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Foreword



I take great pleasure in introducing *Effusions* to the students of the Higher Secondary second year for their Alternative English course with effect from the academic session starting in 2013. *Effusions* is an anthology of essays, stories, and poems that aims to provide students with a rich fare of texts written by eminent personalities like B.R. Ambedkar, R.K. Narayan, Jawaharlal Nehru, E.M. Forster and Bertrand Russell. Besides, there are poems by an Indian poet Toru Dutt, an expatriate Indian A.K. Ramanujan, a British poet Thomas Hardy, and an American poet Ezra Pound.

It is hoped that this anthology will help students to develop their intensive reading abilities by tackling different types of texts meaningfully. At the same time, it is also hoped that these texts would encourage students to read some of the principal works of the prescribed authors on their own.

Guwahati
April 2013

Sd/
U.C. Das
Secretary
Assam Higher Secondary Education Council
Bamunimaidan, Guwahati

Who is a Great Man?

DR B.R. AMBEDKAR



Dr B.R. Ambedkar (1891–1956) was a distinguished lawyer and a politician who relentlessly fought for the upliftment of the harijans, a downtrodden community which was socially ostracized and alienated. A naturally gifted person, he took to the profession of law, and for many years was Professor of Constitutional Law. He was a member of the Governor-General's Executive Council (1942–46) and, along with Jawaharlal Nehru, was one of the architects of the Indian Constitution. His best known books are *Thoughts on Pakistan*, *Ranade*, *Gandhi and Jinnah*, *Emancipation of the Untouchables*, and *Thoughts on Linguistic States*.

Dr Ambedkar writes simply and forcefully, and is always guided by a sound intellectual perception and logical reasoning. In the present essay, he extolls sincerity as one of the hallmarks of a great man and fortifies his arguments by quoting Carlyle and Lord Rosebery.

Who can be called a great man? If asked of military heroes such as Alexander,¹ Attila,² Caesar,³ the question is not difficult to answer, as

military men make epochs⁴ and effect vast transitions.⁵ They appeal to and dazzle their contemporaries by their resounding victories. They become great without waiting to be called great. As the lion is among the deer, so they are among men.⁶ But it is equally true that their permanent effect on the history of mankind is very small. Their conquests shrink and even so great a General as Napoleon⁷ after all his conquests left France smaller than he found it. When viewed from a distance they are seen to be only periodical,⁸ if necessary, incidents in the world's movement, leaving no permanent mark on the character of the society in which they live. The details of their careers and their morals may be interesting, but they do not affect society and form no heaven⁹ to transform or temper the whole.

The answer becomes difficult when the question is asked about a person who is not a military general. For, it then becomes a question of tests, and different people have different tests.

Carlyle¹⁰ the apostle of Hero worship¹¹ had a test of his own. He laid it down in the following terms:

But of a great man especially, of him I will venture to assert that it is incredible he should have been other than true. It seems to me the primary foundation of him this ... No man adequate to do anything, but is first of all in right earnest about it; what I call a sincere man. I should say sincerity, a deep, great, genuine sincerity, is the first characteristic of all men in any way heroic.

Carlyle was, of course, particular in defining his test of sincerity in precise terms, and in doing so he warned his readers by defining what his idea of sincerity was:

Not the sincerity that calls itself sincere; 'Ah no', he said, 'that is a very poor matter indeed a shallow, braggart, conscious sincerity; oftenest self-conceit mainly.'¹² The Great Man's sincerity is of the kind he cannot speak of, is not conscious of; nay, I suppose, he is conscious rather of insincerity; for what man can walk accurately by the law of truth for one day? No, the Great Man does not boast himself sincere, far from that; perhaps does not ask himself if he is so; I would say rather, his sincerity does not depend on himself; he cannot help being sincere!

Lord Rosebery¹³ proposed another test when dealing with Napoleon—who was as great an Administrator as a General. In

answering the question, 'Was Napoleon Great?' Rosebery used the following words:

If by 'great' he intended the combination of moral qualities with those of intellect, great he certainly was not, but that he was great in the sense of being extraordinary and supreme we can have no doubt. If greatness stands for natural power, for predominance,¹⁴ for something beyond humanity,¹⁵ then Napoleon was assuredly great. Besides that indefinable spark which we call genius, he represents a combination of intellect and energy which has never perhaps been equalled, never certainly surpassed.

There is a third test, suggested by the philosophers or, to be more accurate, by those who believe in divine guidance of human affairs. They have a different conception of what is a great man. To summarize the summary of their view, as given by Rosebery, a great man is launched into the world as a great natural or supernatural force, as a scourge and scavenger of society, to cleanse it and lead it on to the right path, who is engaged in a vast operation, partly positive, mainly negative, but all of it relating to social regeneration.¹⁶

Which of these is the true test? In my judgement all are partial and none is complete. Sincerity must be the test of a great man. Clemenceau¹⁷ once said that most statesmen are rogues. Statesmen are not necessarily great men, and obviously those on whose experience he founded his opinion must have been those wanting in sincerity.¹⁸ Nonetheless, no-one can accept that sincerity is the primary or the sole test. For sincerity is not enough. A great man must have sincerity. For it is the sum of all moral qualities without which no man can be called great. But there must be something more than mere sincerity in a man to make him great. A man may be sincere and yet he may be a fool, and a fool is the very antithesis¹⁹ of a great man. A man is great because he finds a way to save society in its hours of crisis. But what can help him to find the way? He can do so only with the help of intellect. Intellect is the light.²⁰ Nothing else can be of any avail. It is quite obvious that without the combination of sincerity and intellect no man can be great. Is this enough to constitute a great man? At this stage we must, I think, make distinction between an eminent individual and a great man. For I am certain that a great man is something very different from an eminent individual. Sincerity and intellect are enough to mark out an individual as being

eminent as compared to his fellows. But they are not enough to raise him to the dignity of a great man. A great man must have something more than what a merely eminent individual has. What must that thing be? Here comes the importance of the philosopher's definition of a great man. A great man must be motivated by the dynamics of a social purpose²¹ and must act as the scourge and the scavenger of the society.²² These are the elements which distinguish an eminent individual from a great man and constitute his title-deeds to respect and reverence.²³

Glossary

1. **Alexander:** the III, known as Alexander the Great (356–323 BC), King of Macedonia; one of the greatest generals the world has known
2. **Attila:** (c. AD 406–53), King of the Huns; one of the greatest 'Barbarian' rulers, known as the 'Scourge of God', who conquered much of the Byzantine and Western Roman empires
3. **Julius Caesar:** (101–44 BC), celebrated Roman ruler, statesman, general, and historian
4. **epochs:** periods of time in history or life, marked by special events or characteristics
5. **transitions:** changes from one set of conditions or circumstances to another
6. **as the lion ... so they are among men:** Simile to express the power and glory of great men, comparing them to lions, among other animals
7. **Napoleon:** (1769–1821), a French emperor and general
8. **periodical:** appearing at regular intervals
9. **form no leaven:** (figurative) quality or influence spreading in and changing something; (literal meaning) to use yeast to make dough rise before it is baked to make bread
10. **Carlyle:** (AD 1795–1881), Scottish essayist, historian, and philosopher
11. **apostle:** leader or teacher of reform of a new faith or movement; *apostle of Hero-worship:* one who leads in praising heroes excessively

12. **conscious sincerity ... conceit mainly:** sincerity that is self-conscious; is actually self-pride or conceit
13. **Lord Rosebery:** (AD 1847–1929), Prime Minister of England from 1894 to 1895
14. **predominance:** superiority in strength and numbers
15. **human beyond humanity:** super-human
16. **partly position ... social regeneration:** struggle to maintain one's power or position, leading to improving society
17. **Clemenceau:** (AD 1884–1929), French statesman and journalist
18. **wanting in sincerity:** lacking sincerity
19. **antithesis:** direct opposite of, contrast of ideas
20. **intellect is the light:** intellect is the guiding factor
21. **the dynamics of a social purpose:** the sweeping motion of public reform
22. **the scourge and scavenger of society:** (figurative) the one who cleanses and removes decay in society
23. **the title deeds to respect and reverence:** (figurative) the official claim to respect and awe

Comprehension Questions

1. Account for Dr Ambedkar's remark that the conquests of great military men left no permanent mark on the character of the society they lived in.
2. What, according to Carlyle, is the first prerequisite of a great man?
3. What are Lord Rosebery's views on Napoleon's greatness?
4. What is 'the test of a great man as suggested by philosophers'?
5. What, according to Dr Ambedkar, is the true test of greatness?
6. What is the demarcating line between an eminent person and a great man?

