantic vision of the past. If we want to evade or remain oblivious of the complexities and demands of the concrete situation in which we are placed, we can take refuge in an idealised past or an utopian future. We tend to indulge in retrospective or futurist vision when we long to escape our embittered and plagued condition.

In the post-independence period, the cultural fabric of our lives is so rent that we can neither resist the charm and power of the consumerist life-style of the west nor have we the capacity or will to assimilate and practise the norms which are presupposed by the life-style. Perhaps the constant talk of an inevitable ecological crisis, depletion of resources, acute alienation and fragmentation of life in the west, also functions as a hidden dissuader and deepens our predicament. Consequently we are torn between a vague nostalgia for the almost forgotten past and the prospect of a technologically advanced welfare society. Our reflections on the current situation are dominated by our ambivalent attitude towards these two conflicting alien world-views, one lost and the other not gained. In such a critical situation, it is tempting to engage in poetic fabrications of the past and arbitrary speculations about the future since the dream of vision of emancipation carries a mythical tinge. But the basic issue remains: Can we recreate and develop our indigenous non-western cultural traditions without adversely affecting or preventing an adequate acquisition and use of modern science and technology needed to solve our socio-economic problems? I do not think that it is possible for our society to reject modern science and technology without facing a total collapse of existing socio-economic practices. The colonial period of economic and cultural domination is very much a part of the present life of the colonised people and the socio-political decisions continue to be taken under conditions of incomplete independence and lack of autonomy. All interactions

between the periphery (the third world) and the centre (the first and also the second world) reflect the unbalanced and unequal exchanges of values and ideas. Therefore, it would be wishful thinking to hope that decolonisation can be achieved merely by taking a collective decision to not to be trapped or lured by the western world-view and re-establishment of "indigenous" or "authentic" belief-systems and values tends to ignore the fact that there is no immediate direct link between the contemporary situation and the emasculated tradition.

## II

During the British Raj, western ideas were foisted on Indian soil through the colonial educational system. Not only was an alien cultural tradition inducted in the process, but even the perception of native tradition was mediated through the western conceptual framework. Consequently, the colonial intelligentsia was bred on a borrowed self-image and a borrowed world-view which is at best a poor imitation of the sensibility and culture of the colonial master. The influence was so thorough and subtle that it resulted in a gradual erosion of our own identity. The most significant aspect of the western cultural hegemony has been that even our perception of our own past is filtered through the scholarship that has been expounded at the behest of the master-culture. Most of us, who are products of the university education system, do not have a sense of native traditions apart from how they have been discovered, invented, and projected through the Western scholarship. We seem to be more keen to make superficial comparisons between the native and the western traditions without explicating them in their own terms and without examining their value and relevance in the present context. In such comparative studies, there is an unwitting superimposition of the western conceptual categories in the interpretation and exposition of Indian philosophical texts or there is a mere repetition of what have been long regarded as established truths. It seems as if all wisdom is in the past and the only task is that of exposition and interpretation. The demands of the western conceptual framework considerably influence these expositions and inter-

pretations, consequently most of these articulation often sound like the struggles of patients of amnesia trying to recollect their past with the aid of those very people who have contributed towards their unfortunate condition. An individual victim of amnesia may be enabled to overcome his loss of memory by concern and help of his fellow beings. But the same situation does not obtain when the traditions of a community have been eroded. It requires an intense self-conscious struggle to identify and articulate new goals for itself to overcome its despair and defeat.

It is important to recognise that a cultural tradition cannot be transmitted passively. Unless it is continuously revalued by and for the new generations, a tradition becomes a dead thing, a burden. It is entirely natural and proper that contemporary problems and interests should guide the questions with which we may confront the great thinkers of the past in our studies. But study and teaching of Philosophy through descriptive history of ideas, is doomed to remain a kind of shadow enterprise caught in the net of pre-set problems, formulated solutions and the appropriation of the opinion of such others as are quite respectable in the history of ideas. Such an exercise usually ends up as a cataloguing of who said what, when, and then a tracing of similarities among the thinkers of the native and the western traditions. By complaining against the abuse to which descriptive writing of history of philosophy has been put, I do not wish to undermine the importance of studying the philosophers of the past. But it needs no emphasis that mere exposure to the ideas of the great masters, without their emerging as instigators of thought and action, and guides to otherwise inaccessible dimensions of the problems under the discussion, is in a way seriously at odds with the enterprise of reflection, the endeavour to think for and upon oneself.

