Indian Philosophical Quarterly, Vol. XI, No. 4, Oct. 1984

REMEMBERING THE PROFESSOR

SISIRKUMAR GHOSE

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

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

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

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

one's traditional cast of ideas and sentiments is superseded without comparison or competition by a new cast representing an alien culture which possesses one like a ghost.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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

II

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

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

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

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

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

Avoiding patchwork or the flimsy, the range and depth of his mature, musing mind is as remarkable as the simplicity of his language. He could think like a polymath but write with becoming naturalness. If it was now and then aphoristic, that was his way of thinking, of packed rather than packaged thought. Too intelligent to be popular, he had no pet dogma or facile formula of his own. Words like 'religion' and 'spirituality' are generally avoided. This in spite of the piety of his personal life. Even when he holds some things in esteem – not without reason, one can be sure, for instance, *svadharma* – he is chary of readymade, holier-than-thou postures. Neither cranky conservatism nor rootless cosmopolitanism was a model for his exploring mind. The thinker has to see every side of the question. As he saw it, the only cure for cultural conflict

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

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

Viswa Bharati,
Santiniketan.

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Comments and Communication :

A. K. SARAN

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

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

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Comments and Communication :

INSTEAD OF AN ARTICLE

(A juxtaposition of KCB and MKG)

S. S. DESHPANDE

1 A

MKG :

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

Hind Svaraj, pp. 38-40.

1 B

KCB :

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

Svaraj in Ideas, para 3.

2 A

KCB :

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

Svaraj in Ideas, para 1.

2 B

MKG :

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

Hind Svaraj, p. 49.

KCB:

3 A

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

Svaraj in Ideas, para 2.

MKG:

3 B

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

Hind Svaraj, p. 88.

MKG:

4 A

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

Hind Svaraj, p. 30.

KCB:

4 B

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

Svaraj in Ideas, para 1.

Hind Svaraj and *Svaraj in Ideas* demand a much fuller study even in juxtaposition than what the above quotations pretend to be; I reproduce them only to whet the readers' appetite. I hope soon to put together the results of a detailed study of *HS* on the theme of Svaraj in Ideas and of *Svaraj in Ideas* on the theme of Indian Independence. But even the quotations reproduced above are sufficient proof of the catholicity of

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

KCB :

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

Svaraj in Ideas, para 10.

MKG :

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

Young India, 26.6.24

Department of Philosophy,
Poona University.

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Comments and Communication :

SVARAJ IN IDEAS OF GOD, MAN AND NATURE

J. P. S. UBEROI

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

After his return from South Africa, Gandhiji reopened the whole question of svaraj and culture, and recast the framework of the Anglicist versus Orientalist debate, arguing for vernacular education. He said in Calcutta that, in this ancient land of thinkers, the presence of a Tagore or a Bose or a Ray ought not to excite wonder : "the painful fact is that there are so few of them" (1917). In the same year, he had addressed the Gujarat educational conference and diagnosed the illness as owing to the dissociation of the elite and the masses, and to the dualism of the school and the home : "we are unable to

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Comments and Communication :

SUNIL SAHASRABUDDHE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Comments and Communication :

THE AGONY AND ECSTASY OF SVARAJ

K. RAGHAVENDRA RAO

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

I

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

II

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

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

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

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Comments and Communication :

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

True, we may abandon wide-eyed external imitation. Since we have a heritage, even after assimilating foreign elements we can never become their duplicates. But if the new questions we face in the business of life has foreign answers, we must

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

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

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

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Comments and Communication :

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Comments and Communication :

MOHINI MULLICK

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

And he is surely right....

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Comments and Communication :

ROOP REKHA VERMA

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Comments and Communication :

THE IDEA OF SVARAJ

ASHOK R. KELKAR

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Comments and Communication :

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

I

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

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

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

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

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

II

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Comments and Communication :

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

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

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

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

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

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Comments and Communication :

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Comments and Communication :

ROMESH THAPAR

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Comments and Communication

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When we look back upon Krishna Chandra Bhattacharya's address "Svaraj in Ideas" delivered almost 60 years back from where we are now, perhaps the first feeling that one is likely to have is one of humiliation and a sense of powerless despondency for the fundamentals of his diagnosis hold true even today, perhaps with an even greater point and urgency. His words of warning and admonition still ring true and we can and have to recognise our own portrait in his depiction of the soulless, imitative galvanic mind, which is powerless in action and unserious in thought. Perhaps on the surface, a few things may appear to have changed; for instance, today, we may have to qualify somewhat differently the dangers of national conceit and unthinking glorification of everything in our culture. In the time and context of his address, this required less stressing; the danger then was the opposite tendency – the contempt for our own forms of thought, perception and action. But today, we also have to reckon with this spurious Svaraj in many quarters. But this does not in the least mean that the danger he was talking about has vanished. On the contrary, both are different symptoms of the same spiritual malaise, for in its own way, this spurious pride and conceit, this parading of our 'Indianness' is, more often than not, a reactive symptom of our insecurity.

