

# Prout in a Nutshell

## Part 1



Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar

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# ROMAN SAṂSKRĀTA ALPHABET

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Realizing the necessity of writing swiftly and of pronouncing the words of different languages correctly, the undernoted Roman Samskrta (Sanskrit) alphabet has been adopted.

Those not familiar with either the Devanagari alphabet or the Bengali alphabet, and those not familiar with Bengali pronunciation, please see the pronunciation keys starting on page x.

অ আ ই ঈ উ ঊ ঋ ঌ ঐ ঔ এ ঐ ও ঔ অং অঃ  
 অ আ ই ঈ উ ঊ ঋ ঌ ল্ লৃ এ ঐ ও ঔ অং অঃ  
 a á i ii u ú r rr lr lrr e ae o ao am ah

ক খ গ ঘ ঙ চ ছ জ ঝ ঞ

क ख ग घ ङ च छ ज झ ञ  
ka kha ga gha ṅa ca cha ja jha ṇa

ट ठ ड ढ ण त थ द ध न  
ṭa ṭha ḍa ḍha ṇa ta tha da dha na

प फ ब भ म

Pa pha ba bha ma

य र ल व

ya ra la va

ya ra la va

श ष स ह ऋ

श ष स ह क्ष  
sha śa sa ha kśa

अँ ङ ऋषि छाया ज्ञान संस्कृत ततोऽहं  
अँ ङ ऋषि छाया ज्ञान संस्कृत ततोऽहं  
aṅ ṅ ṛṣi chāyá jñána saṁskṛta tato'haṁ

a á b c d ď e g h i j k l m ṁ  
n ṅ ṇ o p r s ś t ź u ú v y

It is possible to pronounce the Samskrta , or Sanskrit , language with the help of only twenty nine letters of Roman script . The letters " f " , " q " , " qh " , " z " , etc. , are required in the Arabic ,

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Persian , and various other languages , but not in Samskrta .

" áa " and " áha " , occurring in the middle of a word or at the end of a word , are pronounced " í " and " íha " , respectively . Like " ya " , they are not independent letters . When the need arises in writing non - Sańskrta words , " í " and " íha " may be written .

Ten additional letters in Roman Sańskrta, for writing non-Sanskrit words.....

ক	খ	জ	ড	ঢ	ফ	য়	ল	ৎ	ঐ
ক্	খ্	জ্	ড্	ঢ্	ফ্	য়	ল্	ত্	ঐ
qua	qhua	za	í	íha	fa	ya	lra	t	aṅ

# Publisher's Note:

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Prout, an acronym for “Progressive Utilization Theory”, is a comprehensive socio-economic philosophy developed by the author from the beginning of 1955 until his passing away in October 1990. The author defined Progressive Utilization Theory as the “progressive utilization of all factors”, and those who support this principle as “Proutists”.

Translated from original Bengali. Meaning of Bengali words are given in footnotes.

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# **Prout in a Nutshell Part 1**

## **[a compilation]**

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# The Evolution of Society

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The quinquemental [made of five element like earth, water, fire, air and ether] creation is the final manifestation of Bráhmīcitta [Macrocosmic ectoplasm]. During pratisaiṅcara, (1) when the quinquemental factors started to be slightly affected by Puruṣottama [Nucleus Consciousness, Cosmic Consciousness], the vibration of animation first arose in them. The more that animated entities continued to be illuminated by the divine effulgence of Nucleus Consciousness, the more they developed their contemplative power, propelling them further down the path of self-awareness. The greatest among these contemplative entities became capable of tremendously accelerating their own individual movements along the path of

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Macrocosmic pratisaiṅcara. These superior beings are called mánava or mánuśa[man], meaning "contemplative beings". (2)

Contemplative power is not manifest to the same degree in every human being; no two human beings even are equal in this respect. From the perspective of time, primitive humans made less use of the power of contemplation than the people of today. When the first human babies evolved hundreds of thousands of years ago in the process of the Cycle of Creation, those humans did not find the world such a safe place to live in. There were dense forests infested with wild, ferocious animals and venomous reptiles. Gigantic carnivorous creatures with huge protruding teeth prowled everywhere in search of prey. The first human beings were not blessed with a sweet, homey environment to protect them from violent storms, terrifying thunder and lightning, and falling meteors. The scorching

rays of the midday sun threatened to destroy the lives of those babies. Such was their condition.

How little scope the human beings of that age had to develop their contemplative power, to explore the pathways of their inner world. People spent all their energy on survival, fighting ceaselessly against the ruthlessness of nature.

During that age of struggle in that primitive human society, what counted most was brute force – sheer physical strength. In that distant age people lived according to the maxim "Might is right." When they realized that the forces of nature were hostile to them, they did not think it wise to live separately in an isolated, scattered way. Thus they began to come together and to form many small groups, gotras [clans] or tribes, with the sole purpose of surviving through collective struggle. In that age

of physical might the strongest person became the leader of the clan and was worshipped by society as a hero. In this way the kśatriya social structure first developed in the ancient world.

The world continued to evolve. The social structure developed by those primitive people could not maintain its status quo. Society began to understand that mere physical strength was insufficient; it required the support of intellect. That intellect would control and direct physical might and point the way to real prosperity. Those who first discovered how to make fire by friction, providing comforting warmth to the human body when it was chilled by cold winter nights, came to be viewed as the greatest people, not because of their physical strength, but due to their merit and intellect. Society hailed them as rśis [pioneers of human welfare].

In the following age human beings made food palatable and easily digestible by roasting it

over a fire. Those who first taught this use of fire to others were also acclaimed as rśis; they were the successors of the previous rśis. Those who first invented the art of weaving cloth to cover the naked human body, those who first taught animal husbandry and the use of cow's milk to feed babies deprived of their mother's milk, and those who first solved the problems of transportation by inventing the now-outmoded bullock cart, were all rśis, the original benefactors of humanity. They were all the ancestors of the human race, hence they were all worthy of being remembered and revered. Those rśis, the messengers of the new, were naturally held in the highest esteem by kśatriya society. They were known as vipras and given unstinting respect.

Time passed. Human beings came in closer contact with the external world and learned better how to use various material objects, or

learned the necessity of rendering those objects fit for use.

Naturally some people had to be engaged in producing mundane commodities. The class that was thus engaged was called the vaeshya class.

As the result of a natural process, the kśattriyas and vipras gradually became subservient to the vaeshyas in order to maintain their mundane existence. In the absence of farmers no food could be produced; without weavers no clothes could be made – blacksmiths, potters, cobblers, etc., were also indispensable. Thus gradually the vipra society had no alternative but to accept the supremacy of the vaeshyas.