As long as recognition by the west — to think, write, and publish in the western languages and in their journals about issues which are of interest in the west, to take part in their conferences and seminars, to get their grants and financial support — is going to remain the criterion of success in the aca-

demic career, we should not expect the Indian academician to aspire for intellectual and cultural autonomy. Our syllabi, on the whole, are not very different from those of Anglo-American universities. But merely restructuring the syllabi, drumming up the teachers, and reforming the mode of examination will not liberate our thinkers from the hegemony of the west. It is true that "the ideals of a community spring from its past history and from the soil" but these ideals retain their significance only when they are continuously applied and re-valuated in the context of the new and unforeseen circumstances that confront the people. A mere articulation of ideals, be it from the native or the western tradition, is not going to serve much purpose till we are clear about the conditions of their realisation. We all use terms like 'svaraj', 'satyagraha', 'tolerance', 'ahimsa', 'fellowship of religions', 'rationality', 'equality', 'freedom', 'democracy', 'socialism', and so on. But more often than not, we do not mean the same as what others mean when they use these terms. Through an analysis of the internal incoherences on the constellation of values and ideas which are untenability of simultaneous realisation of these ideals in the given circumstances, we can be clearer about our long-term goals and short-term programmes. Without fixing these goals and identifying the effective steps which are necessary to realise them, all our talk of ideals is going to remain a ceremonial worship of the received traditions which have been neither adequately understood nor properly appreciated. An identification of tensions and conflicts in our theoretical interests and practical pursuits can be a first step towards a critique of existing institutions and practices — a prerequisite for moving towards "Svaraj in Ideas".

The vision of a future requires a critical appraisal of the present condition which is an outcome of the native traditions being emasculated and distorted by an alien culture in pursuit of its own interests. Any Indian caring to reflect on the present cultural condition has to come to terms with the contemporary socio-political reality in its historical perspective and to expose the make-believe of a synthetic pan-Indian culture. This make-believe might have been useful in the movement for indepen-

dence from the colonial master, but it cannot provide a proper understanding of the richness and limitations of our past. The multiplicity of socio-cultural practices, theories of reality and knowledge, the historical context of their origin and growth, and their relation and relevance for contemporary issues needs to be studied in depth for a proper reconstruction of the native traditions and their interrelations.

Even though the struggle for independence in India derived its inspiration from the native religious traditions for mobilising the masses (and it did succeed to some extent in stirring the people to participate in the freedom movement), yet no lasting links could be forged between the political struggle and cultural consciousness. Perhaps this had something to do with the character of the majority of the intellectual leadership (of the movement) which was alienated from the masses and subconsciously aspired for a recognition from the masters — a recognition conceded only to those who join as collaborators. Since there was never a well-organised cadre-based mass movement in the struggle for independence, the issue of aligning with the needs and aspirations of masses never acquired any urgency. One would have expected that during the movement for independence, some serious attempts should have been made towards visualising and articulating social structures and cultural values relevant to the contemporary Indian situation. Except for Mahatma Gandhi, one does not find any serious attempt in this direction. But even in the case of the Mahatma, there is a relative neglect of the demands of the global political economy on the local situation. The search for a Svaraj in Ideas — both at the collective and individual level — involves a realistic understanding of the present, its complexities and a critical reappraisal of the various traditions in order to come to terms with this situation. In order to realise this we have to break through our narcissistic isolation and get in touch with what has been transpiring. We can use our labour and skills to elucidate the issues which confront our society, attack the complicity of those colleagues who servilely reproduce the existing order, and most challenging of all struggle to visualise an alternative and articulate the conditions necessary for its realisation.

An ideational practice which lacks an adequate understanding of its own socio-cultural basis and its place and purpose is doomed to remain unconscious of its own nature and lack a sense of identity.

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*Comments and Communication :*

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There can be little dispute about what K. C. Bhattacharya has said in his article entitled "Svaraj in Ideas", but the deeper problem is how to foster that assimilation and creativity about which he has written in the article. The traditional scholars who have remained in closer touch with the tradition have shown as little creativity as those who have been exposed to the Western intellectual tradition and may be presumed to have been cut off from their roots in their own culture. Even in the West, creativity is not found everywhere and hence, though it is a fairly common belief that lack of creativity amongst India's Western educated intellectuals derives from the fact that they have been cut off from their own past, the situation demands a deeper and more critical reflection than has been upto now.