But it is not merely in his account of the fundamental structure of our intellectual life that the address speaks to us across a gulf of half a century. Perhaps the most important thing that the address can still teach us is the principle of spiritual growth and spiritual decay. There are, it seems to me, two striking manifestations of our decadence, which Bhatacharya has reminded us of – the first may not appear as serious and deplorable as the second, but in its own way, it is equally

capable of humbling our intellectual pride and pretensions. Also perhaps, as I shall soon try to suggest, the two are connected, and are hence different manifestations or symptoms of the same root failure. The first is the sterility and superficiality of our intellectual and moral grasp of Western cultural forms. In spite of the enormous fascination which it has had for us, in spite of the love and labour, time and talent that we have given to it, our lack of comprehension of Western thought and culture, as distinguished from merely a technical familiarity with it, is truly striking. As Bhattacharya tells us, we are yet to produce what we may call our own distinctive appreciation or judgement on its social, political, moral or philosophical forms. Our response to the West continues to be a distant and lifeless echo of the West's judgement of itself. I feel this is important not merely as an indicator of the weakness of our critical sensibilities, but it is important insofar as it is a clue to the root cause of our situation. In other words, I am suggesting that the brittleness and imitative nature of our understanding of the West is partly because we have not grasped its ideas, principles and values in terms of its own foundational classical formulations; we have been so to say overwhelmed by the details, by the exuberance of its manifestations and have missed the classical sources of its vision. We have not attempted to grasp these classical foundational formulations and hence have failed to understand its own specific formative forces. The result has been not merely a superficiality of understanding, but more threateningly, the overwhelming of our critical sensibilities by the details of its surface. Lacking this awareness of its own cultural foundations, we, paradoxically, are at the mercy of its present current self-definitions and self-presentations. I am not suggesting that we should or could study the classical foundations of the West in the manner of a Western culture historian. I am not suggesting an Indian equivalent to Platonic, or Aristotelian or Kantian scholarship. Such a programme would be as silly as it is impracticable, but what am thinking of is the cultivation of a distinctive approach of our own to the classical forms of Western thought and cultural perception. I think that not only in physical but also in spiritual vision, there is such a thing as

missing the forest for the trees. In the absence of this perspective on the root principles of the West, we are at the mercy of every changing current formulation of itself; and we sometimes deceive ourselves by the consolatory thought that we are uptodate.

I would like to argue that a re-orientation of our intellectual concern and preoccupation with the foundational classics of the West may be helpful in a number of ways in our search for the principle of Svaraj in ideas. For one thing, we would thereby be relieved of the futile and nightmarish obsession with each and every turn and twist in the contemporary scene. I am not suggesting that the contemporary period has not produced truly original and creative ideas and principles. But what I am having in mind is something very different – a certain helplessness brought about by being overwhelmed by epigoni, of being tossed about from one new turn of phrase or thought to the other. It is this intellectual floundering that disorganises our thinking and thereby reproduces our dependency. Even if it does nothing else, a turn to the classics can lighten the useless burden that we now carry in every nook and cranny of our minds; a load will be lifted and our perceptions sharpened for the mark of a classic is that it reveals the fundamental principles and presuppositions of a certain perspective. An encounter with a classic is therefore a formation of our own perceptions whereas at present, it is precisely by hiding the basic presuppositions, the moving principles, that we are held captive. But an encounter with the classic formulations can also open our critical sensibilities in yet another manner. A foundational text like Aristotle's Poetics or Kant's Critique of Judgement or Marx's Economic-Philosophic Manuscripts can reveal the unfinished character, the problematic and contestable nature of the Western intellectual experiment. They reveal the basic, foundational problems and the tensions inherent in their own solutions. If we could but respond to it, there is a confessional quality about a classic; it does not pretend to have settled the issue once and for all. Hence an awareness of the classics of the West can give us a more human measure and compass in our judgement, whereas it is precisely this tentativeness and contestability that is sup-

pressed in the contemporary lilterture, particularly in philosophy (see, for example, the sense of assurance about classic issues in almost every article of Mind; see again the air of finality which almost every page of Ryle's *The Concept of Mind* exudes).