Those who were devoid of the qualities of the kśattriyas, vipras or vaeshyas had no option

but to become their obedient servants. They were exploited by all three classes in the same manner – ruthlessly.

The world advanced still further, and along with this the social structure also underwent changes. As a natural consequence of the flow of creation, human beings invented money. Gradually money itself became a source of pleasure. People scrambled among themselves, because the more money one accumulated, the richer one became; one could become the owner of as much land as one wished or as many luxuries as one desired. In the vaeshya-dominated society the vaeshyas were undoubtedly the most affluent; the other classes, for their subsistence, were totally dependent on the favours dispensed by the vaeshyas. This vaeshya-dominated society continues even today.



Due to exploitation, the kśattriyas and vipras are gradually degenerating to the level of shúdras. It is a natural law that the affluent cannot be in the majority in any society; only the shúdras can be the majority. Now these shúdras collectively want to destroy the dominance of the vaeshyas and annihilate them. That is why shúdra domination is emerging in society today. But is shúdra domination the final stage? If the control of society slides into the hands of the shúdras, will not the mundane prosperity and spiritual progress of humanity suffer a set-back? As the shúdras' struggle to gain domination continues, people are gradually realizing what form of society is most conducive to real human welfare.

It is not proper for one particular class to dominate society. If one class is dominant, it will surely continue to exploit the other classes. Hence Ananda Marga wants a society without

divisions or discrimination, where everyone will be entitled to equal opportunities and equal rights.

For humanity to progress, a harmonious social system is most essential. How many meritorious students are forced to abandon their education for want of money, and, for the same reason, how many artists are compelled to suppress their extraordinary talent before it is expressed. This is due to a defective social order. Such a situation cannot be allowed to continue any longer. The system of divisions and discrimination is like the tightly-woven nest of the weaver-bird; it must be broken into pieces forever. Only then will human beings be able to lead the entire human race along the path towards spiritual welfare. Until then a handful of people will perhaps be able to attain the pinnacle of spiritual progress, but it will be extremely difficult to establish all humanity in

the supreme stance. The intense clashes and conflicts of the physical world will continually turn people's attention towards external objects of enjoyment and create obstacles to their spiritual progress.

In a harmonious social order no one will run after fame or wealth like a mad dog. A congenial external environment will assist them in achieving mental balance, and people's psychic poverty will also gradually decrease.

***Sa tu bhavati daridra yasya áshá vishálá;  
Manasi ca parituśte ko'rthaván kodaridrah.***

[Those who have many desires are poor.  
When the mind is contented, who is rich and who is poor?]

O human beings, try to understand human needs and build an appropriate social system.

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Do not try to do anything for your petty personal or group interests, because nothing done with a narrow outlook bereft of Cosmic ideation will last. The cruel hand of time will obliterate all your achievements and plunge them into an oblivion you cannot fathom. It is not necessary to study books to know how to move, what to build, what to break, what to preserve. You should look upon every living being of this universe with sincere feelings of love and compassion. Only then will you realize that whatever you break, build or preserve is already contained within and vibrated by the flow of the blissful Macrocosmic Entity. Through action mixed with devotion and knowledge you will discover the life of your life, the supreme treasure of your inner being, that Supreme Entity, which you have unknowingly kept hidden in the golden temple of your heart.

*Sei Ánanda caraña páte;  
Śađ rtu ye nrtye máte.*

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*Plávaña bahe yáy dharáte;  
Varań giiti gandhere.*

–Rabindranath Tagore

[At the silent footsteps of the Supreme Entity,  
The six seasons(3) burst into dance.

The whole world overflows

With welcoming songs and fragrance.]

1 January 1955 DMC, Jamalpur

## Footnotes:

(1) In the Cycle of Creation, the step-by-step introversion and subtilization of consciousness from the state of solid matter to Consciousness. –Eds.

(2) For a detailed discussion of the author's cosmological system and the place of human beings in it, see *Idea and Ideology*, 1959. –Eds.

(3) In Bengal (the birthplace of Tagore), as in all northeastern India, there are six distinct seasons: summer, rainy season, early autumn, late autumn, winter and spring. Each season is approximately two months long. –Eds.

# The Dharma of Human Beings

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Human beings are the highest-evolved beings. They possess clearly-reflected consciousness, and this makes them superior to animals. No other being has such a clear reflection of consciousness. Human beings can distinguish between good and bad with the help of their consciousness, and when in trouble they can find a way out, with its help. No one likes to live in misery and suffering, far less human beings, whose consciousness can find means of relief. Life without sorrow and suffering is a life of happiness and bliss, and that is what people desire. Everyone is in quest of happiness; in fact it is people's nature to seek happiness. Now let us see what one does to

achieve it and whether it is achieved by those means.

In their search for happiness people are first attracted towards physical enjoyments. They amass wealth and try to achieve power and position to satisfy their desires for happiness. One who has a hundred rupees is not satisfied with it, one strives for a thousand rupees, but even possessing thousands of rupees does not satisfy. One wants a million, and so on. Then it is seen that a person having influence in a district wants to extend it over a province, provincial leaders want to become national leaders, and when they have achieved that there creeps in a desire for world leadership. Mere acquisition of wealth, power and position does not satisfy a person. The acquisition of something limited only creates the want for more, and the quest for happiness finds no end. The hunger for possessing is unending. It is limitless and infinite.

However dignified or lofty the achievement, it fails to set at rest people's unlimited quest for

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happiness. Those who hanker after wealth will not be satisfied until they can obtain unlimited wealth. Nor will the seeker of power, position and prestige be satisfied until he or she can get these in limitless proportions, as all these are objects of the world. The world itself is finite and cannot provide infinite objects. Naturally, therefore, the greatest worldly acquisition, even if it be the entire globe, would not secure anything of an infinite and permanent character. What then is that infinite, eternal thing which will provide everlasting happiness?

The Cosmic Entity alone is infinite and eternal. It alone is limitless. And the eternal longing of human beings for happiness can only be satiated by realization of the Infinite. The ephemeral nature of worldly possessions, power and position can only lead one to the conclusion that none of the things of the finite and limited world can set at rest the everlasting urge for happiness. Their acquisition merely gives rise to further longing. Only realization of the Infinite can do it. The Infinite can be only one, and that is the Cosmic Entity. Hence it is only the

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Cosmic Entity that can provide everlasting happiness – the quest for which is the characteristic of every human being. In reality, behind this human urge is hidden the desire, the longing, for attainment of the Cosmic Entity. It is the very nature of every living being. This alone is the dharma of every person.