2

The Testament of a Walker

R.K. NARAYAN



R.K. Narayan (1906–2001) has written more than a dozen novels and numerous short stories. Narayan's fiction is underlined by 'the mood of comedy, the sensitivity to atmosphere, the probing of psychological factors and above all a detached observation'. His art is one of resolved limitation and he is generally content with a 'little bit of ivory'. He has created an interesting fictional town called Malgudi which forms the backdrop to all his novels. Narayan's characters are the average men and women of India, of South India in particular, caught in the minor anxieties of life. As in Patrick White's mature novels, there is a sense of abundance of life and a pulsating vitality in his fictional world.

The present short story is one such example, in which Narayan pokes fun at the oddities and eccentricities of his characters. His style, simple and forthright, reminds one of Anton Chekhov, and his story ends with the typical Narayan touch—ironic, comic but all the more endearing for it.

There are persons who have no ear for music being tone-deaf; others who have no eye for art, who may in a sense be called 'colour blind'.

In a similar category, I am impervious¹ to the subtler values² in a car. To me an automobile is only the means to an end; I am satisfied if I am provided a seat and four-wheels that can roll and I am blind to all other points in a car. In spite of this constitutional defect,³ by a quirk of fate⁴ I came to own an 'imported car', flashy and full of sophistication,⁵ which caused ecstasy in every auto-pundit⁶ who saw it. 'Ah! Recessed handle!' would cry one. 'Look at this steering manoeuvrable⁷ with a flick of the finger! Push-button glass raiser! Floating seats! Multicoloured speedometer. Ah! concealed air-conditioner! Taperecorder—digital alarm⁸ with calculator.' They would examine my dash-board panel admiringly, although I never understood at anytime the purpose of most of the buttons, switches, and gadgets,⁹ and found it safer to leave them alone. The air-conditioner, which was supposed to make one's journey free from dust, and heat, and noise was switched on, during the ten years I used the car, for a total period of thirty minutes, which worked out to less than three minutes a year. Whenever the air-conditioner was on, the windows were to be closed; which inhibited¹⁰ my driver, whose habit was to show right or left turn by thrusting his arm out, who, when the glass was raised, constantly hit it with his fist. He was also in the habit of gesticulating¹¹ at erring pedestrians¹² and addressing them volubly¹³ in passing. Now he felt constricted,¹⁴ encapsulated,¹⁵ and tongue-tied, and drove morosely.¹⁶ Also, I think, he was conditioned to driving to the tune of a rattle and roar of other vehicles beside, behind, and ahead, and without such accompaniments he could not proceed with any confidence.

I lack automobile sensibility¹⁷ and do not regret it, I have a strong belief that man's ultimate destiny lies in walking,¹⁸ that is why he is endowed¹⁹ with a pair of legs, which can operate without petrol or gears. It is this philosophy that leaves me indifferent at the mention of any petrol 'hike'²⁰ (a hybrid²¹ term, which seems to flourish in oil). I know that the hiking, will culminate²² where it can't 'hike' any further (that will be at a stage where it may cost a thousand rupees to travel one kilometer), and man will rediscover the use of his feet; when that happens oil wells will overflow into storm drains or stagnate²³ for want of takers, and petro-civilization²⁴ will have become defunct.²⁵ The most ambitious work I have been planning for years is to be called 'Testament of a Walker'. The title

has been ready for decades although the book may never be written, considering its boundless scope and ramification²⁶. Whether written or unwritten, the philosophy is deep rooted in me. Time was when I walked ten miles a day, morning and evening (Mysore being ideal for such an occupation), and even now I continue the habit on a lesser scale, wherever I may be, and in any season. If I am compelled to stay indoors through bad weather, I can still get the mileage²⁷ out in my verandah, though I may be presenting an odd spectacle pacing up and down like a bear in his cage. For a fanatic²⁸ of this sort the possession of a car is an anachronism;²⁹ and especially the acquisition of a sophisticated, imported make, an irrelevancy and a nuisance.

Among the things I value are privacy and anonymity³⁰: both are lost when I allow myself to be carried about in a gaudy car. It is like sitting in a howdah³¹ on elephant back and hoping not to be noticed.

In a compact city like Mysore (where everyone can meet everyone else at will), movements became known to the whole town and someone or other would remark 'Ah, you were at the store this morning' or 'I saw you going down the market Road'. No harm, normally speaking, in such observation or enquiry; but in my case it leads to complications, embarrassment since I generally avoid all public engagements and invitations with the excuse that I will be away at Bangalore (100 miles) or Madras (300 miles) or Delhi (1000 miles), depending upon the persistence of the man asking me. Apart from all this, I was in constant dread lest my driver should feel inspired to test my car's special virtue of being able to attain full speed in two minutes. At the workshop I could not help noticing the battered remains of many cars which had tried this facility on our roads. Our mechanic blithely³² explained, 'No problem. We can always bring them back to shape. Part of our job. Nothing is impossible. Insurance will take care of our bills even if we have to charge thirty or forty thousand for repairs. So why worry?'

Since my car was of a special pedigree,³³ it was inadvisable to allow any ordinary workshop to open the bonnet. The accredited workshop³⁴ with mechanics wielding special tools was a hundred miles away at Bangalore. For any attention, I had to drive a hundred miles every time.

At Bangalore a team of experts would stand around and pronounce their verdict. 'Engine mountings need replacement, if you

want to get rid of the 'dug dug' sound which is bothering you; one of the front shock-absorbers must be replaced, better while you do it replace the pair so that your tyre wear will be uniform, otherwise your steering system will be damaged.' After their diagnosis, they would direct me to the one and only establishment this side of the Vindhya which stocked imported spares, an exclusive shop catering only to the elite. They could toss across the counter³⁵ anything you wanted from a little screw to a whole engine, at a price fit, indeed, for royalty still on their thrones. A customer entering this shop was expected to be lofty-minded and discreet³⁶ enough not to question the price but part with his cash with an air of amused nonchalance³⁷ and even benevolence.³⁸

I began to fear that at this rate (I was obliged to visit the workshop every other week to shed my savings), I should soon reach the brink of bankruptcy effortlessly. I seemed to have let myself into a strange world peopled by a class of high priests and voodoo-men,³⁹ the workings of whose minds I could never fathom, but still, who held sway over me.

