

Indian Affairs, An Appraisal

by
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PART I

I am glad that I have not lost the talent for being fascinated by (what to most people might be) the commonplace and familiar. But for the absences in the various near- and far-Eastern countries, I have lived in India for the last 10 years. It is this talent that has kept me here so long, and interested. (It might be a dubious qualification for delving into the subject.)

On arrival in Bombay – I remember – I was surprised at the intense activity about me. I do not remember seeing many men or women relaxing. (I do not regard continuous talking or shouting relaxing, although a man might be stretched on the grass. He is indulging in vocal action, of course.)

Although for a certain morbid excitability of the nerves, it is our weather and, I am sure, spices, chilies, garlic and stuff that have a measurable, a specific, effect on the constitution – one might wonder what is all this activity about?

I suppose we are pursuing human needs. And the needs – for the Indian as well as any audience anywhere – are dedicated to the satisfaction of the instincts: to satisfy hunger, thirst, and allay sexual and excretory stresses. Apart from these compulsions, the rest of a man's or a woman's needs are cultured (or conditioned). A Hindu is cultured (or conditioned) to regard beef as poison and its consumption a moral turpitude. An Orthodox Jew or Muslim has more or less a similar attitude towards pork. The average European is taught to treat these as food.

In my view, for what it is worth, it is a wise man who learns from the rustic and the peasant rather than from the learned and the clever.

After all, we are rather more rustics and peasants than the other sort. Here is a *problem*.

I know an Indian engineer who lives in Delhi. He had a conventional education, is married, has children, satisfies his and his family's instinctive needs, and he earns his living by – I cannot think of the precise verb – engineering. It so happens that I know an Italian engineer who lives in Italy. He, too, has had a conventional education, is married, has children, satisfies his and his family's instinctive needs, and earns his living by engineering. What – the *problem* – makes these two different from each other? (I would not take serious notice of the difference in the color of their skin, the texture of their hair, or the Indian's slender fingers and the Italian's bluish chin. The Italian's cultivated taste for wine, and the Indian's for *ghee*, may also be ignored.)

The Indian, in addition to being an engineer – rustics and peasants, we can work this out together – is a Hindu, has a caste, his wife worships an image of Durgā, he believes – in a vague sort of a way – in the doctrine of *karma*, is supposed to treat the cow as equal to “all gods”, has the sacred *tulsi* plant in the house, and he might feel a certain emotion if he should hear these place names: Kashi, Gokula, Vṛndāvana, Rameshwaram, Dvārakā, Gaya, Puri, Prayag. He accepts, up to this day, moreover, the need for a go-between (himself, his wife, his parents, a marriage broker) to negotiate the proposals for his daughter's hand. Well, these are some of the things that make him different from the Italian engineer. Actually, these particulars define him as a Hindu; other particulars would define him as an Indian, an Asian, a citizen of the United States (if he were), a man of worth, a man of property, etc.

Who are the people, one might wonder, who fashion and impose such differences on other people? Several of the Indian's patterns of behavior – conformity to which confers on him respectability in his society – can be traced to Manu (for instance). It is true that every peculiarity of his – that which makes him different from the Italian – can be traced to someone or other. The *Mahabharata*, among other authorities, holds the cow sacred. If he shares that view, the author of the *Mahabharata* is his mentor (whom he obeys or follows).

Among the Italian's mentors – from a list of some 400 European men of genius – one would certainly count Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci, Shakespeare, Beethoven (for their pursuit of Beauty), Goethe and the Roman lawmakers. Among the Indian's mentors, we might have Kapila, Patanjali, Panini, the Buddha, Asoka, some Jain saints, the author of the *Mahabharata*, and several Muslims, rulers and saints. To them, and the others, any scholar, with a little diligence and labor,

can trace all the Indian symbols, concepts, behavior-patterns, customs, beliefs. (The lay folk, the world over, do not seem to be capable of any originality: unless it is some anonymous genius who not only discovers the cow but milks it as well. But, of course, by being as good as that, he graduates to the status of a mentor himself.)

If we accept the proposition that, natural calamities excepted, absolutely all suffering is due to errors of judgment – several learned people say so – then the responsibility of these mentors must be enormous. Someone has said that the dead among us are infinitely more powerful than the living.

ON GENERALIZATIONS

It would not escape the intelligent reader that, in this consideration so far, I have proffered quite a few generalizations. I have more to tender, beginning with the well-known “All generalizations are false.” (Yet. The would-be-wit will be answered by me that this generalization too, if you insist, must be subject to its content, to what it asserts. If it is false, it asserts the truth, etc.) My second, as well known, is that “national character” is a myth. Yet. You would concede that an Indian, obviously, is not a German or a Japanese. (All generalizations might be haunted by the ‘Yet’ – a tantalizing ghost.)

Other generalizations – as indeed absolutely any statement concerning millions of people – can be proven false. Take, “Indians are dirty.” I can, off-hand, think of a hundred house-proud women – one or two among them compulsives, the crazy-clean type – who would be angry with anyone who dared say such a thing. And they can prove him wrong, too. Yet. I rely on memory, but was it not Mr. Jayaprakash Narayan who said this not long ago? (I think he used the superlative: ‘dirtiest’.) And I have seen Calcutta before, during – when the city was cleaned up – and after Queen Elizabeth’s visit.