**The word dharma signifies “property”. The English word for it is “nature”, “characteristic” or “property”. The nature of fire is to burn or produce heat. It is the characteristic or property of fire and is also termed the nature of fire. Similarly, the dharma or nature of a human being is to seek the Cosmic Entity.**

The degree of divinity in human beings is indicated by their clearly-reflected consciousness. Every human being, having evolved from animals, has, therefore, two aspects – the animal aspect, and the conscious aspect which distinguishes a person from animals. Animals display predominantly the animality, while human beings due to a well-reflected consciousness also possess rationality. The

animality in human beings gives them a leaning towards animal life or physical enjoyment. They, under its influence, look to eating, drinking and gratification of other physical desires. They are attracted towards these and run after them under the influence of their animality but these do not provide happiness as their longing for it is infinite. Animals are satisfied with these limited enjoyments as their urge is not infinite. However large the quantity of things offered to an animal may be, it will take only those which it needs and will not bother for the rest. But humans will certainly act differently in these conditions. This only establishes that animals are satisfied with the limited, while the desire of human beings is limitless, although the desire for enjoyment in both is prompted and governed by the animal aspect of life. The difference in the two is due to the possession by the human being of a clearly-reflected consciousness, something which animals lack. The infinite nature of the human urge for absolute happiness is due to their consciousness alone. It is this consciousness alone which is not satisfied with the physical

pleasure of possession, power and position – things which in spite of their huge proportions, are only transitory in character. It is their consciousness which creates in human beings the longing for the Cosmic Entity.

The objects of the world – the physical enjoyments – do not quench the thirst of the human heart for happiness. Yet we find that people are attracted by them. The animality in people draws them towards gratification of animal desires, but the rationality of their consciousness remains ungratified since all these are transitory and short-lived. They are not enough to set at rest the unending and unlimited hunger of the human consciousness. There is, thus, a constant duel in humans between their animality and rationality. The animal aspect pulls them towards instant earthly joys, while their consciousness, not being satisfied with these, draws them towards the Cosmic Entity – the Infinite. This results in the struggle between the animal aspect and consciousness. Had the carnal pleasures derived from power and position been

infinite and endless, they would have set at rest the eternal quest of consciousness for happiness. But they do not, and that is why the fleeting glory of temporal joys can never secure a lasting peace in the human mind and lead people to ecstasy.

It is only the well-reflected consciousness which differentiates human beings from animals. Is it then not imperative for human beings to make use of their consciousness? If their consciousness lies dormant behind their animality, people are bound to behave like animals. They in fact become worse than animals as, even though endowed with well-reflected consciousness, they do not make use of it. Such people do not deserve the status of human beings. They are animals in human form.

The nature of consciousness is to seek for the Infinite or realize the Cosmic Entity. Only those who make use of their consciousness and follow its dictates deserve to be called human beings. Therefore, every person, by making full use of his or her reflected consciousness, earns the right to be

called a human being and finds his or her dharma or nature to be only the search for the Infinite or Cosmic Entity. This longing for the Infinite is the innate quality or dharma which characterizes the human status of people.

Happiness is derived by getting what one desires. If one does not get what one desires, one cannot be happy. One becomes sad and miserable. The clearly-reflected consciousness in people, which alone distinguishes them from animals, seeks the Cosmic Entity or the Infinite. And so people derive real happiness only when they can attain the Cosmic Entity or get into the process of attaining It. Consciousness does not want earthly joys because being finite none of them satisfy it. The conclusion we arrive at is that the dharma of humanity is to realize the Infinite or the Cosmic Entity. It is only by means of this dharma that people can enjoy eternal happiness and bliss.

1955, Jamalpur

# The Practice of Art and Literature

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The actual significance of the word sáhitya [loosely, “literature”] is inherent in the word itself. Sáhitya is defined as that whose characteristic is to move with (sahita = “with”) the trends of life. Sáhitya, literature, is not the invention of the superficial side of social life, nor is it the colourful spell of fantasy. Rather it is the portrait of real life, an external expression of the internal workings of the mind, a bold and powerful expression of the suppressed sighs of the human heart. In order to

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preserve the sanctity and prestige of its name, literature must maintain a rhythm that reflects the dynamic currents of society.

The word *sáhitya* can be interpreted in another way as well: *sa + hita = hitena saha*, “that which co-exists with *hita* [welfare]”. Where there is no inner spirit of welfare, we cannot use the term *sáhitya*. The creations or compositions of those who proclaim, “Art for art’s sake,” cannot be treated as *sáhitya*. Indeed, welfare which pertains to the mundane world is relative; its definition may also change according to changes in time, place and person. But the aspect of the term *hita* which leads human beings towards the absolute truth is one and the same for all ages and all countries.

In order to communicate with people at different stages of development who have different ideas, the same concept of welfare has to be expressed through different branches of knowledge. The grand, benevolent flow of ideas with the common people on one side and the state of

supreme bliss on the other, is called literature; for in every particle, in every rhythmic expression of this benevolent thought process, the supreme bliss is lying dormant.

Thus literature is that which moves together with society and leads society towards true fulfilment and welfare by providing the inspiration to serve. The statement “Art for art’s sake” is not acceptable; rather we should say, “Art for service and blessedness.”

In every expression, in every stratum of this universe, however crude or subtle, only one recurring theme occurs, and that theme is the attainment of bliss. In the artistic movement towards welfare both the attainment and the bestowal of happiness find simultaneous expression. When sáhityikas(1) dedicate themselves to the service or sádhaná [sustained practice] of literature, they have to let their creative genius flow in this stream; they have to purify all that is turbid, all that is impure in their individual life in the holy waters of



their universal outlook and then convey it sweetly and gracefully to the heart of humanity. In this lies the fulfilment of their service, the consummation of their sádhaná.

If the sweet, benevolent sentiment of individual life fails to inspire collective life, we cannot consider their creations as art. Those who are unwilling or unable to consider sáhitya as a form of service and sádhaná, should not try to lay the blame on the collective mind, hiding their own impure thoughts behind their grandiloquence and bluster. They should not claim that they are simply painting a picture of society, that this portrayal is their sole responsibility, and that society will find its own direction under the pressure of circumstances. A discriminating judgement will term such so-called sáhityikas as literature-dealers or pot-boilers, instead of creators of literature, for they are not moving along the path of benevolence. Their business outlook merely views society as the buyers of their books.