I am suggesting that in our search for Svaraj in Ideas, a certain distinctive orientation to the classics of the West may help us in a not inconsiderable manner; but of course, this alliance must be, to use political terms, on our own conditions. This is what I was having in my mind when I was speaking of a distinctive orientation to the Western classics. But what could we say further about this orientation? It is easier to see what it is not; for one thing, as I have already said, it is not what may be called the orientation of scholarship. Only too often, we have tried this and always to our discomfiture. It would be, for one thing, too demanding in terms of our time, talent and sensibilities, to hope to equip ourselves in all the refinements and sophistication of culture-historical scholarship. Even the contemporary West is realising that in this kind of classical scholarship, there is a point of diminishing returns. For us, understandably, this threshold of larger gain may be expected to be considerably lower. Very early in such investigations, the costs of such exacting scholarship are bound to grow larger and even larger than its returns. There is also another danger involved in such a direction, for once we engage in the pursuit, we are drawn, whether we like it or not, into a certain unrewarding competition with Western scholarship. I am not suggesting that the Indian intellectual as a type cannot have a chance in this kind of competition. I am not making a point about the limits of individual talent and dedication, but rather I am suggesting the cultural function of such intellectual styles. Scholarship of this type has a tendency to prove more beneficial to the West than to us. In matters of the mind and spirit also, there may be such a thing as development or underdevelopment. This kind of pursuit is likely to accentuate our dependency and that too, paradoxically, because of its very success and excellence.

But Bhattacharya is speaking of another form of competition which may strengthen us. I am suggesting that it may be pos-

sible for us to use the classics of the West precisely in the service of such a competition. But the chance of finding such an ally is conditional upon a certain re-orientation of our thought in the direction of our own situation and its demands, intellectual and moral. This re-direction of our thinking may well amount to a Copernican turn, for what is involved herein is that instead of adapting our frames of thought and perception to the forms of Western cultural experience, we must adapt them to our frames; it is this turn about that can, at the level of our thought, overcome the determinism of the present intellectual situation and in its place make possible an autonomy of our own. It may also be remembered that the Copernican turn is also the source of a certain universality and necessity precisely by way of this turn to the subject. Used as a metaphor, I would suggest that the figure of the Copernican turn captures certain elements of the movement towards svaraj in ideas; like it, this movement also may appear to be subjectivistic and particularistic; it may be felt that we are giving up on the universality of reason, by thus turning back upon ourselves. It is this fear of a seeming loss of universality that perhaps still holds us in check, for we would like to persuade ourselves that intellectual autonomy demands a freedom from our own cultural presuppositions. The universality of reason appears possible only by an overcoming of our own situations; it appears that reason demands the dissolution of all prejudice. But it is well to remember that there may be a sense of prejudice, which is not inimical to autonomy, but precisely the ground on which such autonomy may hope to stand. These are not prejudices in the sense of shackles to be freed from, but they provide a cultural-spiritual medium in which alone thought can truly function. Once we grant that autonomy requires a certain spiritual atmosphere, as it were, as a condition of its own possibility, then it is easier for us to grasp why the movement towards svaraj in ideas demands, as a necessary condition, a turn towards our own spiritual and intellectual past for this environing medium is the sedimentation of our own cultural history; it is the formations crystallized out of what we have done and not done, of what we have thought and not thought, of what we have said and left unsaid, and of

what we have felt and not felt. I am suggesting that we must be responsive and responsible to the voices as well as the silences of the past. Responsiveness and responsibility to our intellectual past, perhaps best sums up the programme of svaraj in ideas. But both responsibility and responsiveness have to be guided by a recognition of the past. Too often, we are likely to pass over the issue of recognition in a native manner, as if it is a simple matter of historical scholarship, or we might think that such cultural recognition may be achieved by 'going to the people". I have already said something about the limits of the scholarly orientation. But the other hope of a "populist" orientation has to be still reckoned with. The chance of a true recognition of our cultural essence in the practices of current social life is based upon a noble sentiment which Bhattacharya also respects. Surely as a propaedeutic clearing away of a certain cultural superiority and bias, as a step towards svaraj in ideas, this hermeneutic discipline of trust may help. But it cannot, it seems to me, give us the substance of svaraj. Here again a certain orientation to our classical texts may be an invaluable source of re-direction of our thought and perception, for as we have already seen, a classic requires a proper mode of appropriation. In the case of our own classics, this mode of appropriation requires two hermeneutic disciplines – one which we have to carry out and one which has been carried out for us. On our part, we may have to decontextualize the basic form of the vision of life embedded in the foundational classics of a culture. A cultural text, for the purposes of our present analysis, may be regarded as a situated representation from within a specific situation, of the invariants of a properly ordered life. As such, it moves at two levels – the level of contextualized culture (the realm of signification) and it also has in it the potentiality of representing the essences (the realm of symbolization). A text is thus a dual structure of both signification and symbolization. The symbolic level transcends the signific and thus in the form of texts, a situated history transcends its own situationality. But there is another mode of transcendence also possible at the level of what may be called exemplary or epochal acts. Thus transcendence of situationality may be accessible at the level of exemplars of

meaning as well as exemplars of action (I owe the realisation of the theoretical importance of the notion to personal discussions with Pof. K. J. Shah). Only when we grasp the process of exemplary transcendence can we be in sight of genuine universality, and only this is the validation of our svaraj in ideas.