There is also the ambivalence created by the acceptance of universal standards in the realm of Mathematics and the Natural Science and their denial in the realm of the social sciences and the humanities. There has been a continuing development in the field of Mathematics and the Natural Sciences in the West and it has one of the tasks of the intellectuals in the non-Western world to keep pace with it. To assume that developments in these fields have no effect on the disciplines in the social sciences and the humanities is to believe in a compartmentalization of the cognitive enterprise which is not so easily achieved. There is the added problem of what may be called cultural Monadism. If each culture tries to preserve its own identity and accepts only that from other cultures which it can assimilate on its own terms, the situation will be desperate indeed. For there are at present more than 150 nation states, each providing one with some sort of distinctive identity whose external hallmark is the passport and the visa that one needs to move from one national frontier to another.

The distinctiveness of cultures in the past was itself a result of their relative isolation from each other on the one hand and a more continuing interaction within a certain linguistic and cultural region on the other. These have resulted in the exploration in depth of certain values and the emergence of certain distinctive styles in thought and living which certainly are valuable. But to think that for all future times the people belonging to these cultural areas should be confined within the range set for them by their past does not seem justified. The three thousand years of past history within which present cultural styles have taken shape seem long only when we look back. But the moment we look forward to the future, they do not seem to be so long at all. There seems no reason why humanity should remain bound to the patterns which were discovered around the sixth century B.C. in China, Greece, and India or that the accident of one's birth should determine the tradition to which one should feel compelled to belong.

In the Indian context, there is the still deeper problem as to how one can be true to that tradition and yet distinguish between the "we" and the "they", or identify the self with any one of the historical formulations in humanities past. K. C. Bhattacharya's article was given as a lecture to students some time during the late 1920. It reflects the anguish of perhaps the most creative philosopher this country has produced in this century. The problem has continued to trouble the intellectuals not only in this country but in all the countries which have felt the global presence of the West at the present time. Even within the Western culture the American presence after the Second World War has presented similar problems to the countries of Western Europe. The problems of identity, relative creativity, and one's linkage with the tradition are too complex to be sorted out by talking about Svaraj in ideas. A reflection on K. C. Bhattacharya's philosophising might help more in understanding what he meant than just discussing what he said in this article. It may perhaps be even better if we share experiences regarding our own philosophising and the search for cognitive identity and the relative successes and failures that we may have attained therein. Ultimately, Svaraj

in ideas can only be achieved by a radical alteration in our attitude to both the traditions—the Indian and the Western. We have to de-identify with both and treat them only as take-off points for our own thinking which should be concerned with what we consider important.

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*Comments and Communication :*

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There is no doubt at all in my mind that the principal burdle in our collective self-realization towards Svaraj lies in our colonised consciousness, in the uncritical acceptance of borrowed ideas, in the deliberate marginalisation of our own culture under the impact of "modernity". Krishna Chandra Bhattacharya's little essay of 1928 seeks to put the searchlight on this basic dimension of our bondage as a people.

Yet it seems to me that looking at the matter 55 years later, 75 years after Hind Svaraj was written, we need to focus on a radically different setting, or context, of this condition of our mind.

Let me lay out what I mean by a radically different context. Many things have happened since the late twenties. For India, it was "achievement" of independence followed by its undermining not because of foreign sahibs but because of our own and not necessarily because of some evil design of outsiders but because of an inner debility that found resolution from flashy formulae of "success" from abroad. For the world at large, it was (a) a horrible war waged on both sides in the name of ideas—and ideals, to remind ourselves of Krishna Chandra's penetrating dyad—followed by an even more devastating one (the so-called "Cold" one), also in large parts on behalf of one idea against another, for the domination of the whole world, and (b) a fundamental mutation in the human condition following the advent of the nuclear age, its unflinching consummation in the form of militarization of human existence everywhere and its projected denouement in the form of a civilizational collapse.

This changed context calls for not just a defence of India's essential concepts, philosophy and worldview against the encroachment of alien ones; it calls for a basic affirmation—and assertion—of all these in the defence of life as such, its mean-

ing, its stress on "inwardness" (Krishna Chandra's principal concern) and the external realization of this inwardness into the whole human space (to voice my main concern).