**The Responsibility of a Sáhityika:**

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The aim of all artistic creation is to impart joy and bliss. Those who serve the people by bestowing this bliss cannot in their daily lives remain aloof from commonplace events, from pleasure and pain, smiles and tears. Literature must remain inseparably associated with the men and women of the soil of this earth, and the sáhityika is also one of them.

People seek deliverance from the whirlpools of darkness; they aspire to illuminate their lives and minds with light all the time. All their actions, all their feelings, express an inherent tendency to move forward; therefore, if at all they are to be offered something in this regard, the creator of art cannot remain idle or inert.

On their journey through life human beings may sometimes stop short in fear or apprehension. Sometimes their knees give way and they sit down fatigued and frustrated. At such times the responsibility of the gifted sáhityika becomes all the more significant. And when sáhityikas sing songs inspiring them to move forward, they have to be

very cautious in one respect: after every artistic creation they must look back carefully to determine whether those for whom they sang their marching songs are capable of moving forward with them, whether their thought-waves are touching the core of the people's hearts, whether their service is really doing them good. In the literary world the crown of glory goes only to those who are constantly aware of their responsibilities as sáhityikas.

Real sáhityikas are not only beacons of the present, they are also minstrels of the past and messengers of the future. They are capable of providing proper leadership for the future only after they have grasped the relationship, the flow, between the past and the present. The past, present and future must be beautifully interwoven in their compositions; only dreaming of a bright future will not suffice. One must remember that all the potentialities of the future lie embedded in the womb of the present in seed form, just as the blossoms of the present bloomed from the seeds planted in the past. So artists should not only use

their creative talent to portray the present flawlessly, but should also continue to explore the possibilities of the future with a benevolent mind.

All the possibilities that sáhityikas periodically present to the world, they should present as the healthy outcome of the present. The natural consequences of these possibilities should also be explained perfectly and flawlessly. The relation between the present and the future must be properly portrayed by presenting the causes and effects at every stage. The natural result of káraña [cause] is known as kárya [effect] at a particular time or place or on a particular person. We should never lose sight of this, even for a moment, because it is the link between these two, cause and effect, that brings people into intimate and sympathetic contact with the purpose of the writer. In the absence of this sympathetic affinity and this dynamic unity, the readers will not be able to identify themselves with any literary compositions. Whatever we may call the writers of such compositions which have no relationship with the

collective psychology, we certainly cannot call them sáhityikas. At best we may call their writings compositions, but certainly not sáhitya.

## **Epochal Literature and Coastal Literature**

As already mentioned, marching together with the thought of benevolence is termed sáhitya. Literature which is based on a feeling of benevolence, and which without severing its relationship with us completely, is marching so far ahead of our time that we are not really in step with it, is called taístha sáhitya,(2) rather than yuga sáhitya [“epochal literature”]. It is close to us, but always slightly eludes our grasp. As this category of literature is ahead of its time, it lasts longer than epochal literature, but it is less significant, I feel, in fulfilling the needs of a particular era.

The outstanding characteristic of epochal literature is that it expresses in clear terms the demands of a particular era; it moves hand in hand with the collective psychology. It conveys in the

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language of the time every large or small, important or unimportant matter of the human mind afflicted with the problems of that age. If this epochal literature, which is created expressly to fulfil the needs of the era, becomes more dynamic than the people of the age despite its sincere and benevolent intent, it loses its characteristic of moving together with them; it loses all its value. Such literature cannot earn its reputation like coastal literature, and thus all the dreams of the sáhityika end in frustration and failure.

In order to fulfil the demands of the time, good literature must move in unison with society, maintaining control over its own speed. Sáhityikas may move a step or two ahead, for they are the guides of society; but they should not move too far forward, and of course, moving backwards is out of the question.

Movement is the characteristic of life, and so everything must move. Those who have lost their inherent dynamism are indeed dead. The right to

preserve, build and rebuild society is the duty only of those who are moving, not of those who are motionless, who are dead. Sáhityikas cannot fling humanity into the stagnancy of death, for in that case they would show themselves to be lacking in benevolence. So, moving together with the people, they will continue to sing their marching songs; they will go on filling the human mind with the sweet nectar of eternal life.

## **The Sáhityika as the Seer of Truth**

The majority of what is termed sáhitya in the world today is mere composition, not literature. Sáhityikas must prove their sense of responsibility with every stroke of their pens. Command over language and ideas is not sufficient. Something more is needed: the power to delve deeply into any matter, the earnest effort to identify with the minds of all, that is, to use one's mind to assimilate the minds of others into one's own mind. To put it simply, sáhityikas must be seers of truth. Those who possess a little superficial knowledge of life and



merely juggle language cannot produce ideal literature. In the language of the Vedas, a sáhityika is called a kavi [seer]. Only seers of truth can create true literature, for the task of a sáhityika is to point towards the future, and the ability to look into the future belongs to the seers of truth alone.

Those who think that their only responsibility is to portray the past, present or future are not sáhityikas, for mastery over the three dimensions of time is determined by the power to [subjectively] link them together. Those who cannot forge this internal link can never create the proper relation between the past and the present or between the present and the future; none of their portrayals of the past, present or future are capable of finding their complete expression. Therefore, as I have said above, it is better to call these writers mere authors instead of sáhityikas. It is such authors who indulge in utterances such as “Art for art’s sake.” A little examination will reveal the harmful effect of this idea on human society.



The world is the thought projection of the Cosmic Mind, so there is no question of even a momentary pause in the eternal flow. Whether people desire it or not, society has to move forward through ceaseless environmental changes. Literature is the psychic expression of human dynamism. Literature has been created due to the needs of this dynamic humanity, so it cannot be static, nor will it ever become static in the future. The thought-provoking factors that underlie the social picture created by the brush of the artist, that underlie the current of thoughts expressed by the *sáhityika*, change, and so the artist and the *sáhityika* should always work keeping a vigilant eye on those changing factors. Although the momentum of society depends on a variety of factors, it is largely determined by psychic and cultural transformations.

## **Psychological Transformation**

Changes in mental outlook are a natural phenomenon, yet such changes do not always take place in the same way; in the past they were

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different from those of today, and in the future they will be even more different. Human beings must throw themselves into the task of solving the mundane problems that arise as they meet their various needs in the real world, and the solutions must be appropriate to the mundane problems. In this endeavour the speed of the mind is sometimes slow and sometimes fast. The psychic speed of human beings about ten thousand years ago was certainly much greater than it was about one million years ago, when the first human beings had just appeared on this earth. The primitive mind used to move at quite a slow speed; for generations together primitive people used to spend their lives in the same environment, solving the same types of problems. For tens of thousands of years they subsisted on shrubs and weeds and used stone tools and weapons; such was the standard of their civilization. After that came the period of eating animal flesh, and it took those ancient people about two or three hundred thousand years to accustom themselves to this new habit. After the discovery of

fire they did not even learn how to use salt on roasted meat very easily.