Our most sacred city, Varanasi, is malodorous: it stinks. With utmost deference, it does that. All apologies, including one from Mr. Nehru are irrelevant. You do not have to be an amateur sanitary inspector to know the reason why. Apart from the habits of some people – men and women – there are not enough (it is as simple as that) latrines to accommodate the unaccountable number of pilgrims who arrive and depart every day. Yet, I can think of some 20 houses in Varanasi, if not more, with entirely satisfactory amenities.

Plumbing is a major problem and it was not beneath Mahatma Gandhi to concern himself with it. It is right to insist – if that were necessary – that a thing ought to be where it belongs: a lily ought to

be offered to the gods, a beautiful woman should be in admiring company (of poets), a book on a shelf, and the waste products of metabolism should be assigned to the care of a municipality or your septic tank. On this subject, if I may.... What manner of people are they who foul the banks of the Ganga and defile her beauty? When I was last in Varanasi, I heard of a man – stopped in the act by a conscientious policeman – apprehended, marched, charged, and fined 10 rupees for misbehavior. Not long ago, but for the worthy efforts of the health department of U.P. [Uttar Pradesh] government, a warning was given by a European writer to mountaineers to avoid the pilgrim road to Badrinath, as it was polluted all the way. Our rivers, and the Uttara Khanda of India are as ‘holy’ or ‘sacred’ as our people would have.

“*Indians spit.*” I do not doubt that many well-behaved persons, not given to this unnecessary and revolting habit – it does fill some sensitive souls with revulsion – would cite themselves. Yet: our railways and banks – I recently visited a bank in Bombay on quite petty business – feel it necessary, through the written word, to plead that people please refrain (or use the buckets provided).

“*Indians are noisy.*” This generalization can be effectively contradicted – at a rough reckoning – by half a million *maunis*, the holy folk who have taken a vow of silence, all honor to them. Yet. It is a fact that at the least provocation – a marriage, the birth of a child, anything at all – the loudspeakers are brought out (the pitch is at the point, physically painful) and licensed by the authorities. These loudspeakers may be – are – played from as early as five in the morning. Making this kind of a noise is rightly held to be unhealthy, vulgar, uncivil, ignorant, and an interference with the privacy of one’s neighbors. (It is only recently that an enlightened department of the government of India has seriously concerned itself with this menace.) This applies absolutely to the cads among us – and the women – who have discovered the noisemaking potential of the radio. And it applies to the advertisers with moveable loudspeakers, the government and municipal community radios, the loudspeakers at political meetings, all licensed by the authorities. Every victim knows of the contemptuous disregard of the President’s Peace during the Diwali and Pūjā holidays – which are, after all, religious festivals, meant for worship, dedication, contemplation, and quiet celebration. The Indians were the people who sanctified silence. The Buddha had refused to see some *bhikhus*, who had called to see him, because they were noisy. They never met him.

“*Indians lie.*” Obviously not true, and I do not go about telling lies to anyone. (Does not the seal of the Government of India proclaim that Truth Alone Triumphs?) To lie, and to know that you lie, is an

unworthy occupation, and on this issue everyone is agreed, including the liars themselves. (That is why they pretend to tell the truth. If a liar admits he lies, he no longer lies, he tells the truth.) Yet.

Questions might be asked of the conscience of the taxpayers in this country – who belong to the no-rustic and no-peasant class and who enjoy the advantages of education, money, craft. Failing to find it, enlightenment might be sought from the Inland Revenue people, the finance minister, and his assistants who deal with income, super [tax], sales and other taxes. My honest and able informant tells me that every businessman known to him is a habitual liar.

BUSINESSMEN

A businessman – continuing on this theme – has asserted to me that his profits, from evasions, are *karma vipaka*: the fruit of good deeds done in his past lives. There are, you might concede, major and minor laws – I tried to reason with the man – and the law of *karma* might be a major law. “You profit by a minor law – the law of lying successfully.” One or two men have claimed an amoral stance, and quoted to me *Vedanta-Sutras*, the *Gita* – and equally impudently – *Yoga Vasiṣṭha*. I think if a time- and space-conditioned businessman (there is the span of years dogging him), who pursues wealth as a maniac or a psychotic, claims to be *atman* – the Self, which is Brahman, the Highest in the creation – without having the attributes or No-attributes of It (the unrealized and inconceivable *atman* or Brahman) then he lies, but unsuccessfully. I have placed before the men – without carrying conviction – this quotation from R.D. Ranade and S.K. Belvalkar (*History of Indian Philosophy*), obviously their betters. (I have it here before me.) “.... To say that the *atman* (the Self) dies not is legitimate. To say that weapons cannot cut him, nor fire burn him, is also a legitimate varying of the phrase. But to argue that, therefore, the murderer is no murderer, and there is nobody really responsible for his actions is to carry *sasvata* and *akriyā* doctrine to a point which, if seriously preached, would be subversive of all social institutions and religious sacraments.”