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Comments and Communication

MRINAL & SUJATA MIRI

We have read and re-read the lecture and discussed it with friends and colleagues. Every time we read it we are struck afresh by the power of its insight and the utter clarity with which the insight finds expression in the lecture. We cannot imagine a better academic articulation of the dissatisfaction that most of us have undoubtedly felt about the general tenor of intellectual life in our country. Recently, the lecture was the subject of a seminar discussion in this University. We were fortunate to have, among the participants, philosophers from some other universities as well : The discussion in the seminar was somewhat of a surprise to us. The lecture was criticised by some on grounds which we did not think were there at all; and the rather dogged persistence of such criticism was a little disturbing. On reflection, we took this to be only a further confirmation of the truth of the things that Bhattacharya says in the lecture. But we are aware that this might not be the whole story; we would, therefore, like to communicate to you some of the points of criticism raised in the seminar, along with our reactions to them. Our hope is that someone will perhaps take these points up and show to us that they have more substance than we were able to discover.

(1) It was alleged that the cultural and intellectual tradition that Bhattacharya is talking about is really only the brahmanial tradition; that he completely ignores the other traditions; and that, in any case, it is a mistake to talk about *one* Indian tradition.

Our response : The only evidence that can possibly be cited in support of the allegation is that Bhattacharya himself was a Brahmin. While the fact that one belongs to a particular caste may explain many things about one, in this particular case, to cite such a fact in support of the criticism made would

only demonstrate our inability to overcome certain quite mechanical and frequently harmful habits of thinking. In the lecture, the brahminical tradition is not mentioned even once whether directly or indirectly. There is certainly a reference to the life of the spirit. But surely the idea of the spiritual life is not the exclusive possession of the brahminical and non-brahmanical "traditions" of our country are mutually independent and autonomous streams? Is it rather not the case that the different "traditions" stand in such close organic and vital relationship to one another, that they are much more accurately described as the manifestations of one and the same tradition? And is it not a proof of this latter, that the tradition has frequently produced persons who, in their life and thought, embody the life-enhancing, creative unity of the different streams? Mahatma Gandhi is perhaps the latest in the chain of such persons.

(2) Another criticism, of perhaps a little more substance, was that Bhattacharya is arguing for a position of cultural relativism which has quite absurd logical consequences. It is this, it was further claimed, that is responsible for several contradictions in the statement of Bhattacharya's thesis. One of these contradictions was thought to be as follows: On the one hand, Bhattacharya claims that ideas of one culture cannot be translated into ideas of another culture; but, on the other hand, he also makes a plea for "a genuine translation of foreign ideas into our native ideas before we accept or reject them".

Our response: A thorough-going cultural relativism is very possibly a logically untenable position. But Bhattacharya's position in the lecture is quite the opposite of cultural relativism. Or else, it will be impossible to make sense of his insistence that assimilation of alien ideas is not only possible but frequently desirable; that one could, in principle, recognize in a foreign ideal one's own ideal.

About "translatability", Bhattacharya has the following to say: "No *idea* of one cultural language can *exactly* be translated in another cultural language. Every culture has its distinctive 'physiognomy' which is reflected in each vital idea and

ideal presented by the culture" (italics ours). Impossibility of *exact* translation is surely not the same as impossibility of *translation* as such. Also, it is significant that Bhattacharya talks of the "ideas" of a cultural language and not just of language: an idea is vastly more complex than a particular word that might happen to signify it. Ideas (and ideals) of a particular culture may stand in a profoundly unique inter-relationship to one another which makes up what Bhattacharya calls the "physiognomy" of that culture. It is in the light of this that one must understand the meaning of the following remark of Bhattacharya's ".... all concepts and ideas have the distinctive character of the particular culture to which they belong. What should be our reaction to such cultural ideas? They have to be accepted, but as metaphors and symbols to be translated into our own indigenous concepts. The ideas embodied in a foreign language are properly understood only when we can express them in our own way".

(3) Yet another point made was that in Philosophy there is neither east nor west; there is only good philosophy or bad philosophy.