But today, when we look back and examine the period from ten thousand years ago to five thousand years ago, we find that the speed of human progress had greatly accelerated. At intervals of every two or three hundred years some new discoveries were made. As a result of frequently facing new challenges, the human mind underwent revolutionary changes: animal husbandry gave way to agriculture and scattered communities evolved into more compact societies. Yet in the period from ten thousand years ago to five thousand years ago, nowhere do we find a well-knit social order, although we do find comprehensive efforts to build a society. The Vedas present a vague picture of the varied advances made during that five thousand year period which, judged by modern standards, cannot be called rapid progress. The Vedas are the literary reflection of the psychic characteristics of that time. In that age, when rays of light gradually began to pierce the darkness, people started to

realize the need to move together more rapidly. In some of the mantras and hymns of the Vedas, particularly in the Saṁgacchadhvaṁ mantra,(3) the seed of this collective dynamism was sown.

The old world passed away, yielding to the new, and the speed of the social momentum greatly increased. Even before the historically famous Buddhist Age, well-constructed and dynamic societies had evolved in China and Egypt, yet the dynamism of these societies cannot be regarded as the second stage of progress. The reason for this is that in spite of the fact that they came after the Vedic civilization, they were actually similar to it [in terms of progress], although they had intrinsically distinctive characteristics.

The society of the Buddhist Age speeded up the progressive rhythm of the Vedic Age. The Vedic social system got caught up in various clashes and counter-clashes and finally reached a state of stagnancy and avoidance of clash. The Buddhist Age imparted new dynamism to the feeble, faltering

steps of the Vedic Age by awakening new vigour and adding to the impetus for advancement, thus accelerating the momentum for human progress far more even than during the Vedic Age. That is why, in the literature of this era, we find a more constructive, vibrant social picture than in the literature of the Vedic Age.

The greater the clashes in human life, the faster the development of the human mind under circumstantial pressures. As a result of the increasing complexity of life and the tremendous number of problems during the last two centuries, the progress of society has gained unusual momentum. Whether one likes this progress or not, it has developed naturally and will continue to do so. The momentum created by the last two world wars has been forcibly dragging society forward, as though human beings have become obsessed with conquering time. Due to its tremendous speed, the advancement of humanity has been losing its balance: while achieving success on the one hand, it has faced evident failure on the other. The resulting

bankruptcy and failure is glaringly apparent in every line of post-war literature – there is not a spark of bold vision anywhere. Making good capital out of this failure, sáhityikas busy themselves earning money. It is as if humanity is bent upon negating all the traditions of the four-centuries-old Maṁgalkávyā, the time-honoured Rámāyaṇa and Mahābhārata, revered poets such as Shakespeare, Milton, Vidyapati and Chandidasa, and those works which unite both the educated and the uneducated such as the Rāmacarita Mānasa. Although contemporary society is moving with increasing speed, it is incapable of preserving its balance. Sáhityikas have been giving expression to this loss of equilibrium with their pens, thus conveying to their readers that they, too, are part of the unbalanced flow.

## **Cultural Evolution**

Cultural evolution has also brought about, and is continuing to bring about, a considerable change in society. This change is taking place more

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or less uniformly in almost all the countries of the world. Cultural evolution cannot be considered bad, for although defects in some societies are infecting others, nevertheless interaction does have an immensely positive aspect: the human race, knowingly or unknowingly, is gradually building a new human culture through mutual cooperation.

The different expressions of life are termed “culture”. The greater the mutual contact and exchange of ideas between peoples of different countries, the closer they come to one another in the cultural sphere. The old, worn-out walls of literary tradition are in many places crumbling, and in other places have been smashed to smithereens. As a result a new kind of international literature is evolving, and this is certainly an auspicious augury for the future. But even the auspicious developments which result from natural clashes and counter-clashes may eventually end in frustration and failure due to humanity’s folly. In the absence of honesty, simplicity, spiritedness and genuine human love, internationalism may remain solely the caprice



of the sáhityika. The harshness of reality may not be tolerable to the sáhityika, and therefore we cannot surrender human destiny to his or her whims. Sáhityikas must not become intoxicated with the colourful spell woven by their imaginations, nor should they drive humanity to despair by dwelling on the failures of the practical world and singing songs of frustration.

Sáhityikas must be closely attuned to the changes in both psychic trends and cultural evolution which remould the social structure. And not only sáhityikas, but all creators of art, should express a universalistic outlook through their pens or brushes. If artists or sáhityikas do not do that, we must conclude that their artistic talents have degenerated. In fact, their contributions will then be nothing but rubbish which may be fit for fertilizer, but if dumped nearby becomes hazardous to public health.

Artistic endeavour may be justified only when it results in the all-round development of society. If

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the sáhityika's inspiration propels the social movement in a particular direction denying all other aspects of society, we cannot call it literature, because there is no real sentiment of benevolence behind his or her creation. A flow of ideas that is not complete in itself is never capable of leading practical life towards fulfilment and perfection.

## **Struggle Against Obstacles**

Before wielding their brushes or pens, real artists or sáhityikas should understand clearly which way society is moving and why it is moving in that direction, what are the fundamental causes of its inherent weakness, and from which doctrines the depraved propensities which are infecting the society emanate. And merely understanding will not suffice; artists may have to resist the surging current of destruction single-handedly.

**Yadi tor dák shuñe keu ná áse;  
Tave eklá cala re...**

[If none to my call pays heed,  
Then alone must I proceed.]

Keeping this refrain in mind, they must continue in their relentless effort to fight against the seemingly indomitable might of hundreds and thousands of obstacles which are deeply rooted in age-old superstitions that are firmly entrenched in petty selfishness. Their pens may break into pieces, their brushes may be compelled to draw only lines of water on the canvas, and their histrionic flows may end in mute protests, yet their efforts must continue unceasingly. Each of their petty defeats shall be strung together as pearls in the garland of victory.