I know an Indian lady – by breeding and upbringing – who is above indulging in the habit of wearing the mustard oil as a dressing for her hair. Yet, if anyone were to mention the practice, which is fairly widespread among the village folk, she feels a compulsion to defend it. She fancies that to notice such things is “anti-Indian”.

A certain coolness to the performance by an aged, and officially-sponsored “classical singer” in New Delhi, made an Indian woman scowl and suggest to me, “Why don’t you go and live in England?” (Four years after the event, I still believe – regardless of the man’s access to the technique and the tricks – that an ear-assaulter, with a

cracked foghorn of a voice like his, might be manhandled or shot in any musically-sensitive company. I am a reformed character, to be sure. I was thinking of some *csákó*-wearing Hungarians I used to know – with rather strong views on the subject of buzzing and braying.)

While one tries to understand the motives behind such behavior, surely, these generalizations deserve a better treatment – thought, consideration, action – anything but return, rudeness, rebuttal (or defense of the lawlessness and the miscreants).

‘PATRIOTIC’ FERVOR

The most passionate and vocal ‘pro-India’ Indian (and family) from whose company I have suffered – at the time of the country’s need, the Defense Ministry are appealing for recruits – has kept his eligible sons and daughters out of it. He wants the sons and daughters of the Punjabis, Gorkhas, Garhwalis, Dogras, Sikhs, Jats, Marathas and the others to do their duty. His own patriotic lads are making piles and eating themselves sick, and the public-spirited girls are busy titivating themselves, shopping for clothes, and arguing themselves hoarse. The man has the insolence to claim respect for his verbosity and a second glance at his kind of nationalism.

To sum up the condition of the millions of people in this country in any sort of an acceptable (and a descriptive) formula is a wasp of a problem. The single word ‘privation’ might assist.

In the relatively prosperous Maharashtra, in the neighborhood of Khandala and Lonavla, the standard salary paid to the gardener is Rs. 40. Asked how could the gardener, with a wife, six children, and an old mother, live on 40 rupees a month, the millionaire employer dismissed the questions with, “They manage!” An Indian Minister did better, when he shrewdly observed that a government employee becomes dishonest after he marries. (He might have noted a diminishing quantum of honesty with a child born a year, and particularly if he dishonest employee is ‘cursed’ with a girl child – such is the injunction of his mentors – because, in addition to her keep, a dowry has to be provided for her.) It is as well – while appraising the Janata [Party, JP or JNP), the folk whose country this is, and whose employee the Government are – to remind the reader of the national income. To support two, three, four and more creatures – to rear a family – on our income, must be an attack on human dignity.

Apart from the ignorant superstition that one’s born are the visible proof of one’s virility, and one’s woman’s fertility, and the Hindu

mentor's decree that a male child is a religious necessity (and a substitute for an old-age insurance policy), the only motive for this sort of conduct and the outcome is sexual gratification. The people who multiply relentlessly – and how many condemn their children to beg in the street, and complain of hunger to strangers? – might be – in their own interest – treated as lawless. One would have thought it obvious that a man and his woman might be 'penalized' – if that is what it is – for irresponsible and anti-social behavior, rather than be dealt with for bribery, corruption, theft, flogging government property and all the rest of it after they have committed themselves and brought forth their young, who need to be fed, at least. Indian leadership fails if it does not take full cognizance of these facts.

Extremism of any kind – and we in India indulge in extremism – makes it very difficult to advance any sort of a sane appraisal, or even an approximately correct estimate, or predict peoples' responses to certain situations. (This is the second reservation or apology for brushing upon the subject: the first was the reference to the qualification, an interested but fallible observer.) "Mysterious Oriental Motivation" has been suggested as an alternative to explanation. Speaking for myself – although I understand the pseudo-satisfaction a man must feel by confirming, or even from a vulgar showing off – I am still surprised to see the meanest man I met in India, who would not hesitate to get into an unpleasant argument with his wife over an unavoidable doctor's bill, grinning and actually enjoying himself by literally blowing thousands of rupees on ice cream, soft drinks, the garish and theatrical effects, the band at his son's wedding and generally indulging in criminal extravagance. The man, obviously, is not free: he is dominated by his mentors, who decree such things, and the entire enterprise – the wedding, the expense and the noise – is dedicated to furthering yet another generation, absolutely regardless of the competition for food, schools, housing, hotels, transport, plumbing. A vocal section belonging to this class demands that all this must be remedied forthwith by the Government.

It is good to remind ourselves – and the witless millionaires and the well-to-do who think that these things do not concern them – that a shade more than the government of this country is involved in this business. It is our friends, the Americans, the British, and all the others, whose discoveries, and technology, and indeed material aid, keeps things stable, where they are (in spite of the self-created need for thieving, cringing and grasping), saving us from loot when they can, food riots, and more lawlessness. An Indian proverb insists that no gods ever forgive ingratitude.

Mr. William Vogt, the American authority, who knows about the Indian Family Planning effort, rightly questions the ethics of it all. "... Of all people who would find it hardest to justify imposing another child on world society," he says, "the most conspicuous are those in the underdeveloped countries where plummeting death rates are bringing about explosive population growth. They cannot take care of their own. They are ... expecting to be supported by someone else.... What ... these countries do not realize is that the money they secure through government loans and grants is not merely pieces of paper or gold; it is working hours, better education, bread and butter, and long-range security taken away from working taxpayers in the granting country. While the underdeveloped countries do not even try to stabilize their populations," he asks, "should they expect someone else to finance their reproduction?"