There is no need to feel defensive — or defenceless — any more about our culture, its moorings, its salience against an admittedly all-encroaching culture of the "West". The latter stands exposed, naked, in some essentials already defeated, in others grown more aggressive because of fear of being overtaken by a nemesis. Today it is that culture that is on the defensive, its growing aggressiveness and desperation being another symptom of its defensiveness, of its feeling of being beleaguered by a worldwide process of liberation from its shackles. Its *raison d'être* was expansion, domination, imperium. Once this gives way, there is nothing left of it. Nothing for us to fear about, nothing to feel cowed down by.

Provided, of course, we have the confidence and the courage to see where we stand in relation to the world (another of Krishna Chandra's concerns). Not so much in politico-economic terms which are vital and urgent yet derivative of the more basic realm of ideas. To see that it is precisely the inherent exwardness of the West that has brought it to its limits, that this was inevitable, but that as there is nothing else to fall back on, there is no way to saving its core — or of its role in the world at large to which it still stands in a position of hegemony. Our overall failure to see this and to value our core not just for *our* own salvation but for that of the species as a whole is pitiful. Hence the moral vacuum all over, arising out of the decline of all visions — not only of the West but of others too.

It is into this vacuum that the worldview based on the primacy of the "inward" and then its extension into organising human relations in the larger social and political space will need to move in.

On this latter we need to return to Gandhiji's basic theme that the inward and the outward, religion and politics, are inextricably interwoven. Either the external order is an instrument of morality or it becomes an instrument of some positiv-

ist force, ultimately of Evil. Whenever the external order is shorn of the moral imperative and the nuances and controls, the "reverences" that Krishna Chandra so beautifully talks of in rebutting Western rationalism, it becomes oppressive and just ultimately goes under.

There is need to return to these larger issues (which were in times gone by posed in the West too). For they are the central concerns of our time.

It is not surprising at all that in large parts of the world, including our own, there is this "fundamentalist" revival or revolt against modernity. In some ways this is a result of a search for a more authentic identity than is provided by the homogenizing gospel of modernity. And yet, unless this search for authenticity is transformed and institutionalised in the framework of an external order that proves meaningful to the diverse peoples of the world, it may not be possible to avoid the fanaticism that usually accompanies such religious upsurges, usually arising from outward looking religious traditions (including the Visva Hindu movement). This will only provoke much greater backlash from the world secular status quo than is already taking place in response to the rise of the masses and the Third World.

It is here that India's distinctive role lies, first in working out its own transition towards a post-modern, post-secular social order, the second in providing clues to the rest of the world in dealing with their own crises (without any sense of a missionary drive in this respect which, of course, is so un-Indian).

It is necessary to realize the great potency and relevance of our thought structure to the crisis that is engulfing the modern world. Steeped in a tradition of social pluralism, in a conception of unity based on dispersed identities that cohere through shared values, endowed with a non-theological religious pedigree without a fixed doctrine or official clergy, given its high tolerance of ambiguity and deeply ingrained tradition of wholesome scepticism, and above all given its primacy of the "inward" in handling the "outward" and in limiting the lures and excesses of the latter, India may be better placed than most cultures to offer an alternative vision for a world that

has lost its earlier élan and optimism, its very reason for survival.

To say all this is not to say that intellectual and cultural subjugation does not continue to be our bane even in the 1980s. Indeed, the "Indian alternative" laid out above needs to be applied above all to India. The servility of our intellect, the mindless hybridization, the absence of a critical attitude to thoughts — and things — that descend on us are still rampant. One has only to look around: our fascination for and uncritical acceptance of wholly irrelevant technologies, our devotion to the mantra of development, the more so the less it works, our dying urge to catch up with the West, our great extravaganzas of late to demonstrate the same, our sustained brainwashing by the ad man, our wholesale gulping of the poison of the video and the "communications revolution", our glorification of crime and widespread acceptance of the use of armed forces by those in power, our gunning down of rebellious poor — and all this in the name of progress, of development, of building a strong secular state.

And yet I'm convinced that this "new civilization" of ours is bound to collapse under its own weight and its utter neglect of the basic principles of limits, of self-control, of reverence which are central to the survival of any civilization.