When for age after age society spins in the murky eddies of evil and vice, when individual and collective knavery masquerades as intelligence, when hypocrisy, bribery and fraud are the yardsticks for measuring the ability to lead – it is then that the genuine followers of Bháratii [the goddess of learning] must struggle on in spite of

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constant humiliation. Only taunts and insults will be their fate. Those who are afraid of these insults are incapable of offering anything really lasting to humanity. How can people who lack moral strength, under whose feet the soil is not hard and strong, invite anyone in to a cool, refreshing shelter and impart happiness to them? It may be possible to drag oneself through life by sucking the blood of others like social parasites, but this will not bring fulfilment to either sáhityikas or their readers.

The artist or sáhityika who assumes the responsibility of leading humanity along the path to light from the caverns of darkness will have to heed the road signs on that path. It is not possible to guide others with mere cheap, superficial knowledge, like a half-baked pandit who reads a half-a-dozen books and then spouts a few mouthfuls of grandiloquence, and who has obtained a doctorate by plagiarizing others' works. Rather it is necessary for the sáhityika or artist to have a keen and vigorous insight, without which all their endeavours will prove fruitless. Merely juggling

words or depicting defects in society will not satisfy the hunger of the human mind – and such creations of art are indeed valueless for social progress as well. One must know the path, and one must also know how to move on it. If those who have not comprehended what the form of society will be, allow the trends of the past that have shaped the present to proceed unchecked, they can never lead society to the path of perfection. They will in fact thrust society into darkness in the name of social reform; they will encourage license in the name of freedom. Instead of modelling a woman after the ideal of a goddess, they will mould the image of the goddess after the ideal of a harlot.

Sáhityikas are epoch-makers and so they are the sages and seers of society. They cannot afford to forget their dignified calling even for a moment. They are the messengers of the mute masses, the guardians of society. Their slightest mistake may result in catastrophe, and even a small amount of caution may open up many new possibilities. So a person whose thought and expression is not

restrained had better not meddle with the practice of art.

## **Intimate Relation with the People**

I have just stated that it is through finding a balance between psychic and cultural trends that literature proves its worth. Intellectual trends and cultural evolution cannot exist in isolation from the individual or humanity as a whole, for both intellectual and cultural developments concern humanity. And humanity does not mean merely a few favoured persons in the upper stratum of society, like the special delicacies placed on top of the pile of rice offerings to the gods in the temples. Rather humanity means those people who, like the pile of rice, have borne the weight of those delicacies on their heads. Actually, viewed from a proper sociological perspective, those special delicacies should not represent any particular elite person or people at the peak of society, rather they should be regarded as the combined expression of the collective mind.

Those artists who guide that collective expression towards more and more subtle forms will have to maintain an intimate relation with the psychological and cultural structures of the people, with the práña dharma(4) [innate characteristics] of their existence. They must not disregard or neglect them even for a moment. If artists remain preoccupied with floating like balloons in the sky and forget the ordinary people, all their creations will end up in smoke after merely flashing for a moment before the eyes. Their writings will not make any lasting impression on the pages of time.

## **Building the Road to the Future**

When changes in society are accelerated due to intellectual or cultural factors, the creations that take birth in the aftermath of a particular situation or in the perspective of a particular tendency are certainly fit to be called literature; but this sort of literature later loses its practical value due to the rapid changes taking place in society. However,

those who think that this sort of epochal literature will eventually become valueless are also wrong, for it will not only be recorded in the pages of history, but it will also hold a special value for the sáhityikas of the future. From it they will get an idea of the social trends of particular periods.

Those who scorn epochal literature should know that the sweetness of coastal literature is inherent in the many forms, in the richness of thought, of this epochal literature. The endeavour of the yuga shilpii [artist of the era] alone can resist a powerful degeneration or a great catastrophe. There the creators of coastal literature are only mute spectators. They will continue to interpret morality, but their ability to awaken the spirit of dynamic heroism is considerably limited. The creator of epochal literature goes on constructing the road by excavating earth and shattering rocks and stones, while the coastal sáhityika, perched on the summit of a mountain, makes sketches of that scene and at intervals explains the science of road building.



As society's dynamism increases, the span of time in which epochal literature remains effective decreases. Due to the accelerating speed it becomes exhausted within a very short time. But in this there is no cause for regret, because the very task of building the road continues, and its relationship with coastal literature also remains intact.

Epochal literature is mainly concerned with time, place and person. So if there is the slightest increase in the effort to triumph over any of these three relative factors for whatever reason, the speed of society as well as that of epochal literature will be accelerated. Although coastal literature maintains these relative factors within its scope, it does not confine itself to their rhythmic movement. That is why the momentum of coastal literature is extremely vague – verging on motionlessness – and thus we call it *taṭastha* [“coastal”].

The absolute truth is beyond the scope of time, space or person and is also beyond expression. It is therefore not possible to create any literature at



all around it. But the golden line with which the absolute truth has united the unit mind, originating from the relative factors of time, space and person, with its eternal soul – that much of the line, at least, which we can to some extent express with the language of our heart – is what is called *tāstha sāhitya* [“coastal literature”]. The line which is neither sea nor shore but is touching both is *tāta* [the coast]. That which maintains the relation between the two, between the temporal and the eternal, by standing on this coastline, is called *tāstha*.

## **Popular Language**

If we call the creator of epochal literature a sage, then we shall call the creator of coastal literature a seer. The sage goes on establishing coordination and adjustment, stage by stage, among time, space and person, and the seer goes on establishing contact between time, space and person and the Entity which transcends all of them. Epochal literature deals with the minute details of the

common people's daily lives – their hopes and aspirations, sorrows and joys – using language that can easily touch their hearts. That is to say, the creator of epochal literature must give great importance to the people's popular language. But if the people's language is not given much importance in coastal literature, it will not cause much inconvenience. If Tulsidas in his *Rámacaritamánasa* and Chandidasa in his *Padávalii* had used the then scholarly Sanskrit language, could they have wielded so much influence over the people? Similarly, the popular language of any part of the world as a vehicle of epochal literature does not carry very much weight in another part of the world, or with people speaking another language. There are quite a number of well-written English and Bengali books about the history and culture of Rajasthan, but how much can the people of Rajasthan, speaking Rajasthani, be benefited by them? Perhaps the poetic genius of Michael Madhusudhan Dutt could have produced remarkable English compositions, but the marked extent to which his genius found expression in the

Bengali language – the way a wonderful epochal literature came into being – perhaps could not have been achieved in the English language. It is not that epochal literature has to be written in the popular language alone, but sáhityikas should write their compositions in their own mother tongues as far as possible.