THE LEADERSHIP

Any appraisal of the Indian problem must take into account Indian leadership.

Although the prime minister of India has had negligible or no influence so far as ideas are concerned, and he certainly has not been a source of any incorporeal comfort to anyone – such comfort is a traditional expectation from India's leaders – it is true that after Mahatma Gandhi, it is Mr. Nehru, whose leadership and guidance has affected the material aspect of this country.

Mr. Nehru's mentors – at an off-hand reckoning – could be Spinoza, Hume, Marx, Whitehead, Adam Smith, the Webbs [Clement Charles Julian Webb and Beatrice Webb?], Shaw, Bertrand Russell – a considerable legacy. I do not regard Mr. Nehru in the Indian tradition, in spite of a certain verbal bias he has shown for the ancients, particularly the Buddha.

It is conceded that Mr. Nehru has a private personality known to his intimates and that he knows the meaning and import of such concepts as honor and gentleman: I doubt if he is addicted to pretense and acting in private. That sort of behavior – play days and Holi [festival] apart – might compromise his dignity. Yet, the correspondent of *The Times [of India]*, among others, has taken notice of this unexpected talent of his: the able performance in an information film, having breakfast, etc. – under the floodlights, one assumes – and well-acted, in spite of the presence of the director and the camera crew (a so-called peep into this average day). However unfair, partial or unjust it might seem, it is his public – not private – personality that people would assess (Mr. Nehru's several biographers notwithstanding). It is a risk any politician takes when he puts himself forward.

But for the peculiar climate and the culturing of this country – the majority of its people identify vegetarianism with ‘spirituality’ – it would be irrelevant, if not insolent, to discuss in public a man’s eating habits. Yet, one cannot overlook the agitation during the last election (and the one before) in Mr. Nehru’s constituency about this, and appeals by the most influential Hindi religious monthly sometime ago asking its readers to send telegraphic protests to the government of India against its policy of serving beef at the Ashok Hotel, New Delhi. Mr. Nehru’s eating habits – his non-vegetarianism – is certainly a topic of discussion in Varanasi, Prayag and elsewhere.

By being sent to school in England and eating off the kitchens where beef is cooked – I do not know if he consumes it or if he had the liberty to call for lamb or goat at Harrow and Cambridge – he certainly established a precedent that opposes a decree of the past (Hindu) mentors. The more significant – in this frame of reference – is the fact that in spite of his challenge to the tradition, Mr. Nehru is the accepted leader of India and the Ashok Hotel is owned by the Indian people, Hindus and the others.

(A change or a modification in the eating habits of a people is an important pointer and one can certainly draw a conclusion from it.)

A few facts on this theme might be an aid to understanding. It has been pointed out to the deadly strict that *dahi* or *dhadhi*, the [illegible] emotionally satisfying word for curds – is alive. It might be described as meat: yielded by animals with metabolism (admittedly small-sized and sappy). This information has not deterred many from devouring it. Recently, more vegetarians, it seems, have been breaking faith with themselves by going for eggs (and of course the price of eggs is up and on par with the far superior variety sold abroad). I rely on memory but it was during the war – was it not? – that an official report told us that milk sold in Bombay had approximately double the weight of bacteria found in the sewer water of metropolitan London. A British writer – who specializes in curing disease by dispensing to the patient his (the patient’s) urine – recommends Ganges water as a remedy: it is near enough diluted urine, he says. (Curing disease by human and animal urine is an ancient Indian and Chinese discovery.) Mr. J. Krishnamurti has described to me the excrementous nature of Ganges water at Raj Ghat, one of the beauty spots of Varanasi. The flies, cockroaches, the pests, which are such a feature of the bazaar in Varanasi, the grocery shop, the eating house, the sweet shop and the kitchen, contaminating everything, makes all food additionally alive. We consume it all and survive on sepsis. There is the problem of adulteration of food – particularly ghee – with such things as mutton tallow. One might ask

– not the rustic or the peasant but those who quote the mentors’ Satyam, Shivam, Sundaram, the True, the Auspicious, the Beautiful – if this sort of feeding and drinking is ‘pure’, or if it is the angel-food (“*sattvic bhojan*”) they claim it to be, or if it is ‘vegetarian’.

I have not been able to define a true vegetarian. Innumerable Christian and Muslim saints, and Jesus Christ, and nearer home, the Buddha and Ramakrishna Paramahansa cannot be described as vegetarians. The only vegetarians, I suppose, whom I met in India were some *sadhus* who were living (or half-living) on fallen leaves, wild fruit and stuff – avoiding an animal byproduct such as milk – and who were enlightened enough to concede life to the stuff (before it dropped down). The so-called vegetarian diet has not changed some millionaires I know from being avaricious, predacious, cruel, and entirely insensitive to the suffering around them. (What manner of livestock-loving people are we who have our lepers on display in our streets, on railway platforms, at places of pilgrimage, and who humiliate children, the sick, the aged and the infirm, in like manner?) Anyone living on the Gandhian diet would not become Mahatma Gandhi. I have known conscientious objectors, and combatant Englishmen, both kinds so disposed, on the same British wartime rations. The late war lord Adolf Hitler was a vegetarian. It might be a venture into clear thinking to appreciate that his vegetarianism – or indeed any diet-conscious European’s or American’s – cannot possibly be compared to the belly-cheering chickenfeed that passes for a vegetarian diet for millions in India. Malnutrition – protein starvation particularly – makes folk (in Asia, Africa, Latin America, anywhere) ‘non-violent’.