Let me end by quoting what an Indian friend of mine who has always held that it is our culture that stands in the way of our progress and who has lived in the United States for a long time now recently said in an interview on how we need to "catch up" with America: "We have to learn to organize as Americans do. My children learn the pledge of allegiance — it's a beautiful idea. It's boundary-bursting consciousness. Indians are a boundary-building culture".

Krishna Chandra's message to us is thus put in sharp relief: It is only the boundary-building ethic that can survive the crisis of a civilization that has "busted" all norms, all limits, all reverences.

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Comments and Communication:

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I found Krishna Chandra Bhattacharya's "Svaraj in Ideas" fascinating. That it should have been written in 1929 and remain vividly pertinent today is a measure of our failure to understand that this world, made into a veritable "neighbourhood" by the advances of science and technology, must retain its varied textures in thought, in ideas, and perspectives. If it does not, we will destroy many sensitives and creativities which alone are the civilising essence of the stereotypes that increasingly influence and mould us.

As I see it, when we speak of freeing our minds from the framework of scientific-technological systems, re-linking to the vital continuities of our traditions and seeking those mutations in thoughts, ideas, and perspectives which would make us valuable to the mainstream of human advance, we are misunderstood as parochial, inhibited, backward looking. And, certainly, some of us who overplay the achievements of our past — even in science and technology — confirm these suspicions. The possessors of the levers of science and technology enjoy these confusions. They are so obsessed by their power to influence that they believe, whatever our cautions, that we will be their willing camp-followers.

So many illustrative scenarios of our confused age litter the Third World with its pretensions to national self-respect, independence, and non-alignment. Each national group is being polarised by what are called "modernising" processes. The lost and the damned, the poor, and the bonded will remain condemned to a hell on earth unless these frameworks of growth and development are removed from the hands of elites wedded to the ideas and concepts born in the womb of a neo-colonial aggrandisement and a neo-imperial affluence. In our conditions, the gulfs between the rich and poor will continue to grow with

each "advance", and what's more, in such a petrified situation our Third World rich will remain the servitors of the global masters. However, these patterns can be broken by freeing our minds from the palsied grip of ideas and concepts which have been imported without intensive testing and rigorous selection. This hard-headed effort is lacking. Without it, there can be no svaraj in ideas.

There is no denying the many global trends towards synthesis. Clearly, 1929 is not 1984. But the very concept of such a synthesis needs study. Do we seek a multi-faceted thesis which embodies diversities within a harmonised value system, or do we plan a future where a severe, mechanical uniformity is sought? We are moving without clear perspectives, a kind of hit-and-miss meandering. We can no longer avoid the deadly impact of those who rationalise, philosophically, the "globalities" which are visibly disrupting the rich and healthy intertwining of various traditions. There is a growing acceptance of the processes which iron out the individuality of cultures. The silence on these questions is now punctuated by noisy rhetoric which pretends to be a response, but is equally damaging. It heightens the confusion.

As a first step, every society must set itself the task of indigenising the ideas and concepts that are circulating globally. The cultural matrix of a society should be sufficiently vibrant to provide this indigenisation. There is little point in urging a svaraj in ideas if this cultural matrix has been torn to shreds as in India. In the area of language, where Sanskrit is not a mandatory discipline in school and where mother tongues have no supporting literature in the original or in translation, or in the area of education where there is no rooting in the life around us and where excellence has been discarded as some elitist fad, or where the spirit of balanced and intelligent enquiry into the many splendours of our land has been largely abandoned in favour of propagandist exercises, it is difficult to organise the anchorages or moorings so necessary for a cultural matrix. In other words, 1929 was healthier than 1984. The disruptive waves of "globality" had not taken their toll. Now, the task is doubly difficult — awesome, in fact. A

mere sampling of our intellectual and cultural expression is enough to convince us of the profound disorder that has overtaken us. It has to be confronted.

The example of Krishna Chandra Bhattacharya will have to be emulated at a hundred different levels and in a hundred different ways. We are a deeply corroded society, particularly in the urban areas which cover some 150 millions of our people. But eighty per cent of India lives in its villages without the shadows of an unthinking, imitative modernisation. The base is still sound, and can be salvaged — perhaps, in encounters which may well be intellectually rewarding. A beginning must be made, and by the pure philosophers, and the others, political, economic and cultural.

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