Two cyclists collided and fell on my car parked in front of the hospital, and smashed the parking light on the left side. It could not ordinarily be replaced in this country. The élite shop could produce one if I was prepared to pay two thousand for the piece. My mechanic enquired why I didn't visit New York and pick it up there. I had to remind him as gently as I could that he was talking nonsense. Then he examined the damage closely, and declared, 'Oh, yes ... only the glass is broken ... we will fabricate a cover in plastic ... though it may be difficult to get the curvature of the original ... I will try....' Briskly he unscrewed the whole assembly and left. He was away from the workshop for ten weeks on sick leave. When I met him again and enquired about the parking light, he looked puzzled and said, 'I remember I gave it to you. I needed only the measurement of the socket.⁴⁰ Please check if it is at home in Mysore ... As a rule I do not like to keep such things with me.' No further reference was made to the subject. It was impossible that both of us could be right. One of us must surely have suffered from hallucination;⁴¹ either myself seeing a vision of his taking out the light with the words, 'Let me keep it for safety ... otherwise the boys in this workshop may steal it ...' or he had an illusion of handing it over to me with appropriate words.

That settled it, I was appalled⁴² at the thought of all the travail I had undergone and the expense, and considering that actually I had no use for a car, having no office or outside engagements, using it only to catch it at the end of a long walk ... it seemed to me the most thoughtless thing I had done in my life to have acquired this car, I decided to get rid of it, lock it up in the shed as soon as possible to turn my energies again to writing stories.

I am not the sort of person who would enjoy getting under the car on a Sunday, as is the case with a friend of mine, who generally spends his leisure hours under his imported car, having no trust in any mechanic or workshop in our motherland. All his time is spent in collecting spare parts from far and near; he has succeeded in piling up enough stock to assemble a couple of new cars if he so desires. Whenever it becomes necessary, he strips his car bare, cuts away a diseased part, and grafts⁴³ a new one. At such moments he speaks like a surgeon specialized in heart bypass and kidney transplants. I admire his competence, though I cannot accept his advice, which generally runs on the following lines, 'Don't give up your car ... the thing to do is to be on the lookout for a similar model, buy it at any price, and then you could transfer all the necessary parts from one car to another. It will work out cheaper that way. Ultimately you can sell away the shell of the remaining car to any fellow who is planning to set up a wayside tea-stall, or you could convert it into a little garden house in your own compound.'

Glossary

1. **impervious:** (literally) not allowing some things to pass through, that is, water, etc.; here, relating to ideas
2. **subtler values:** fine or delicate values
3. **constitutional defect:** some physical imperfection
4. **quirk of fate:** a trick played by destiny
5. **sophistication:** the latest improvements and refinements
6. **auto-pundit:** an expert on automobiles
7. **manoeuvrable:** capable of being moved in a pre-determined direction
8. **digital alarm:** an alarm clock that tells the time by representing time as numbers

9. **gadgets:** small (usually mechanical) contrivance or device
10. **inhibited:** restricted, controlled
11. **gesticulating:** making energetic gestures
12. **erring pedestrians:** people who walk where they should not, on the road
13. **volubly:** to speak quickly and fluently
14. **constricted:** restricted by the crowd
15. **encapsulated:** surrounded on all sides
16. **morosely:** in a sullen way
17. **automobile sensibility:** a knowledge of or feeling for automobiles
18. **man's ultimate destiny lies in walking:** a humorous way of stating that eventually mankind will have to depend upon walking as the only means of physical communication
19. **endowed:** possess naturally
20. **hike:** rise
21. **hybrid:** made up of differing elements
22. **culminate:** reaching the highest point
23. **stagnate:** unchanging; remain inactive
24. **petro-civilization:** civilization dependent on petroleum
25. **defunct:** extinct
26. **ramification:** a network, capacity to spread out
27. **mileage:** here, a humorous way of referring to the distance covered
28. **fanatic:** a person filled with excessive enthusiasm
29. **anachronism:** a custom, person, or attitude regarded (unfavourably) as out of date
30. **anonymity:** unnamed, unknown
31. **howdah:** seat on an elephant's back
32. **blithely:** in a gay or joyous manner
33. **pedigree:** ancestry or line of descent
34. **accredited workshop:** a genuinely good or worthy workshop
35. **toss across the counter:** to produce items for inspection by a customer in a shop
36. **lofty-minded and discreet:** with a mind too noble to deal with petty matters
37. **nonchalance:** indifference, unconcern
38. **benevolence:** well-meaning attitude

39. **voodoo-men:** those who are concerned with magical beliefs and practices
40. **socket:** hollow into which something fits
41. **hallucination:** an imagined occurrence (usually abnormal)
42. **appalled:** dismayed
43. **grafts:** implanting a different piece to replace a damaged one

Comprehension Questions

1. What kind of a car did the author own? What impression did it create among the auto-pundits?
2. How was the owner of the car deprived of using the air-conditioner?
3. Where, according to R.K. Narayan, did the ultimate destiny of man lie? Why?
4. What ambitious work had the author been planning for years? Why was it delayed?
5. What are the things that R.K. Narayan valued most? How were they lost when he was carried by a flashy car?
6. What advice did the mechanic offer to Narayan?
7. What verdict did the Bangalore team of experts pronounce on the car?
8. How did the verdict perplex the author?
9. What did the two cyclists do? What was the effect of their action?
10. Why did the author say that he had no use for a car?
11. What kind of a man was the author's friend?
12. What was the opinion of the author about his friend who collected car spare parts?

3

A Letter to the Mahatma

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU



Jawaharlal Nehru (1889–1964) was not only a wise and sagacious politician but also a writer of considerable merit. His best known works are *Glimpses of World History*, *The Discovery of India*, and *An Autobiography* which reveal a rich imagination and a clear perception of the Indian social and cultural heritage. Nehru participated in India's freedom struggle along with the other political savants and became a disciple of the Mahatma. The history of Nehru's writings and speeches merges with his life. 'A study of his life and his speeches by implication is a study of the main currents of the Gandhian Age and the awakening of modern India from stupor and taking on to the direction of the future.'

In one of his letters to Gandhiji, Nehru speaks of his disillusionment with the working of the Indian National Congress and the temporary withdrawal of Civil Disobedience. The letter, written in a candid and transparent style, rich in imagery and idioms, reveals Nehru's characteristic literary mode. It shows an acute intellectual perception of political problems and provides a brilliant analysis of the political situation.

Allahabad
13th August, 1934

My Dear Bapu,

Thank you for your telegram—we are all happy to think that you have successfully passed through—or will pass through in a few more hours—your latest self-imposed ordeal.¹ My temporary discharge² has undoubtedly done good to Kamala. Fundamentally, she may not be much better but the psychological effect has been marked and of course this is a great help in her treatment. She has really been continuously ill, more or less, for the last year or so.... I am in a peculiar position. On arrival at Allahabad I was met by the district magistrate who told me that the U.P. Government had ordered that I should be permitted to visit my wife and remain with her for two days, and for a longer period if the doctors considered that her condition was still one of serious illness. These were the conditions, he added, on my parole³ and that I would go back to prison at the end of this period. I told him that I was grateful to the U.P. Government for their courtesy⁴ in permitting me to visit my ailing wife but I regretted that I was quite unable to give any undertaking on parole however this might be put. As for going back to prison, it was open to them⁵ always to take me there. I was not likely to run away or hide myself, nor was I interested in raising legal quibbles. This answer of mine put the magistrate in a quandary.⁶ Eventually he allowed me to go home for the night and said that he would communicate with the Chief Secretary by telephone and let me know the next day (that is today). I reached home at about 8.45 p.m. last night. The same night at about 10 p.m. I sent a letter to the district magistrate repeating what I had told him orally. The answer to that came this afternoon. He said that he quite understood my difficulty in giving any undertaking. But I had recognized the courtesy of the U.P. Government in allowing me to visit my wife 'and in a similar manner I rely on your courtesy and good sense to do nothing to compromise the present position. The present undertaking will remain in force at least till Wednesday morning by which time I hope to have received further instructions from the U.P. Government.' So that is how matters⁷ stand. I am somewhere in mid-air.