A 13-day experimental fast has convinced me that food is fuel for the emotions as well and that its intake – both the quality and the quantity of it – is definitely related to some people’s idea of ‘spirituality’. I agree. As a matter of fact, a fast carried to a climax would be starvation, and starvation would lead to the terminal death: and a visible, a literally spiritual effect of that conclusion would be no sinning (no sinner).

Part II

G.V. Desani's "Indian Affairs, Second Part of an Appraisal" appeared in the Feb. 2, 1964 issue of The Illustrated Weekly of India.

Among a leading section of the Indian intelligentsia there is a loss of confidence in Mr. Nehru's leadership today. The ably-worded attacks on his policies by eminent Indian journalists, following the Chinese affair, bear witness to this fact. The causes of Mr. Nehru's failure to rise up to expectations are not the subject of this consideration. Mr. Nehru's own reactions to criticism might be studied. An obvious cause – taking but one aspect of his leadership into account because it is relevant – is his preoccupation with "World Peace".

One understands daydreaming. It compensates, and no one is immune. Daydreaming carried to a climax would be hallucination; and hallucinations, if persistent, would lead to terminal insanity – since the victim gratifies himself by evading reality. I am anxious to draw a defensive conclusion. The conclusion is that all of us – in a strictly therapeutic sense – are insane at some time or other. The fact – in a wider, a comprehensive sense – has not escaped the Buddha. Even the gods are subject to his *vipallasa*: the inherent derangement or incompetence that compels a mind to perceive falsely, to think falsely, and to view falsely.

It is a surprising business nevertheless that anyone – with access to the sources of information – should presume to lead the World – advise, guide the Burmese, Sinhalese, Pakistanis – on the theme of whom to have or not have as their foreign friend – Nepalis, Indonesians, Tibetans, Africans, Russians, Americans, Chinese, British, French, to bring about "World Peace" – this has been our highest prestige endeavor abroad – and expect the World to laud to him or to his symbol ('India'). It is an amazing business if one expected to achieve this result without the wherewithal, any power at all, economic, intellectual, of arms, science, art, even physical stamina, such as those needing to be guided recognize. That anyone should not take into account other contenders for the position of Teacher and Taskmaster – the formidable Europeans and Americans apart, the present leaders of the United Arab Republic, China, Indonesia, Mr. Mao and the Pakistani President Ayub Khan are a considerable company and nobody's henchmen – is even more amazing. To tempt the Devil on the sole basis of a certain ability to

argue, or the management of words, and – this is the relevance – the delusion of ‘spirituality’, “moral authority”, “Indian spiritual tradition” – passes belief. It is a subject that need not be pursued: too much has been written on it, before and after the Chinese event, and since it is recent history, its effects are visible. It is relevant to note, though, that absolutely no original analysis of the problem of war, or a technique to bring about peace between the nations, has been unfolded – which could, for example, with benefit to ourselves, be applied to our own international problems. There is a total sterility of ideas, of anything creative, and the stuff preached by India through her appointed spokesman to the world is quotation, compilation, an editorial writer’s copy. We have officially renounced Gandhian methods.

Would it be taxing anyone’s patience – continuing on this theme – if one said that peace between the nations is desirable? (The point is, *How to?*) To keep at it might be twaddle about the obvious and insulting to oneself because one does not know better. Absolutely everybody – neurotics excepted – is agreed about this matter as he is about the need for eating and drinking, and nobody is japing and rending the air about that. The stuff about the atom, hydrogen and other big bombs is pretty obvious stuff, too, and can bore the pants off an American, a Russian, or any other: and equally obvious to the world is the fact of arming yourself with bombs – small bombs, but bombs – and other weapons, till you are near-bankrupt and need foreign aid. For this malpractice – the peace-loving you – plead ‘necessity’, ‘security’ (which is stealing the argument from the Americans, and the Russians, who said it first: ‘necessity’, ‘security’). Some of their best minds say that the big bombs – the megaton stuff – are peacemakers, as we now declare the small stuff to be.

It so happens that there has been recently an easing of tension between the Eastern and Western blocs – and without the benefit of any peace counsels from Mr. Nehru. It is Mr. Nehru who is arming.

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One allows for distortion in newspaper reports. There is yet another judgment from Mr. Nehru on astrology and on “chanting of mantras”. This is a free country and of course Mr. Nehru is entitled to his views. The Constitution guarantees freedom of worship, moreover, and that guarantee certainly safeguards the freedom for Mr. Nehru to worship his No-God – the prejudiced might call it Mammon – and to fight an aspect of It, the evil aspect. (Any person of average intelligence can work this out. It is the Devil, Shaitan, Mara, that this brave esquire and *burra sahib* is fighting. He has

abstracted It from the visible evil, poverty, want, disease, superstition and the rest.) Well: if he propagated a view – even from the motive of protecting his flock from his idea of evil – and one believed it is to be a wrong view, wrong in fact and essence – it is in order to debate it and to question it. About this judgment of his, quite briefly – this is no occasion to discuss the subject at any length – I am appalled.