Our response: It is amazing that in spite of the great variety of philosophical styles and idioms that are familiar to all of us, we do not recognize the degree of culture-specificity of a particular philosophical tradition. But perhaps, what is meant by the critic is not that there may not be different traditions of philosophy – but rather that there are universal procedures for assessing a philosophical position of any tradition. There is, undoubtedly, some truth in this; but it has only a limited application. What is meant by "universal procedure" here, presumably, are the logical methods of assessing and evaluating philosophical arguments. But, once again think of the different "logics" evolved in different philosophical traditions. Even if there were a universal logical procedure, philosophical arguments are notorious for their almost unlimited potentiality for increasing sophistication and refinement. So, as far as arguments are concerned, in most cases, there cannot be a final judgement. The more important philosophical task – specially when one is trying to understand an alien tradition –

is, however, to try and understand (i) why it is that certain concerns acquire a primary importance in a particular tradition; (ii) how it is that different philosophical methods are preferred in different philosophical traditions; and (iii) why it is that certain things which are never questioned in a particular tradition are vigorously questioned in another. One, of course, must also ask these questions of one's own tradition. But the point we are making is that it is equally if not more important to ask them of an alien tradition. And these are philosophical questions, not simply questions about causal determination. What we have said, we take to be at least part of the meaning of the following passage in the lecture: "We have to distinguish between two forms of rationalism ... In the one, reason is born after the travail of the spirit: rationalism is here the efflux of reverence, reverence for the traditional institutions through which customary sentiments are deepened into transparent ideals. In the other form of rationalism — what is commonly meant by the name, the simplification and generalization of ideals is effected by unregenerate understanding with its mechanical separation of the essential from the unessential".

There were other points raised as well. But we did not think they deserved much philosophical attention. About themes for possible seminars or workshops we would like, briefly, to suggest the following:

(i) Writing of the history of Indian philosophy with stress on the availability of traditional ideas for our contemporary concerns.

(ii) Writing of the history of Western philosophy from the point of view of the Indian tradition (this is an idea suggested to us by Professor B. Pahi).

(iii) Probllems of understanding the philosophies and cultures of tribal India.

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Comments and Communication

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As to the significance and relevance of the subject chosen, and my reaction to Krishna Chandra Bhattacharya's lecture, I too am immediately reminded of Mahatma Gandhi's pioneering 'Hind Svaraj' (1909) – a politically oriented philosophy of Indian independence. If in the mist of today's confused philosophical scene in India we ask whether at any time before independence there was a parallel attempt to develop revolutionary thinking in the field of Indian Philosophy, we must recognise as classical and deeply perceptive K. C. Bhattacharya's little known lecture. At that time, such a formulation of the subject, as we find in his lecture, must have sounded quite 'revolutionary' to his audience. But today there is hardly any need, I believe, to show excitement over it. The imperative need of our time is to understand the essential content/ message of his lecture: "Thought or reason may be universal, but ideas are carved out of it differently by different cultures according to their respective genius. No idea of one cultural language can exactly be translated in another cultural language. Every culture has its distinctive 'physiognomy' which is reflected in each vital idea and ideal presented by the culture".

What, then, does 'Svaraj in Ideas' signify for us today? I think it signifies a reassertion of that unique individuality of our Indian culture which has its own inner dynamics to evolve – even if it may be lying dormant at present – and to survive all distortions whatever; and which is, like any other culture, deeply informed by an all-pervasive universalism, to borrow a word from K. C. Bhattacharya. The true starting point of Indian Philosophy today is then to recognise this fact and to engage in a recurrent process of self-discovery, i.e. a process of re-discovery of problems and principles lying deeply buried in the past cultural heritage of India. And this certainly en-

tails a re-orientation of our educational system as a whole, i.e. the development of a whole new philosophy of education in India as a first step.

Only when we are able geninely to assert our collective individuality as a cultural community can we meaningfully interact with other such communities with individualities of their own, and in the process learn more and more from them, not by a simple and dull process of comparison but by a healthier process of negative feedback, as it were. I believe that Indian philosophers today owe it to themselves to elucidate the fundamental presupposition of cultural pluralism together with the common background principle of universalism. This educidation can be partially achieved provided we are able to attend to the most urgent problem of showing how unique the individuality of Indian culture is, or has been over a period of time; and how strongly or weakly it can interact with other cultures.

I believe that no culture can afford to remain static if it is to survive as one culture among many cultures. On the contrary, every culture has to be creative so as to evolve in terms of a dynamics of its own. Indian philosophers today must, therefore, ask themselves: Does the Indian philosophical scene today show any sign of creativity at work at all? Is the philosophizing done here strong enough to enter into a serious dialogue — not just comparison — with philosophizing being done elsewhere in the world? Are the standards of appraisal, if any, followed in ancient Indian philosophical systems adequate and could these be further enriched in ways demanded by the philosophical problem situations themselves?

Without suggesting here an answer to the questions raised above, it is these, I think, which could be debated at a future National Seminar on 'Svaraj in Ideas'. Thus among the issues which could be debated at such a seminar are those which relate to creativity and rationality in philosophy, problems of intellectual slavery, cultural pluralism, and standards of appraisal that could be followed in Indian philosophy today.

Above all, I suggest that a future national seminar could quite fruitfully devote considerable time to debating the various

aspects of 'Svaraj in Ideas' as are brought out or sought to be brought out in K. C. Bhattacharya's own brilliant contribution on the subject, if only as a first step towards the institution of annual K. C. B. lectures on themes of ever-increasing relevance to our society.