It is clear that the Government do not wish to have me out of prison, at any rate till the next congress is over. I am inclined to think

that I shall be taken back to prison soon. I shall be kept in Nainital this time and can be easily accessible⁸ in case of need. I am very glad, however, that I was given this opportunity of seeing Kamala, mother and the others. This has done her good and done me good. Mother has been down with dysentery,⁹ ... After just six months of absolute seclusion¹⁰ and the anxiety, excitement and activity of the past 27 hours, I feel very tired. I am writing this letter to you at midnight. All day there have been crowds of people coming. If I have the chance I shall write to you again but I doubt if I shall be able to do so for some months. I am therefore going to indicate to you briefly how I have reacted to various major Congress decisions of the last five months or so. My sources of information have naturally been strictly limited but I think that they were sufficient to enable me to form a fairly correct idea of the general trends of events.

When I heard that you had called off the civil disobedience movement, I felt unhappy. Only the brief announcement reached me at first. Much later I read your statement and this gave me one of the biggest shocks I have ever had. I was prepared to reconcile myself to¹¹ the withdrawal of civil disobedience. But the reasons you have for doing so and the suggestions you made for future work astounded¹² me. I had a sudden and intense feeling that something broke inside me,¹³ a bond that I have valued very greatly had snapped. I felt terribly lonely in this wide world. I have always felt a little lonely almost from childhood up. But a few bonds strengthened me, a few strong supports held me up. The loneliness never went, but it was lessened. But now I felt absolutely alone, left high and dry¹⁴ on a desert island.

Human beings have an enormous capacity for adapting themselves and so I too adapted myself to some extent to the new conditions. The keenness of my feelings on the subject, which amounted almost to physical pain, passed off; the edge was dulled.¹⁵ But shock after shock, a succession of events sharpened that edge to a fine point,¹⁶ and allowed my mind or feelings no peace or rest. Again I felt that sensation of spiritual isolation, of being a perfect stranger out of harmony not only with the crowds that passed me, but also with those whom I had valued as dear and close comrades. My stay in prison this time became a greater ordeal for my nerves than any previous visit had been. I almost wished that all newspapers might

be kept away from me so that I might be spared these repeated shocks.

Physically I kept fairly well. I always do in prison. My body has served me well and can stand a great deal of¹⁷ ill-treatment and strain. And being vain enough to imagine that perhaps I might yet do some effective work in this land to which fate had tied me, I looked after it well.

But I wondered often enough if I was not a square peg in a round hole,¹⁸ or a bubble of conceit thrown about hither and thither on an ocean¹⁹ which spurned²⁰ me. But vanity and conceit triumphed and the intellectual apparatus²¹ that functions within me refused to admit defeat. If the ideals that had spurred²² me to action and had kept me buoyed up through stormy weather²³ were right—and the conviction of their rightness ever grew within me—they were bound to triumph, though my generation might not live to witness that triumph.

But what had happened to those ideals during these long and weary months of this year when I was a silent and distant witness, fretting²⁴ at my helplessness? Setbacks and temporary defeats are common enough in all great struggles. They grieve but one recovers soon enough. One recovers soon if the light of those ideals is not allowed to grow dim²⁵ and the anchor of principles²⁶ holds fast. But what I saw was not setback and defeat but that spiritual defeat which is the most terrible of all. Do not imagine that I am referring to the council entry question. I do not attach vital importance to it. Under certain circumstances I can even imagine entering a legislature myself. But whether I function inside or outside the legislature, I function as a revolutionary, meaning thereby a person working for fundamental and revolutionary changes, political and social, for I am convinced that no other change can bring peace or satisfaction to India and the world.

So I thought. Not so, evidently, the leaders who were functioning outside. They began to talk the language of an age gone by before the heady wine of non-cooperation²⁷ and civil disobedience had fired our heads. Sometimes they used the same words and phrases but they were dead without life or real meaning. The leading figures of the Congress suddenly became those people who had obstructed us, held us back, kept aloof from the struggle and even cooperated with

the opposite party in the time of our direct need. They became the high priests in our temple of freedom²⁸ and many a brave soldier who had shouldered the burden²⁹ in the heat and dust of the fray³⁰ was not even allowed inside the temple precincts.³¹ He and many like him had become untouchables and unapproachables. And if he ventured to raise his voice and criticize the new high priests, he was shouted down and told that he was a traitor to the cause because he spoilt the harmony of the sacred precincts.³²

And so the flag of Indian freedom was entrusted with all pomp and circumstances³³ to those who had actually hauled it down at the height of our national struggle at the bidding of the enemy; to those who had proclaimed from the house-tops³⁴ that they had given up politics (for politics were unsafe then), but who emerged with a jump to the front ranks when politics became safe.

And what of the ideals they set forth before them, speaking as they did on behalf of the Congress and the nation? A pitiful hotch-potch,³⁵ avoiding real issues, toning down, as far as they dared, even the political objective of the Congress, expressing a tender solicitude³⁶ for every vested interest, bowing down to many a declared enemy of freedom, but showing great turbulence³⁷ and courage in facing the advanced and fighting elements in the Congress ranks. Is not the Congress being rapidly reduced to a magnified edition of that shameful spectacle, the Calcutta corporation during the last few years? Might not the dominant part of the Bengal Congress be called today 'the society for the advancement of Mr Nalini Ranjan Sarkar', a gentleman who rejoiced to entertain government officials, Home Members and the like when most of us were in prison and civil disobedience was supposed to be flourishing? And the other part probably a similar society for a similar laudable object? But the fault does not lie with Bengal alone. Almost everywhere there is a similar outlook. The Congress from top to bottom is a caucus³⁸ and opportunism³⁹ triumphs.

The Working Committee is not directly responsible for this state of affairs. But nonetheless the Working Committee must shoulder the responsibility. It is the leaders and their policy that shape the activities of the followers. It is neither fair nor just to throw the blame on the followers. Every language has some saying about the workman blaming his tools.⁴⁰ The Committee had

deliberately encouraged vagueness in the definition of our ideals and objectives, and this was bound to lead not only to confusion but to demoralization⁴¹ during periods of reaction, and to the emergence of the demagogue⁴² and the reactionary.⁴³

I am referring especially to the political objectives which are the special province of the Congress. I feel that the time is overdue for the Congress to think clearly on social and economic issues but I recognize that education on these issues takes time and the Congress as a whole may not be able to go as far at present as I would like it to. But it appears that whether the Working Committee knows anything about the subject or not it is perfectly willing to denounce and excommunicate⁴⁴ people who happen to have made a special study of the subject and hold certain views. No attempt is made to understand those views, which, it is notorious,⁴⁵ are held by a very large number of the ablest and most self-sacrificing people in the world. Those views may be right or wrong but they deserve at least some understanding before the Working Committee sets out to denounce them. It is hardly becoming for a seasoned argument⁴⁶ to be answered by sentimental appeals⁴⁷ or by the cheap remark that conditions in India are different and the economic laws that apply elsewhere do not function here. The resolution of the Working Committee on the subject showed such astounding ignorance of the elements of socialism that it was painful to read it and to realize that it might be read outside India. It seemed that the overmastering desire⁴⁸ of the Committee was somehow to reassure various vested interests even at the risk of talking nonsense.

A strange way of dealing with the subject of socialism is to use the word, which has a clearly defined meaning in the English language, in a totally different sense. For individuals to use words in a sense peculiar to themselves⁴⁹ is not helpful in the commerce of ideas.⁵⁰ A person who declares himself to be an engine-driver and then adds that his engine is of wood and is drawn by bullocks is misusing the word engine-driver.