It was about nine years ago that I was told of the faculty in some persons to foresee. A few of those were professional astrologers. I consulted them, at a considerable cost in time and money, and although one or two surprised me, I was disappointed. The results reported from Europe and America seemed better. (Mr. Nehru obviously has not the leisure to read such reports or to notice that the subject of precognition and foreknowledge is not beneath the active attention of a research fellow at the University of Oxford.) My inquiries, in the course of years, led me to the *samhitas* of the *rishis* Bhrigu, Vashistha, and Kaśyapa. I allow for greed, and fraud: apart from the laudable enterprise of the Madras Government – so I have been told – who have published some *Nadi* books, these *samhitas* are in the possession of the people who sell information. Well. If, in a work written on palm-leaf, absolutely at the most guarded of estimates a few centuries ago, I found my name, my parents' name, and the names and exact description of the women with whom I have been in love, and all the details about the state of my health, my gurus' names – including non-Indian names – and the precise details of my *mantra dikshas* – secret communications known only to myself and my teachers (absolutely regardless of any other prophecies concerning the span of years following the date of consulting the *samhitas*) and all this information within the framework, the precise terminology of Indian astrology, I think such a discovery is an occasion for humility and reduction of one's ego.

Mr. Nehru's capacity for foreseeing is limited (shall we say). He has regretted that he could not foretell – his prophetic gifts apart, even per intellectual processes – the intentions of his ex-friend and brother the Chinese prime minister. I remember a successful prophecy of his, though: Mr. Nehru predicted, weeks or days in advance, that nothing harmful would befall on February 3, 1962, the *ashtagraha* day, on which occasion all the visible planets and the two luminaries were to be cocked in one constellation, while most, or all of his fellow prophets and foreseers had divined a dire and malefic result. But to prophecy that I, G.V. Desani, shall, at a certain age, exactly so many years and months and days past the date of my birth, on a certain day, at such and such hour, call and consult the *Samhita of Kausika*, is a special faculty, you see.

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I do not think – I might be wrong – that Mr. Nehru ever received the ritual initiation into the Gayatri *mantra* from his father. (This is customary with the Brahmins.) Anyhow, I am pretty sure that he has not practiced it. I had heard of *mantra yoga* – among the practitioners of this *yoga* was Ramakrishna Paramahansa – and not unlike Mr. Nehru, did not know the difference between a *beeja mantra* and phrases and incantations used as invocations (also called *mantras*), or heard by *siddha mantras*, *shabar mantras*, *ucchista mantras*, or *kripa mantras*. Quite briefly – I find myself running short of patience, a shortcoming I do not like to encourage – if I wanted to know something of this *yoga* – to assess it would be ambition – I should go to the Indian scriptures, the *mantra Śāstrā*, to the *tantras*, to Jain sources (the *Namokāra mantra* tradition), to the Buddha (the Mahayana tradition), to Dakṣiṇāmūrti *rishi*, to Durgā Saptashati, the Ādi Shankara (*Soundarya Lahari*), the unpublished *āgamas* (Kerala, Kashmir, Magadha, and Assam-Bengal tradition), the later *mantra* tradition[s] (the Nāthas, Siddhas, and Goswami Tulsidas and Kabir Sahib and others), and to the scholars, among them at least Sri Yogendra Vijñani (*Mahayoga Vijñana*), Gen. Dhanashamahera Jung Bahadur Rana (who has access to the *Vadvanal tantra*, one of the uncounted number of MSS lost to us, his *Tantrikopasana Darpana*) and Sir John Woodroffe: and I should certainly consult these *Samhitas* – I have received a *mantra* initiation from Vashistha and another from Bhrigu – and I might even approach the Chinese, Japanese, Tibetan and Indonesian practitioners, who certainly know the Indian *beeja mantras*, and most of all I would go to the gurus of this *yoga*, humble myself, and seek a *santati diksha* – an initiation – from them, and I should certainly consult my own experience – nearly 11 years dedicated to the practice of this *yoga*, including *mantra* initiations from Muslim masters. Opposing this entirely reasonable, and formidable reference, is Mr. Nehru’s opinion. There is a cent percent error – either his or mine – in our approach to the subject: a *viparita dasana*, false perceiving, a perverted viewpoint. I should expect better treatment – regardless of his views – from Dr. Radhakrishnan, who understands the disciplines and restraints of scholarship.

I have heard from a learned Indian envoy that among the Tibetan peasants Mr. Nehru is, or was known as a Bodhisattva – an Enlightened Being, destined to attain Buddhahood (a future Buddha). I have no comment to make on this assessment, compliment, prediction, or benedictory wish. If Buddhahood is – Nirvana, omniscience, and the mastery over supernatural powers apart – overcoming of all manifestations of avarice whatsoever, overcoming of all forms of hatred and anger whatsoever, and absolutely all ignorance whatsoever, then it must be wished for, and wished for all.