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Comments and Communication

ARINDAM CHAKRABARTY

(I) Written a little over half a century ago, Svaraj in Ideas could be expected to have lost at least some of its relevance, plausibility, or at least empirical validity. Apart from one or two context-bound contingent statements like :—

> That is inevitable where the education of a people is controlled by foreign rulers (Paragraph 23).

— these twenty-six scintillating paragraphs have not only retained their relevance but, to my mind, they deserve a sharper focus now than at the time they were written. Take the statement just quoted. The fact that there was then an overall political control by the British could explain some of the inherent un-Indianness of our education. But what about now? The contrast between political subjection and the more insidious cultural subjection with which the essay opens ought to be more clearly perceived (but for the essential imperceptibility of cultural subjection) now that the former is absent and the latter very much there, as K.C.B. puts it — like a growing spectral presence, in our cultivated chat, dress, diet, arts, literature, social institutions — and most dangerously in our morals (or in our lack of them).

(II) Some of the points which might however be considered vulnerable (especially by those among us whose cognitive de-Indianisation has exactly followed the pattern predicted by K.C.B.) are the following :

(a)The essay abounds with calls like :

"Let us resolutely think in our own concepts". Is it logically or historically correct to identify a certain set of cultural, ethical, and spiritual ideas and ideals as India's own? What are the criteria for recognising a given life-pattern L as the

Sva-dharma of a people P ? Number of years L has been practised by most (numerically largest or status-wise important section) of the members of P ? Whether L originated in the geographical limits of the habitation of P ? (K.C.B. does talk about the ideals of the soil.) Aren't these criteria controversial and at the same time difficult to apply to the case of India ? Concurrence upon some radically ahistorical metaphysical criteria of "own"-ness of culture may prove impossible. (I personally think some of these questions are spurious but they are fashionablle all right).

(b) Obscure but deceptively appealing notions like 'our native genius' or 'the inwardness of our social ideals' pervade the essay. Even if they can be clearly spelt out, do they apply to present-day Indian society ? Many have despaired of finding a uniform 'Indianness' in any concrete terms either across times or across regions of this vast variegated country.

(c) In the crucial paragraph 20, K.C.B. goes his usual oracular way in pronouncing that axiological judgements (unlike theoretical) cannot be passed by detached reason from a zero point of view, but that a new ideal must (a moral *and* a logical "must") be judged from the point of view of the old actual ideal. It is not clear whether he wants to deny the objectivity (he comes very near to denying the universality) of values when says : "The way to know facts is not the way to know values". These are troubled questions.

It is difficult for me to raise fruitful doubts about K.C.B'sz argument and conclusions because I agree so completely with them. But it is necessary to consult people from disciplines like Sociology, Politics and History (especially Marxist historians whose well-known antagonism to the idea of 'national individuality' qualifies them as the fittest Pūrva-Pakṣa of K.C.B.) and test the validity of these views, which, if correct, have most urgent consequences for the way in which each of us should live and think.

(III) Finally, I shall list the philosophically interesting questions surrounding which further discussion on Svaraj in Ideas can be conducted :—

(a) How does K.C.B. formulate and deploy the key distinctions between

(i) assimilation and acceptance,

(ii) cultural and political domination,

(iii) synthesis and patchwork of ideals,

(iv) spiritual compromise and secular adjustments,

(v) Confusion and conflict ?

(b) Is Svaraj in ideas necessarily a re-birth ? i.e. always preceded by a state of Slavery ? (something to be attained like Mokṣa ?)

(c) Western ideas might have been 'alien' to those in whose family life and religious practices the traditional Indian cast still persisted. The new generation of the educated Indian middle class tend to lead even a daily life deeply influenced by Western standards. Need they perceive Western culture as "foreign" ?

(d) What is the essential connection between Slavery and lack of creativity ?

(e) With what justification does K.C.B. talk about a mutual untranslatability of cultural languages (if he does) ?

(f) Why cannot culture be universal like thought or reason ?

(g) Is Respect without acceptance possible ? Can we, for example, be respectfully tolerant towards those religious ideas which are essentially intolerant ? (More abstractly : Is it consistent with the principle of tolerance to tolerate a view which preaches intolerance ?)

(h) Is not K.C.B. adumbrating a broadly anti-Kantian view when he argues that ethical principles should not and cannot be universal (across communities) ?

(i) How does K.C.B. diagnose our unquestioning submission to alien cultural subjugation in terms of the 'old immemorial habit of regarding what we are taught as sacred learning' (paragraph 22) ? Is there a hint of a self-refuting

paradox here? To be Indian again we have to question our slavishly accepted present standards – which we have gulped because it is typically Indian not to question.

(j) K.C.B. does allow some place to the ideas of synthesis and universalisation. Carefully demonstrate how he makes that compatible with the leading idea of retaining national individuality in our cultural sphere.