This letter has become a much longer one than I expected and the night is already far spent.⁵¹ Probably I have written in a confused and scrappy way for my brain is tired. But still it will convey some picture of my mind. The last few months have been very painful ones. For me and, I take it, for many others. I have felt sometimes

that in the modern world, and perhaps in the ancient world also, it is often preferred to break some people's heart rather than touch others' pockets.⁵² Pockets are indeed more valuable and more cherished than hearts and brains and bodies and human justice and dignity!

Perhaps some parts of this letter might pain you. But you would not have me hide my heart from you.

I received your short note in Alipore Jail and I sent an answer. But the superintendent suppressed that answer.

Yours affectionately,
Jawahar

Glossary

1. **ordeal:** severe test of character; on 7 August 1934, Mahatma Gandhi commenced his seven days' fast as a penance for the acts of violence committed on the sanitarists at Ajmer and thought that self-purification was necessary for the removal of untouchability; here 'ordeal' refers to that incident
2. **discharge:** freedom from prison
3. **parole:** a prisoner's solemn promise, on being given certain privileges, that he will not try to escape
4. **courtesy:** well-mannered attitude
5. **it was open to them:** it was up to them to decide
6. **to put the magistrate in a quandary:** to put the magistrate in a state of doubt or perplexity
7. **that is how matters stand:** that is how things are, at the moment
8. **accessible:** able to be easily reached
9. **dysentery:** a painful disease of the bowels
10. **seclusion:** being withdrawn or alone
11. **to reconcile to:** to be in agreement with, although reluctantly
12. **astounded:** surprised, shocked
13. **something broke inside me:** (figurative) some psychological bond snapped inside me
14. **left high and dry:** deserted, abandoned
15. **the edge was dulled:** (figurative) the force of the pain was numbed
16. **a succession of events sharpened that edge to a fine point:** (figurative) the succession of events made the pain more intense

17. **to stand a great deal of:** to put up with a lot of
18. **a square peg in a round hole:** (figurative) a person who is not suited to his surrounding situation, a misfit
19. **a bubble of conceit thrown ... on an ocean:** (figurative) the insignificance and fragility of self-pride suffering blows on all sides
20. **spurned:** rejected or refused contemptuously
21. **intellectual apparatus:** mental faculties
22. **spurred:** (figurative) urged forward
23. **buoyed up through stormy weather:** (figurative) capable of withstanding difficult situations
24. **fretting:** worrying
25. **the light of those ideals is not allowed to grow dim:** (figurative) the wisdom of those ideals is not destroyed
26. **anchor of principles:** (figurative) firm attachment of one's principles
27. **heady wine of non-cooperation:** (figurative) intoxicating excitement caused by the practice of non-cooperation
28. **became the high-priests in our temple of freedom:** became the authoritative leaders of liberty
29. **shouldered the burden:** took on the responsibility
30. **the heat and dust of the fray:** the excitement of the battle
31. **temple precincts:** sacred area (here of freedom)
32. **spoilt the harmony of the sacred precincts:** destroyed the peace of freedom
33. **pomp and circumstance:** ostentatious or showy display
34. **proclaimed from the house tops:** declared far and wide
35. **hotch-potch:** jumble
36. **tender solicitude:** (sarcastic) concern or anxiety
37. **turbulence:** disorderly violence
38. **caucus:** meeting of the organizing committee of a political party
39. **opportunism:** action that is governed by selfish principles rather than those showing consideration for other people
40. **workman blaming his tools:** to pass on the responsibility of one's own wrongdoing to others
41. **demoralization:** weakening the courage or confidence of someone

42. **demagogue:** a political leader who tries, by speeches appealing to the feelings instead of to reason, to influence the public
43. **reactionary:** a person opposing progress or reform
44. **excommunicate:** to cut off from a particular group or society
45. **notorious:** widely known (especially for something bad)
46. **seasoned argument:** an argument that has passed the test of time
47. **sentimental appeals:** emotional appeals
48. **overmastering desire:** ardent wish
49. **to use words in a sense peculiar to themselves:** to attribute private meanings to certain words
50. **commerce of ideas:** unrestricted free flow of ideas
51. **the night ... far spent:** the night is almost over
52. **to break some people's heart rather than touch others' pockets:** to weaken someone's courage rather than exploit others' wealth

Comprehension Questions

1. Why was Nehru temporarily discharged from the jail?
2. What did the U.P. Government want from Nehru when he was discharged?
3. What kind of reply did the Magistrate send to Nehru's note?
4. How was Nehru disturbed when the Civil Disobedience movement was called off?
5. What, in fact, was Nehru's real problem?
6. What were the reasons which made Nehru oppose the withdrawal of the non-cooperation movement?
7. Who were the leading figures of the Indian National Congress and who were the traitors?
8. What opinion did Nehru form about the Calcutta Corporation and Mr Nalini Ranjan Sarkar?
9. Why was Nehru critical of the Congress Working Committee's resolution?
10. What glimpse of Nehru's personality do you get from his letter to the Mahatma?

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let me down. *Myself, be as reliable as possible, and this is not a matter of contract—that is the main difference between the world of personal relationships and the world of business ships. It is a matter for the heart, which signs no documents. Most men possess this warmth, though they often have it and get chilled. Most of them, even when they are politicians, to keep faith. And one can, at all events, show one's own light, one's own poor little trembling flame,¹⁹ with the knowledge that only light that is shining in the darkness, and not the darkness which the darkness does not comprehend.²⁰ Personal relationships are despised²¹ today. They are regarded as bourgeois²² luxuries of a time of fair weather²³ which is now past, and we are to get rid of them, and to dedicate ourselves to some movement instead. I hate the idea of causes, and if I had to choose between betraying my country and betraying my friend, I hope I have the guts to betray my country. Such a choice may seem to the modern reader, and he may stretch out his patriotic hand to the telephone at once and ring up the police. It would not have done Dante²⁵ though. Dante places Brutus²⁶ and Cassius²⁷ in the circle of Hell²⁸ because they had chosen to betray their friend, Caesar²⁹ rather than their country, Rome. Probably there lies an asked to make such an agonizing choice.³⁰ Still, there lies an of every creed something terrible and hard for which the world may one day be required to suffer, and there is even a hardness in this creed of personal relationships, urbanely though it sounds. Love and loyalty to an individual can run to the claims of the State. When they do down with the State, which means that the State would down me.*

This brings me along to Democracy, 'even Love the Republic,³¹ which feeds upon Freedom and lives.' Democracy is a Beloved Republic really, and never will be. But it is less than other contemporary forms of government, and it deserves our support. It does start from the assumption that the individual is important, and that all types are needed in the State. It does not divide its citizens into the haves and the have-nots, and it tends to do. The people

most are those who are sensitive and want to create something or discover something, and do not see life in terms of power, and such people get more of chance under a democracy than elsewhere. They found religions, great or small, or they produce literature and art, or they do disinterested scientific research, or they may be what is called 'ordinary people', who are creative in their private lives, bring up their children decently, for instance, or help the neighbours. All these people need to express themselves; they cannot do so unless society allows them liberty to do so, and the society which allows them most liberty is a democracy.

Democracy has another merit. It allows criticism, and if there is not public criticism there are bound to be hushed-up³³ scandals. That is why I believe in the Press despite all its lies and vulgarity, and why I believe in Parliament. Parliament is often sneered at because it is a Talking Shop.³⁴ I believe in it because it is a talking shop. I believe in the Private Member who makes himself a nuisance. He gets snubbed and is told that he is cranky or ill informed, but he does expose abuses³⁵ which would otherwise never have been mentioned, and very often an abuse gets put right just by being mentioned. Occasionally, too, a well-meaning public official starts losing his head³⁶ in the cause of efficiency, and thinks himself God Almighty. Such officials are particularly frequent in the Home Office. Well, there will be questions about them in Parliament sooner or later, and then they will have to mind their steps.³⁷ Whether Parliament is either a representative body or an efficient one is questionable, but I value it because it criticizes and talks, and because its chatter gets widely reported.