The Buddha – for whom Mr. Nehru has shown a certain verbal bias – has evaluated propositions as true and useful and pleasant: as true, but useless and unpleasant: as true but useless and pleasant: false and useful and pleasant: false, useful but unpleasant: false, useless but pleasant; and false, useless and unpleasant. As against this, some assert – among them I suspect some or Mr. Nehru’s mentors – the theory of ethical relativity, although, a rustic and peasant, I cannot see anything relative about the seven cardinal virtues: faith, hope, charity, justice, prudence, temperance and fortitude.

It might be – continuing on this theme – yet another error of judgment to sum up the Buddha’s Law of *karma* as a manifestation of the mechanical law of cause preceding effect. If it were – it is unnecessary to offer exegesis – the Buddha would not have insisted upon the practice of his *yoga*, and the development (from a point to a point) of certain special and extraordinary faculties. It is with those, the special and extraordinary faculties, that one can – with insight, an inward vision – see the truth of his law (as opposed to the verbal representations and arguments about it).

All acts are *karma*, if willed: there is, thus, freedom of will: and all *karma* – action – is mental and so is the result: words and physical action being the sequel, the outward manifestation or expression thereof. Even the tendency – the habit, the predisposition, to behave, to assume certain attitudes, resulting in verbal and physical acts is from the past – a point in time – action (mental *karma*). These statements need not be treated as authority, as the word of Buddha, or as irrelevant propositions with which a historian of ideas or a philosopher might play.

They are, obviously – regardless of their ethical implications – statements the truth or the falsity of which may be verified by anyone, including Mr. Nehru, if such an investigation mattered to anyone. (It might claim a year or two of a man’s life. I am sure of my facts.) Similarly, the lapse of time – the unimaginably brief passing of time between one point of consciousness and the following – between the mental event (the impulse, *kāma*) and its physical, including verbal, expression – can be known exactly and directly by anyone, including Mr. Nehru, if such an investigation mattered to anyone. (If this fact can be known, then a review of the discovery would prove the truth of the statement that all Karma is mental. We are indebted to the Buddha for these wonderful techniques.)

It must be obvious that the mental event (*cetana*, volition, the impulse) that leads to the complex action known as conflict – a war is a mode of conflict between groups – is the same in which Mr. Nehru publicly – and I am told, privately – indulges when he is, for

example, short-tempered and angry. The act is the same (and anti-“World Peace”) and with special and extraordinary faculties one can see the identity. Without the attainment, either a person parrots a mentor or it is *vipareeta dasana* [*daṇḍāsana?*], false perceiving, a perverted viewpoint. (I know that some men, and more women, are under the powerful delusion that being angry is ‘manly’ or ‘virile’.)

We might get a measure of how good a *Savaka* (a Hearer of the Buddha’s teaching) Mr. Nehru is, from his reaction to these statements about his perception and points of view. His reaction to the criticism and abuse that is spoken and published against him might be another measure. The Buddha recommends that anger should be overcome by loving-kindness (*metta*).

All propositions are ethical propositions. If a reservation were necessary at all: for all practical purposes.

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The Hindu enumeration of psychological evil – which manifests as unethical verbal and other conduct – is *kāma* (desire that limits, finitizes, something that, in theory, is limitless and infinite; its opposite quality is the saint’s peace with his situation): *kroda* (anger, hate, against anyone, anything, men, gods, animals, governments, world governments, the fates, the weather; its opposite quality is *mātre*, love, kindness): *lobha* (avarice, “sticking to”; its opposite quality is *dāna*, giving, charity, not “sticking to”): *moha* (any attachment to the passing, the impermanent, the unstable object, to which a mind, a consciousness, might be attached, including an idea of a self, an ‘I’; its opposite quality is the detachment of the saint): *ahamkara* (egotism, pride, one of the mothers of evil, a form of temporary insanity, arising from a false assessment of one’s ego or situation, suggested elsewhere in this consideration as characteristic of all of us; its opposite quality is humility, devotion to God, to Amitābha Buddha, for example): and *irshva*, *matsarya* (envy, jealousy, meanness, all that; its opposite quality is the happiness, the disinterested joy in other people’s happiness). The Buddha’s roots of Evil are *lobha* (avarice, greed), *dosa* (hate, anger), and *moha* (delusion, ignorance). That is the trouble with all of us (and the world).

To overcome these roots of Evil, the roots of Good must be cultivated, and those are *alobha*, *adosa* and *amoha*: to give rather than take, to love rather than hate, and to cultivate wisdom – the principles of worldly wisdom (with which this consideration is concerned) as well as the out-of-the-worldly (the *lokottars*, the super-

mundane wisdom, that frees, and leads to Excellence, Enlightenment, Nirvana).

The obvious conclusion for all practical purposes is that the psychological act is all: a murderer is nothing more or less than the act of murder (arising from the root *dosa*, anger, hate, although of course some people kill from *lobha*, avarice, greed). It is the same act that finds vocal expression in harsh speech, angry words, curses.