I have already said that the need for popular language, however, is not so very strong or rigid in respect of coastal literature. I see no reason to be unduly concerned if books about any subtle theory or principle, or any complicated science, are written only in the principal languages of the world, for if they were written in the popular local language, there would be only a few who could study them. But then I would say that those sáhityikas who think that their works will be less in demand if produced in their local languages, and thus instead create literature in the more widely-known languages, cannot be called true sáhityikas, for they lack the spirit of moving together with all. Rather, it will be

more appropriate to call such writers pot-boilers or literary businesspersons.

## **The Symbol of the People's Hopes**

It is through clashes that power finds expression. In a life which is averse to fight, where there is little urge to fight, the expression of life also remains vague and indistinct. Human intellect is awakened through natural, social, psychic and economic struggles. Those who desire to awaken their intellects should not be afraid of struggle.

The social, economic and psychological principles of human life change from age to age. Armed with the strength of past experiences, human beings seek to create their future wealth. This is an undeniable fact. Those who keep their eye on the future and try to create something by cutting off the past will utterly fail, for literature or art can only justify its existence by maintaining a relation between the past and the future. Art or literature which appears suddenly and haphazardly, only to

vanish just as haphazardly, leaves everything in turmoil. Due to changes in the wake of its sudden appearance and disappearance, society no doubt achieves some gains and sustains some losses, but we cannot accept these changes as the fulfilment of any constructive endeavour.

Sáhityikas are seers of the truth, so naturally we should not expect anything haphazard from them. In their contributions we want to see keenness of intellect, wise discrimination and the sweet touch of a sympathetic heart.

Where society is caught in a whirlpool of superstitions and prejudices, where it has lost its vision in the darkness of ignorance, there sáhityikas and artists will have to come forward, even if they have to take risks to do so. They will have to show the path to others with a flaming torch in their hand. It is not proper for them to remain inert and inactive, out of fear of stumbling. It is only by waging a ceaseless struggle against all opposing forces that they will lead humanity forward. For their offence of

outspokenness, the vested interests of the different sections of society may threaten them menacingly, but they must remain undaunted by this. As the symbol of the hopes and desires of millions of people, they will have to hold aloft the possibilities of the next era, after transcending the limits of this one. This undertaking involves every bit as much responsibility as it does hard work. Artists will have to take into account the natural means of expression of human aspirations, and portray the ideal in a manner which is easily understandable to the masses.

## **The Language of the Era**

Sáhityikas who are born in a particular age or environment cannot completely transcend the influence of that environment and create literature based on an altogether different idea or different language. Human taste is advancing through changes; not only is language and its style of expression changing, but language is gradually losing its simplicity due to more complicated modes

of thought. I am not referring here to sáhityikas' unnecessary endeavours to create linguistic intricacies and complexities. Whether they like it or not, due to unavoidable necessity, they are gradually being compelled to use more and more complex language. This state of affairs existed in the past, exists in the present and will continue to exist in the future. So taking into account the peculiarities of the underlying ideas and language, the insightful critic can very easily detect the lapses of the sáhityika. The language of one era will become archaic or awkward in the next: no epic verse can be composed today with the simplicity of Valmiki's language. The use of denominative verbs as in the era of Michael Madhusudhan Dutt would only provoke laughter in this age. The ideas and language of Bharatchandra's Vidyásundara received great approbation from the cultured people of that time and used to be recited with great appreciation in the royal court. The poet, too, was honoured with a royal title in recognition of his work. But today the ideas and language of this work are considered obscene and it is deemed unfit to be read by society.



Even words that the sáhityikas of today unhesitatingly use will perhaps one day be considered indecent by civilized society. But sáhityikas are absolutely helpless in this regard, for it is impossible for them to completely shake off the thought and language of their era. In spite of the expansion of their vision over all the eras, their physical existence remains embedded in a particular age. How is it possible for them to cut themselves off from the influence of their era, whose light and air, soil and water, fruits and flowers, have saturated their whole lives? Chandidasa in his Shriikrśńa-Kiirtana(5) portrayed Radha far more crudely than Gyanadas and Govindadas did in their literary creations, and yet in simplicity and sincerity Shriikrśńa-Kiirtana is impeccable, regardless of how it is evaluated in the royal courts of literature.

## **The Taste of the Age**

An era advances through the physical, psychic and causal strata. The hands may not move as fast as

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the feet, and the intellect may move a thousand times faster than the hands; therefore at any one time, a different era may be unfolding, and sometimes is unfolding, in [each of] the different strata of life of an individual or a society. Before we start passing judgements we should remember this fact, otherwise we may do injustice to sáhityikas and artists.

It is necessary to have different kinds of yardsticks for measuring different things. Those who are impressed by the unique artistic expression of the Konark temple sneer in contempt at its obscene sculptures. From the viewpoint of the modern era they are perhaps correct, for their minds are conditioned by modern taste. But we must not forget that those sculptors possessed within themselves the expressions of [other eras], that their artistic creations are an eloquent testimony to those expressions.

With the dawn of civilization humanity's artistic mind was developed, and people expressed

themselves through the media of arts and crafts. Primitive humans depicted in stone the images of the birds or animals they hunted as well as the images of their own internal conflicts. Small groups of people constantly thought of reinforcing and increasing the strength and number of their respective groups in order to gain victory in their battles, and thus in the art of those days phallus worship appears as the symbol of numerical maximization. This phallus worship, which was prevalent among the primitive non-Aryans, was given a new philosophical interpretation by the refined Aryans and transformed into Shivalinga.(6) In spite of the subtlety or refinement behind this philosophical interpretation, the more developed people lacked the simplicity of taste of the primitive people. However, the expressions of both groups have become offensive to the taste of the people of today. Of course, these are the results of epochal changes.

If two eras are expressed simultaneously through artists' hands and feet, thoughts and

visions, their contributions may be enriched with all the sweetness of their hearts and minds, but there will be no harmonious balance between their creative expressions and their inner sensibilities. The thought-waves of the sculptors of the Konark temple could not flow towards subtlety at the same speed as their chisels and hammers.

## **The Message of Human Fulfilment**

The genius that evolves from age to age through the process of introversion and extroversion of the intellect does indeed bear the message of the fulfilment of human potentiality. At every step the warm breath of its labour and fatigue finds its true expression; no one has the power to withstand this force. Those who want to transform their psychic wealth into inertness and inaction may perhaps obstruct this force of expression for a while, but the inner momentum of its dynamism will not be in the least impaired. The very next moment it will break through all the dams created by the obstacles with a force increased a thousand-fold.

That is why I say that it is through the fight against opposing forces that the intellect is awakened.