(k) Can we agree with K.C.B's classification of disciplines into those (like Mathematics) which need not show any national flavour and those which should distinctively imbibe the 'own' flavour of the people developing it? Are there completely value-free disciplines? What about borderline cases like Economics with its value-loaded welfare-economics part?

Though K.C.B. did not write this paper in his characteristic philosophical style, he could not help packing his paragraphs with new ideas and close-knit arguments. An exposition and critical revaluation cannot, I presume, ignore the points I have indicated though others surely remain which are also important.

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Comments and Communication

S. K. SAXENA

The distinction drawn by K.C.B. in para 18 between 'two forms of rationalism' fascinates me. But the whole lecture is admirable because of the spirit it breathes. I say so not merely because I am an Indian, but because what it says is, in my view unchallengeable. It deserves to be made compulsory reading for us all.

I admire also the spirit that motivates you and your colleagues in your venture. Is it not outrageous that whereas Hume's 'refutation' of self is taught, often as gospel truth, to our students invariably, hardly a mention is made in our classrooms of Sri Ramana Maharshi's living realization of Self as the basic reality? I have for long quietly rebelled against the ease with which we get swayed by every passing turn in Western philosophy; and it is as much because of this as out of the sense of my own limited ability, that I have chosen to confine myself to the study of our own arts and religious experiences. Today, when even our exclamations tend to smack of the West, it is a good safety-measure to work on subjects that are in some way distinct and irreducible.

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Comments and Communication

SRI CHANDRA

..... there are four things which should be kept in mind. (1) We should not accept ideas and culture simply on the ground that they are foreign and novel to us. (2) We should not reject ideas and cultural elements simply on the ground that they are foreign. (3) We should not accept ideas and culture simply on the ground that they evolved in our own country. (4) We should not reject ideas and culture simply on the ground that they evolved in our own country. Three of these things Bhattacharya does not explicitly mention. But all the four are important. Different ideas and cultures can be rationally compared. Bhattacharya says that natural sciences and mathematics have no nationality and imply no valuation. Because of this reason they are universal. But different values enshrined in different cultures can also be rationally compared. This is made possible by the fact that there are some basic values which can be found in all cultures primitive and advanced. Those values can form the basis of rational comparison and scrutiny. Besides these values, every culture involves many questions of fact, which may be decided scientifically. All ancient cultures have a load of superstition that can be cleared scientifically.

Bhattacharya objects to cultural patchwork, namely uncritical mixing of foreign ideas and cultural elements with native ideas and culture. But he is not opposed to a proper synthesis of foreign ideas with native ideas. But he seems to be laying down two conditions for this synthesis. Firstly, he says that the synthesis should not be done by an external and superficial understanding of cultures. The synthesis should be the result of spiritual searchings of a soul. Secondly, he seems to be saying that we should accept only those foreign ideas and cultural elements which express, in a different garb, our

own ideas and values. The second condition seems to be unnecessary. Of course, as some basic values are to be found in all cultures, some of the values to be found in foreign cultures will have their counterparts in our own culture. But perfectly new ideas,, which have no counterparts in our cullture, should not be uncritically rejected simply on the ground of their novelty.

While talking of universalism Bhattacharya distinguishes between two kinds of universalism. He does not seem to be opposed to all forms of universalism. There are two factors from which universalism derives strength. Firstly, some basic values are to be found in all cultures. Secondly, different countries of the world are being progressively interlinked economically and politically. Economic life influences culture. And sameness of economic life to some extent creates sameness of culture. This universalism implies critical scrutiny of all cultures.

While discussing cultural synthesis Bhattacharya says that elements of a foreign culture are to be assimilated to our culture and not our culture to a foreign culture. This gives primacy to our culture. Our culture is to be the basis of synthesis. But some cultures may be spurious, and may have to be rejected basically. Perhaps Bhattacharya was not thinking generally of all cultures, but only of Indian culture and the culture of the West. There are valuable elements in Indian culture which are to be retained in all synthesis.

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Comments and Communication

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KCB's lecture has many points of caution and of direction. Some are generally applicable to circumstances of cultural contact and conversion by domination, political and cultural. They are relevant universally. Some are specially applicable to Indian conditions, for the nature of those conditions prevailing during British domination made him respond the way he did in his talk. Being a great lover of India's culture and spirit, he did not want any harm to be done to their sanctity and individuality; hence his scholarly analysis of the problem.