So Two Cheers for Democracy: one because it admits variety and two because it permits criticism. Two cheers are quite enough: there is no occasion to give three. Only Love the Beloved Republic deserves that.

Glossary

1. **creeds:** systems of belief or opinions, especially on religious doctrine
2. **rent by:** forcibly divided by
3. **plays the subservient pimp:** to act slavishly or submissively

4. **come to the front before long:** take the lead soon
5. **flower battered beneath a military jackboot:** (figurative) liable to be easily destroyed
6. **mental starch:** (figurative) mental stiffening
7. **Erasmus:** (1466–1536), humanist scholar, celebrated for his learning
8. **Montaigne:** (1533–1592), French writer, author of *Essays*; generally regarded as the inventor of the modern 'essay'; a man of insatiable intellectual curiosity, condemning a show of learning and deceit but tolerant of lax morality
9. **Moses:** Old Testament prophet
10. **St. Paul:** one of Jesus Christ's apostles
11. **Mount Moriah:** the hill on which Abraham tried to sacrifice Isaac, where the Temple later stood
12. **Elysian Field:** according to the Greek myth, the home of the blessed after death; a place of perfect happiness
13. **to keep my end up in it:** I have to act responsibly
14. **comparatively solid:** relatively stable
15. **incalculable:** difficult to calculate or ascertain
16. **the personality is solid, and the 'self' is an entity:** that each person is a recognizable and stable individual
17. **they should not let one down:** they should not betray one
18. **the heart ... signs no documents:** one's feelings are not publicly declared, not official
19. **one's own poor little trembling flame:** one's own weak faith
20. **comprehend:** understand
21. **despised:** felt contempt for
22. **bourgeois:** merchant or middle class
23. **fair weather:** easy times
24. **scandalize:** shock, offend the moral feelings of
25. **Dante:** (AD 1265–1321), great Italian poet
26. **Brutus:** Marcus Junius Brutus (c. 85–42 BC), Roman statesman, conspirator against Caesar
27. **Cassius:** fellow conspirator with Brutus (d. 42 BC)
28. **lowest circle of Hell:** classification of Hell, according to Dante's *Divine Comedy*
29. **Julius Caesar:** (101–44 BC), Roman statesman
30. **agonizing choice:** extremely painful choice

31. **Love the Beloved Republic:** sarcastic phrase to allude to a totalitarian state
32. **less hateful ... contemporary forms of government:** least objectionable of present-day forms of government
33. **hushed up scandals:** suppressed scandals
34. **Talking Shop:** place where there is more talk than action
35. **abuses:** wrong-doings or malpractices
36. **public official losing his head:** (figurative) public official becoming unnerved and acting foolishly
37. **they will have to mind their steps:** they will have to be careful of their behaviour

Comprehension Questions

1. What, according to Forster, are the prerequisites for living in the present-day situation?
2. Why does Forster extol Erasmus and Montaigne?
3. What is the importance of maintaining personal relationships?
4. What is the choice left for the moderns sacrificing persons or the country?
5. What constitutes real democracy? How does Forster enunciate it?

5

The Scientific Technique

BERTRAND RUSSELL



Bertrand Russell (1872–1970), born in an aristocratic family, was the grandson of Lord John Russell, an eminent English statesman of the nineteenth century. One of the great thinkers of the modern age and a philosopher, Russell has also written extensively on science, politics, sociology, and mathematics. His better known works include *An Outline of Philosophy* and *The Impact of Science on Society*. In his writing there is clarity of presentation, simplicity, and grace of style. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1950.

The present extract is taken from his book *The Scientific Outlook*. It outlines the various stages of scientific technique, illustrates the application of science to methods of production since 1870, and concludes by summing up the merits of the scientific method.

The earliest beginnings of scientific technique belong to prehistoric times; nothing is known, for example, as to the origin of the use of fire, though the difficulty of procuring¹ fire in early times is shown

by the care with which sacred fires were tended² in Rome and other early civilized communities. Agriculture also is prehistoric in origin, though perhaps it did not precede the dawn of history by any very long period. The domestication of animals is mainly prehistoric, but not wholly: according to some authorities, the horse burst upon Western Asia³ in the days of the Sumerians,⁴ and gave military victory to those who employed it in preference to the ass. In countries with a dry climate the beginning of writing practically coincides with the beginning of history, since early records survive, in Egypt and Babylonia⁵ much longer than they would do in a less parched soil. The next great stage in scientific technique was the working of metals, which falls entirely within the historical epoch. It is no doubt, because iron was a recent invention, that in certain passages of the Bible its use is forbidden in the constructions of altars. Roads, from the earliest period down to the fall of Napoleon, have been constructed chiefly for military reasons. They were essential to the coherence of large empires; they first became important for this purpose under the Persians and were developed to their fullest extent by the Romans. The Middle Ages added gun-powder and the mariner's compass, and, at their very end, the invention of printing.

To one accustomed to the elaborate technique of modern life, all this may not seem to amount to very much, but it did in fact make the difference between primitive man and the highest grade of intellectual and artistic civilization. We are accustomed, in our own day to protest against the empire of machinery and eloquent yearnings for a return to a simple day. In all this there is nothing new. Lao-Tze,⁶ who preceded Confucius⁷ and lived (i.e. if he lived at all) in the sixth century BC, is just as eloquent as Ruskin⁸ on the subject of the destruction of ancient beauty by modern mechanical inventions. Roads, bridges and boats filled him with horror because they were unnatural. He speaks of music as modern highbrows⁹ speak of the cinema. He finds the hurry of modern life fatal to the contemplative outlook. When he could bear it no longer he left China, and disappeared among the Western barbarians. He believed that men should live according to nature—a view which is continually recurring throughout the ages, though always with a different connotation. Rousseau¹⁰ also believed in the return to nature, but no longer objected to roads and bridges and boats. It was courts and late

hours and sophisticated pleasures of the rich that roused his ire. The sort of man that seemed to him an unspoiled child of nature would have seemed to Lao-Tze incredibly different from those that he calls 'the pure men of Id'.¹¹ Lao-Tze objects to the taming of horses, and to the arts of the potter and carpenters; to Rousseau the carpenter would seem the very epitome of honest toil. 'Return to nature' means, in practice, return to those conditions to which the writer in question was accustomed in his youth. Return to nature, if it were taken seriously, would involve the death by starvation of some 90 per cent of the population of civilized countries. Industrialism as it exists at the present day undoubtedly has grave difficulties, but they are not to be cured by a return to the past, any more than were the difficulties from which China suffered in the time of Lao-Tze, or France in the time of Rousseau.

Science as knowledge advanced very rapidly throughout the whole of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but it was not until near the end of the eighteenth century that it began to affect the technique of production. There was less change in methods of work from Ancient Egypt to 1750 than there has been from 1750 to the present day. Certain fundamental advances¹² had been slowly acquired: speech, fire, writing, agriculture, and domestication of animals, the working of metals, gun-powder, printing, and the art of governing a large empire from a centre, though this last could not attain anything like its present perfection before the invention of the telegraph and steam locomotion. Each of these advances, because it came slowly, was fitted in, without too much difficulty, to the framework of traditional life, and men were at no point conscious of a revolution in their daily habits. Almost all the things that an adult man wished to speak about had been familiar to him as a child, and to his father and grandfather before him: This had, undoubtedly, certain good effects which have become lost through the rapid technical progress of modern times. The poet could speak of contemporary life in words that had become rich through long usage and full of colour through the embedded emotions of past ages. Nowadays he must either ignore contemporary life, or fill his poems with words that are stark but difficult to speak over the telephone; it is possible to listen to Lydian airs,¹³ but not to the radio; it is possible to ride like the

wind upon a fiery steed, but difficult, in any known metre,¹⁴ to go much faster than the wind in an automobile. The poet may wish for wings to fly to his love, but feels rather foolish in doing so when he remembers that he could take an aeroplane.