If this is conceded, what objection can anyone have (and can Mr. Nehru have, although he describes himself as “an agnostic”) to this ably-worded statement from Christian spokesman? “...To believe in God is to desire his existence and what is more to act as though he existed. Similarly, virtue exists in the purely subjective effort and not in the result.”

Man is an animal – I am not contesting it, it is obvious to me as well as to those who insist upon the fact as if it were a privilege – but the capacity to challenge that fact, to contradict it by making a subjective effort, to believe, or assume, rightly or wrongly, that a supreme and just Mentor, a Judge, Allah, God, an all-seeing Buddha exists, is what might give the animal dignity.

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To go about demanding that things must change – everybody is doing it – without changing oneself, might be another error judgment. (It is conceded that things that pain, and inconvenience, cause such demands.)

That ‘India’ should ‘reform’ – this is voiced loud and often; it is a complaint against inconveniences, disguised as criticism – might be a vain hope, too. It might be, if we follow one another, yet another matter of not knowing our words and meanings. (It might be a form of arguing for “World Peace”.)

A man I know, who cannot change his wife’s ways – she challenges everything he says and does – and whose daughters (not minors or delinquents but grown-up women who, in spite of sarcasm, appeals, silences, and an occasional fast against them) defy him all the time, demands that Mr. Nehru and the “Nehru Government” alter the behavior of this or that official, of all the government employees in fact, and forthwith change this or that circumstance. (It might be a form of demand for “World Peace.”)

It should be obvious that – in spite of the geography and the census – we cannot concede the existence of anything called ‘India’ or even ‘Indians’. These are concepts – convenient means of day-to-day

communication. (It would be equally obvious that Mr. Nehru, as an individual, is not the subject of this consideration: but Mr. Nehru as certain mental acts. This applies, of course, to the other individuals discussed.) What we can do is to concede behavior, habit-systems: some 50 habits, habits of thinking, emotional habits, physical habits, social habits, sum up an individual, and those can be traced to such and such mentor although, of course, one allows for experiment and interpretation within a mentor's tradition. It would be impossible to change, or reform 'India', 'Indians' or the "Congress Party" – the effort which is made, or would be made, as a sequel to Mr. K. Kamaraj's suggestion – if 'India', 'Indians' and the "Congress Party" (or Mr. Nehru, or the world) are conceived as units, wholenesses, personalities, fixtures. That is why we admit the definition habit-systems (for units, wholenesses, personalities, apparent fixtures).

The group that followed Mahatma Gandhi – for instance – shared certain habits of his. With a few possible exceptions, that group no longer has those habits. The one habit that unites these former followers of a mentor is the sense of community. A consequence of this belonging habit would be to oppose, sooner or later, the interests and the conflicting aims of other communities. That is true of all nationalisms. (It is in such group loyalties that the need of conflict is sown. A war is but an overt effect of conflict.)

It must be further obvious that changing a habit-system is to change or 'reform' a person, a party, a nation. That is changing human nature (believed by some to be an impossibility). Observe the village recruit change – literally change – into a soldier. They do this, consciously or unconsciously, by changing his habits: the transformation could be seen from the fact that he can manage the flush toilet as well as understand the duties of a soldier.

Sufficient theoretical justification has been offered in this consideration to invite the conclusion that to change for the better, to reform is a matter of choice – free individual choice – in any given situation, at any present moment, and that the act is mental. ("...Virtue exists in the purely subjective effort and not in the result.")

On arrival from Japan last year, I found the customs officials at the Calcutta airport most helpful. They were willing to accept my word for the dutiable articles brought in and not subject me to a search: at my age, I am old enough to regard this necessary legal process as something personal and 'humiliating'. I happened to have a small transistor radio on me. It was given to me as a present – so they said, but in refined phrases – by the Tokyo Broadcasting System people, after they interviewed me over the television. The choice: if we speak

of the radio, we pay a hundred, and if we don't, we save a hundred. If Christ is your mentor – this is a legitimate extension of the argument – you might have to court crucifixion. Mahatma Gandhi's attitude towards personal possessions might be cited as an example.

The friend who demands that Mr. Nehru, his government, or his party 'reform' – in spite of his obvious failure to reform anyone, his wife and daughters included – had, quite recently, the choice to change a habit (and so reform India, Indians and the World). He had the choice to lie, or not to: a matter of two large mirrors brought into the town limits and, absolutely from habit, he lied to the excise clerk. There is, too, the large sum – it is an imitation of yet another mentor, little men cannot work even an adjective of their own – which he calls "black money", amassed over the years by lies, deception, treachery.

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Courtesy, consideration, tolerance or irritability, anger, pride? Denunciation, argument, preaching, scolding, wasteful speech – as a nation – living beyond our means, running up debts, uncleanliness, slovenliness, or cleanliness, neatness, punctuality, foresight, a low voice, quiet manners, and generosity, fair play, cheerfulness? Hate, guilt, self-depreciation, or self-respect, and love, justice, compassion, sympathy, kindness, and *Śilā* – the Buddha's *Pancha Śilā*, not the travesty ('spirituality' 'other-world' all that follows the observance of *Śilā*); and respect for a man's religion?

[Note: In addition to minor edits, the text has been made consistent with American English spelling and punctuation.]

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