A doubt, however, occurs here, standing as we are at the end of the century. How much of his talk could be relevant to our times? If in the present circumstance when India is free politically and has built up its own image in the comity of nations and in an inter-cultural context, should one adopt such strict cautions guarding against foregn influence? Should not one receive light or ideas from wherever they may come, especially in the global context when concepts of culture and philosophy and of values have changed? That is, when we are exposed to methodologies philosophical and scientific (such as phenomenological, anthropological, sociological, and humanistic on one hand and technology on the other), which have opened new vistas of mind behind one's religion, philosophy and culture, socio-economic ideas, and political relations, can any country isolate itself by a rigid attachment to a native mode of life and thinking, and yet look forward to progress in all fields? In the global context no country can afford to be 'backward' civilisationally and culturally.

Culturally, exposure to global influences does not mean losing one's freedom of the spirit or of ideas. Culture finds new ways of development with contacts, and for an enrichment of one's culture what KCB suggests as a 'synthesis' may not itself be sufficient. Perhaps, one needs a new perspective and a reorien-

tation which may not be just a 'synthesis' but a 'flight' into the new, a more dynamic state of being registering a greater freedom of the spirit. This does not mean an 'irreverence' to one's time-tested tradition but a glimpsing of a hitherto undiscovered dimension or meaning of human relations and spiritual actualisations. For example, what should be the character of human ideas affecting a culture with civilisational progress in a 'space-age' where the global – not to think of any local – boundary has completely disappeared?

Jumping beyond the global limit into a boundless 'space' could become the proper 'symbol' for an 'invitation to infinite living' – an expansion of the spirit, as always being advocated by Indian culture and philosophy.

Perhaps gates are now more open for an expansion of the Indian spirit of cosmic unity, harmony and universal peace – and the destiny of mankind being weighed against an expanded consciousness more for survival than for destruction. The demand for a qualitative life and thinking is pressing more now than ever. Though civilisation has brought us to the end of our tether, a revolution of ideas in the direction of human welfare has become more urgent.

Under the circumstances comparative study is a must, interpersonal relationship is a must; and the world is pushed towards it by the modern development of science and technology both of which have shrunk the size of the world to that of a mustard seed.

Advanced civilisation has given an unexpected turn, but a good one, to human consciousness, and it is time for 'culture' to take over the reins of human destiny from the hands of 'civilisation'. And though spiritual development is not to be linked with civilisation or history, yet the unrolling of time may raise a new dimension of spirit and expand the parameters of its relationship, for which India has always stood. Perhaps KCB would have happily nodded his head now at this turn of history and ideas, even as his 'anguish' would have subsided with the coming of political freedom to India (entirely due to the spiritual vision and craftsmanship of Gandhiji) and of the unrolling of time.

It is no bad comment to say that KCB, when he spoke of 'Svaraj in Ideas', was moved more by an idealism that was demanded of him at the time, when the warning he gave was necessary to see that no sabotage of Indian culture was done by the ruling masters. One wonders if what he said in 1929 he would have repeated at present !

2. With regard to the contemporary development of Indian philosophy with an accent on materialism and communism — as is being increasingly evident in recent writings — KCB's analysis of the impasse of foreign cultures in affecting adversely the spirit of native culture, has been correct. He has hit the nail on the head. With all demonstrations to the contrary, the Indian cultural emphasis has been distinctly spiritual and has a vision (beyond the soul-killing tendency of materialism) in tune not simply with a transcendent reality (which the materialistic doubt) but even with a trans-personal, inter-subjective relationship. This assures, in good faith, a transvaluation of the individual (not as a means but as an end) warning him to act not on the basis of immediate anguish or a sense of forlornness but on a far-fetched idealism of the divinity of man and his capacity to rise above cruelty and wickedness in human relations.

If we are to abide by KCB's warning, such orientations, natural to the Indian spirit, are of greater help in the present age of inter-cultural relations and hamony. For, the direction of one's thinking is forcibly turned towards it, even against odds mankind is facing. International institutions and global welfare organisations are examples of this new direction of human development. A cue from KCB's lecture-tract will go a long way in shaping Indian philosophical inquiry, not leaving the cultural base of the Indian traditional spirit yet obtaining a newer and fresher appeal to the prospect of human betterment, even as Gandhiji had hoped and meditated upon constantly, whose spiritualisation of politics and economics are instances in point.

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EDITORIAL POSTSCRIPT

We would have liked to incorporate in this volume a factor of self-consciousness in the form of an overview and even a review of its contents, but are unable to do so because we are also contributors to it and there is no time now to ask a non-contributor to undertake the exercise. And yet we would be utterly failing in our duty towards the text which inspires this special number, and towards its sophiticated author, if we did not here complainingly point out that at several places in several pieces, KCB's Wittgenstein-anticipating and structuralism-enhancing plea for intellectual autonomy and rooted universality has been lazily and fallaciously equated with throw-back chauvinism and purblind patriotism. Without a clear-headed avoidance of that sort of misunderstanding, chauvinist and purblind in its own way, there can be no fruitful or even critical discussion of either *Hind Svaraj* or *Svaraj in Ideas*. This is a note of warning, not despair. We shall overcome.

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