The aesthetic effects of science have thus been on the whole unfortunate, not I think owing to any essential quality of science, but owing to the rapidly changing environment in which modern man lives. In other respects, however, the effects of science have been much more fortunate.

It is a curious fact that the doubts as to the ultimate metaphysical value of scientific knowledge have no bearing whatever upon its usefulness in relation to the technique of production. Scientific method is closely connected to the social virtue of impartiality. Piaget¹⁵ in his book on *Judgement and Reasoning in the Child*, contends that the reasoning faculty is a product of the social sense. Every child, he says, begins with a dream of omnipotence,¹⁶ in which all facts are bent to his wishes. Gradually, through contact with others, he is forced to the realization that their wishes may be opposed to his, and that his wishes are not invariable arbiters¹⁷ of truth. Reasoning, according to Piaget, develops as a method of arriving at a social truth upon which all men can agree. The condition is, I, think, largely valid, and emphasizes one great merit of the scientific method, namely, that it tends to avoid those intractable disputes¹⁸ which arise when private emotion is regarded as the test of truth. Piaget ignores another aspect of the scientific method, namely, that it gives power over the environment, and also power of adaptation to the environment. It may be, for example, an advantage to be able to predict the weather, and if one man is right on this point, while all his companions are wrong, the advantage nevertheless remains with him, though a purely social definition of truth would compel us to regard him as being in the wrong. It is success in this practical test of power over the environment, or adaptation to it, which has given science its prestige. The Chinese Emperors repeatedly refrained from persecuting the Jesuits¹⁹ because the latter were in the right as to the dates of eclipses²⁰ when the Chinese astronomers were in the wrong. All modern life is built upon this practical success of science, at any rate²¹ where the inanimate world is concerned. It has had hitherto less success in direct

applications to man, and it therefore still meets with opposition from traditional beliefs where man is concerned, but it cannot well be doubted that, if our civilization survives, man also will have a great effect upon education and the criminal law, perhaps also on family life. Such developments, however, belong to the future.

The essential novelty about the scientific technique is the utilization of natural forces in ways that are not obvious to untrained observation, but have been discovered by deliberate research. The use of steam, which was one of the earliest steps in modern technique, is on the borderline, since anybody can observe the force of steam in a kettle, as James Watt²² is traditionally supposed to have done. The use of electricity is far more definitely scientific. The use of water-power in old-fashioned water-mill is pre-scientific, because the whole mechanism is patent to the untrained observer; but the modern use of water-power by means of turbines²³ is scientific, since the process engendered is completely surprising to the person without scientific knowledge. Clearly the line between scientific and traditional technique is not a sharp one, and no one can say exactly where the one ends and the other begins. Primitive agriculturists used human bodies for manure, and imagined their beneficial effect to be magical. This stage was definitely pre-scientific. The use of natural manures, which succeeded it and has persisted down to our own day, is scientific if it is regulated, not if it proceeds by rule of thumb.²⁴ The use of artificial nitrates, since it employs chemical processes only found after long research by skilful chemists, is definitely and unambiguously scientific.

The most essential characteristic of scientific technique is that it proceeds from experiments, not from tradition. The experimental habit of mind is a difficult one for most people to maintain; indeed, the science of one generation has already become the tradition of the next, and there are still wide fields, notably that of religion, into which the experimental spirit has hardly penetrated at all. Nevertheless, it is this spirit which is characteristic of modern times as contrasted with all earlier ages, and it is because of this spirit that the power of man in relation to his environment has become, during the last hundred and fifty years, so immeasurably greater than it was in the civilization of the past.

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Glossary

1. **procuring:** obtaining with care or effort
2. **sacred fires were tended:** sacred fires were looked after, that is, kept lighted
3. **burst upon Western Asia:** appeared suddenly in Western Asia
4. **Sumerians:** the people who flourished in southern Mesopotamia during the 4th century BC
5. **Babylonia:** Mesopotamian empire of S.W. Asia, which succeeded the Sumerian civilization (4th millenium BC)
6. **Lao-Tze:** (c. 604 BC), eminent Chinese philosopher
7. **Confucius:** (551-479 BC), eminent Chinese philosopher
8. **Ruskin:** (1819-1900), well-known art and social critic who opposed industrialization
9. **high-brows:** intellectual snobs
10. **Rousseau:** (AD 1712-78), French philosopher and thinker whose writings are full of the romantic spirit, glorifying nature and in particular human nature
11. **'pure men of Id':** people governed by base impulses or bad motives
12. **fundamental advances:** basic advances
13. **Lydian airs:** sad songs; 'Lydia', an ancient Latin poem by an unknown author, is a lament by a lover for the loss of his mistress
14. **metre:** verse rhythm
15. **Piaget:** Jean Piaget (b. 1896), a Swiss psychologist, sometime Professor of General Psychology, Lausanne University, specializing in child psychology and education
16. **omnipotence:** infinite power
17. **arbiters:** judges
18. **intractable disputes:** debates or quarrels which cannot be settled
19. **Jesuits:** members of the Society of Jesus, an extreme Christian religious order
20. **eclipses:** total or partial cutting off of the light of the sun, when the moon is between it and the earth (a solar eclipse) or of the reflected light of the moon when the earth's shadow falls on it (lunar eclipse)

21. **at any rate:** in any case; whatever happens
22. **James Watt:** (1736–1819), Scottish inventor of the steam engine
23. **turbine:** engine or motors driven by water, steam, or air
24. **by rule of thumb:** by rules based on experience and practice

Comprehension Questions

1. Trace the various stages of the growth of the scientific technique.
2. What, according to Russell, are the dangers involved in the philosophy of 'Return to Nature'?
3. Why does Russell say that the aesthetic effects of science have been, on the whole, unfortunate? Do you agree with him?
4. What is the most essential characteristic of the scientific technique?



SECTION TWO



Poetry



6

In Time of 'The Breaking of Nations'¹

THOMAS HARDY



Thomas Hardy (1840–1928), novelist and poet, was born in Dorset. He started his literary career first as a poet and then turned to fiction which became a convenient matrix for all his ideas about the decadence of English social life. He wrote several novels, including *The Return of the Native*, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. Nonetheless, poetry was Hardy's first love and he wrote chiefly on English social life and on nature. Temperamentally pessimistic, Hardy poured out his unqualified pessimism and gave vent to his derision about the loss of values in life.

This poem, written during the First World War, is a caustic comment on the claustrophobia and insanity which gripped most of the nations engaged in it and made them belligerent. Hardy seems to point out the fact that the planned devastation wrought by the wars is only a temporary phenomenon and the essential business of life goes on as usual.

Only a man harrowing² clods³

In slow silent walk

With an old horse that stumbles and nods

Half asleep as they stalk.⁴

Only thin smoke without flame

From the heaps of couch-grass;⁵

Yet this will go onward the same

Though Dynasties pass.

Yonder a maid and her wight⁶

Came whispering by:

War's annals⁷ will cloud into night⁸

Ere⁹ their story die.

Glossary

1. **In Time of the Breaking of Nations:** in times of war between nations which causes destruction; the phrase is from the Bible (*Jeremiah* 52, 20), where God says: 'Thou art my battleaxe and weapons of war; for with thee will I break in pieces the nations, and with thee will I destroy kingdoms.'
2. **harrowing:** breaking up ground after ploughing with an instrument called a harrow (an iron frame with spikes drawn by a horse or tractor)
3. **clods:** lumps of earth
4. **stalk:** walk in a slow, stiff manner
5. **couch-grass:** useless coarse grass which is dug up and burnt
6. **wight:** man, person
7. **annals:** record of events, year by year
8. **will cloud into night:** will be forgotten
9. **ere:** before

Comprehension Questions

1. What are the things that Hardy regards as permanent in human life? Why?
2. Bring out the significance of the title of the poem.

3. Explain the following:

- (i) With an old horse that stumbles and nods
Half asleep as they stalk.
- (ii) Yet this will go onward the same
Though Dynasties pass.

Taking Leave of a Friend

EZRA POUND



Ezra Pound (1885–1972), an American poet and critic, started in the tradition of Browning, the pre-Raphaelites and the early Yeats, later discarding the 'Victorian mantle'. Pound was some twenty years ahead of his time in poetic terms and was aligned with various poetic causes such as Imagism. He shared much with T.E. Hume and Richard Aldington but soon was dissatisfied with the precision of the language and hard images. Though the Imagists produced some interesting poetry, he was averse to their extremities and agreed in principle with Baudelaire in France and Eliot in England that the remedy was 'rhyme and regular strophes'.

It was Pound who reformed 'our numbers', and many of the later professionals like Williams, Cummings, Hart Crane, Robinson Jeffers, Wallace Stevens, and Marianne Moore were immensely benefitted by Pound's technique of writing. The present poem articulates the feeling of loneliness and frustration at the parting of friends. The images are significant and afford one the pleasure of decoding them into meaningful responses.

Blue mountains to the north of the walls,
White river winding¹ about them;
Here we must make separation
And go out through a thousand miles of dead grass.

Mind like a floating wide cloud,
Sunset like the parting of old acquaintances²
Who bow over their clasped³ hands at a distance.
Our horses neigh to each other as we are departing.

Glossary

1. **winding:** going in a curving course
2. **acquaintances:** persons known to one
3. **clasped:** held tightly

Comprehension Questions

1. Who are the persons parting? When does the parting take place?
2. Identify the series of pictures which the poem offers.
3. Explain the following line:
'Mind like a floating wide cloud'.
4. How does the poet bring out the painful experience of the parting of friends?
5. Comment on the poet's use of imagery.

8

Sita

TORU DUTT



Toru Dutt (1856–1877), a Christian and a Romantic, was fascinated and moulded by the literatures of France and England. Her father Govind Datta was a linguist and a lover of literature who wrote poetry himself. Her celebrated volume of poems is *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan* (1882). Toru Dutt recreates the past in terms of the present by grafting on the ancient myths. Her best poems are poems on nature in which she evokes the splendour and the beauty of the phenomenal world in terms of vivid images.

In this poem, Toru Dutt conjures up the mythic past and tries to infuse into it the past glory. She retells the story of Sita in exile and what fascinates readers is her description of nature in which flowers, lakes, peacocks, and deer find a place. The narrator of the story is the mother who tells everything to her three curious children who gather around her to listen to Sita's story and the agonies of her exile.

Three happy children in a darkened room!
What do they gaze on with wide-open eyes?

A dense, dense forest where no sunbeam pries¹
And in its centre a cleared spot.—There bloom
Gigantic² flowers on creepers that embrace
Tall trees; there, in a quiet lucid³ lake
The white swans glide; there, 'whirring from the brake,'⁴
The peacock springs; there, herds of wild deer race;
There, patches gleam with yellow waving grain;
There, blue smoke from strange altars⁵ rises light.
There, dwells in peace, the post-anchorite.⁶
But who is this fair lady? Not in vain
She weeps,—for lo, at every tear she sheds
Tears from three pairs of young eyes⁷ fall amain,⁸
And bowed in sorrow are the three young heads.
It is an old, old story, and the lay⁹
Which has evoked¹⁰ sad Sita from the past
is by a mother sung... tis hushed at last
And melts the picture from their sight away,
Yet shall they dream of it until the day!
When shall those children by the mother's side
Gather, ah me! as erst¹¹ at eventide?¹²

Glossary

1. **pries:** looks into
2. **gigantic:** huge, giant-like
3. **lucid:** clear
4. **'whirring from the brake':** making the sound of wings moving quickly from an area full of thick bushes; the phrase is from Pope's 'Windsor Forest' (11.110–111) 'See! from the brake the whirring pheasant springs. And mounts exulting on triumphant wings.'
5. **altar:** raised place on which offerings are made to a god or goddess
6. **anchorite:** hermit; the 'poet-anchorite' is Valmiki, in whose ashram Sita lived during her exile
7. **three pairs of young eyes:** the three Dutt children, Toru, her sister Aru, and their brother, Abju

8. **amain:** quickly; an archaic word used for poetic effect but no longer used colloquially
9. **a lay:** a short narrative poem
10. **evoked:** called out; brought out
11. **as erst:** as before
12. **when ... eventide:** the last two lines of the poem are a poignant elegy on the early deaths of Abju and Aru

Comprehension Questions

1. What do the children gaze on 'in the darkened room'?
2. 'The fair lady does not weep in vain'. Why is it so?
3. Who is the fair lady? How does her situation affect the children?
4. What song does the mother sing? Describe its effect on the children.
5. Explain the significance of the last two lines of the poem.
6. Explain the following:
 'Whirring from the brake
 The peacock springs.'

9

Rickshaw-wallah

A.K. RAMANUJAN



A.K. Ramunujan (1929–1993) was a Professor of Linguistics and Dravidian Studies at the University of Chicago. His collections of verse includes *The Striders*, *Relations*, and *Second Sight*.

Ramanujan combines both the traditions of India and America, but his sensibility is purely Indian. He writes as a displaced Indian, but never over-stepping the ground-swell of Indian life. He is conscious of the Indian traditions and its customs, and often gives his poetry a genuine sense of reality. His images have a chiselled perfection and an ingrained quality of Indianness.

Ramanujan summons from the hinterland the buried moments of surprise and agony. The mutilated beggar, the drowned woman or rickshaw-wallah seem to have been brought from Dante's hell. In the present poem, he writes of the turmoils of a rickshaw-wallah, a beast of burden, steeped in poverty and misery. The images work up emotion in this spare yet moving and finely orchestrated poem.

His arms and legs are wholly literate!
 in green and in red,

the indelible²
 names of friends long-dead.
 His chest had the three names
 of one woman, and several incredible³
 forms, now gone in the teeth,⁴
 the bitches, their limbs—
 Loosely strung like linen-dolls,
 their breasts no longer the faces of lambs.
 But he, he would take all comers yet,
 especially the thin-stemmed⁵ witches.⁶
 The tattoo⁷ will stand, green, red,
 when all else is gone, he said.

Glossary

1. **literate:** here, readable
2. **indelible:** that which cannot be removed
3. **incredible:** unbelievable
4. **gone in the teeth:** toothless, hence old
5. **thin-stemmed:** narrow-waisted, slender
6. **witches:** women believed to have an evil magic power
7. **tattoo:** mark on skin with permanent designs or patterns made by pricking the skin and staining it with dyes

Comprehension Questions

1. What does the poet say about the forms tattooed on the rickshaw-wallah's body?
2. What does the rickshaw-wallah value most?
3. Explain the following;
 - (i) 'His arms and legs were wholly literate'
 - (ii) 'loosely strung like linen-dolls'
 - (iii) 'thin-stemmed witches'
4. Give five examples of the poet's use of metaphor.
5. Comment on the form of the poem.