It is in fact this consciousness, so beset with obstacles, which has laid the foundations of human civilization, infused literary judgement with a refined outlook and flavoured life with the nectar of Cosmic bliss. In every era literature has brought about different steps, different phases, of evolution of svabháva [humanity's true nature] through the unique union of shreya [blissful spiritual union] and preya [sensory pleasure]. That which is antithetical to human nature, no matter how assiduously one might attempt to paint it with the colours of the imagination, can never be embraced by humanity. If we liken coastal literature to a party dress and epochal literature to everyday wear, we will have to call this kind of impractical fantasy a dress of silvery tinsel. It has no use in real life, nor has it any relation to human nature.

In order to give full expression to the continuous flow of humanity's true nature, insight,

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power of expression and boldness – all three – are necessary. The creation of ideal literature is not possible for those who are always ready to yield to the pressures of the crowd. To manifest that svabháva, one will have to give a clarion call to the common people to struggle against the forces that want to suck dry their vitality. Those voices which lack such bold heroism will simply whine and whimper doggerels in the name of poetry – they will try to save themselves from the responsibility of reality by counting the stars in the heavens.

All are moving forward; no one has come to sit idle, and so everyone will have to march ahead in harmony with all, maintaining a fine adjustment with the flow of life. Whether in thought or in action, in all spheres of life the fundamental characteristic of humanity is to move ahead. Where there is inertness, there is darkness. So one must not give the least indulgence to inertness in the spheres of thought and language. Inertness is just another name for blind attachment to the past. For the sake

of benevolence, for the sake of bliss, this attachment has to be cast aside.

If an idea is likened to iron, then the dynamism of language shall be the touchstone. One must always be vigilant to see that the iron does not lose contact with the touchstone. So before giving expression to any elevated idea, sáhityikas must seek out this touchstone and bring it under their control. Many people have ideas which do not blossom due to lack of mastery over language. Those who have ideas must develop their power of expression through continued practice and effort, and those who possess the power of expression must make efforts to awaken their latent insight. The sáhityika must possess both expression and insight – if there is no iron, the touchstone is meaningless.

By power of expression I do not mean merely individual skill with language; rather I mean the irresistible force of the mind and heart. If boldness and courage are lacking, the language will tend to

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move with diffident steps, with hesitant deliberation. Such timid language cannot express independent thinking due to the impacts of various factors: the prevalent social superstitions; the static bondages of the existing religions; the pressures of political philosophies; the false pride of communalism, provincialism and nationalism; and narrow-minded political ideas. Thwarted by these impacts, weak language either stops moving or expresses itself with extreme diffidence, following the policy of “Kill the snake, but save the stick also.” The root cause of this weakness lies in the cowardice of individuals and in blind attachment to the past. Sáhityikas have to assert themselves thunderingly, give a stirring call to the people and, setting aside all the garbage of impurities with a bold mind and strong arms, clear the path leading to human emancipation. They must be pioneers on the path to fulfilment.

Here there may be a little confusion with regard to the dynamism of language. My exact meaning is that language, too, moves forward,

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keeping pace with the speed of thought. At times the language of those whose thoughts cannot freely move forward under the weight of ignorance or prevalent superstitions, is also very forceful and dynamic. Even the language of those who compose doggerels glorifying the greatness of a family, caste or pilgrimage, at times appears to be attractive and impressive. One can also write a thesis in powerful language on petty matters such as “A Sneeze”, “A House Lizard”, or, before preparing for a journey, on “Why It Is Best To Go North, Not East”; but I refuse to accept such language as truly dynamic language, for it bustles about within the iron railings of superstition and attachment to the past. It has speed but no movement. A deep analysis will show that for all its acrobatics, it has not moved even a step forward. Yoked to the millstone of superstition like the bullock at an oil mill, it may have proudly walked around the whole day covering more than fifty miles in brisk strides, but it could not move a step forward.

## **The Unfoldment of Human Potential**

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Throughout their whole existence human beings eagerly try to develop mentally. They cordially welcome whatever is conducive to that development and strive to understand the unknown; and whatever is antagonistic to that development they reject with all their hearts, though circumstantial pressure may force them to submit to it temporarily. But in the latter case, as soon as an opportunity presents itself, they rise in revolt to deliver themselves from the clutches of those antagonistic circumstances. Human nature has been like this at all times and in all ages. Thus whenever we need to do something for humanity, we should do it keeping this essential human characteristic in mind. The author's literature and the artist's artistic creation are dedicated to the service of humanity, and the sáhityika and the artist must always deeply remember this. They should express their subject or theme in a way that will not impede people's development. Interest must be created through natural expression.

The suggestion of subtle hints, interest and humour that exist even in the crudeness of ordinary life have to be adroitly held up before the eyes of the people – a touch of its colour must be conveyed to their minds.

It is easy to talk, but difficult to act; for in spite of mental characteristics being the same in all persons, they are expressed differently at different times, at different places and in different persons due to variations of saṁskāras [mental reactive momenta] or environmental peculiarities. If the artist's mind can be made to touch the innermost hearts of others – if their human sentiment can be synchronized with others' sentiments – then alone can people determine which path will be truly beneficial for them, which road will lead to the greatest realization of their potentialities. If the potentiality for individual or collective development is not clearly understood, the psychic wealth of humanity may be misused at any moment.

Literature can beautifully convey to those who have the potentiality for leadership how to develop that leadership properly and how to build that benevolent leadership on a firm foundation. But leadership is not only found among the good. Thieves, armed robbers and knaves also have their leaders, and there are also leaders in reactionary movements. So if those with the potential for leadership, who are anxious to express their leadership qualities, derive suggestions from the *sáhityika* about how to enhance their personal prestige through malevolence and wickedness instead of through true benevolence and welfare, they may be influenced to choose the evil path. People are desperate to develop themselves, so if they are not guided onto the path of welfare by the *sáhityikas*, they will follow the path of evil. They have no time to count the waves as they sit on the shore of the sea of time. They do not and they will not sit quietly, suppressing their desires and propensities in the hope that some day someone will come and direct them onto the path of benevolence.

Human beings want free and untrammelled expression of their innermost thoughts and feelings. Few people have the capacity to judge the way this expression takes place. Some ability, no doubt, develops at a later age as the result of many trials and tribulations, but it is completely absent in childhood, in adolescence and in early youth. So during this period people readily accept glittery, superficial art and literature as an outlet for their self-expression. They do not ponder over it seriously, for they do not even understand the necessity of deeper reflection or analysis.

In this connection it is necessary to add that if two different paths, one good and one bad, are presented to people as a means to express the same idea, they will gladly choose what they think to be the easier one instead of the more complex one. So no matter how benevolent the ideas of the sáhityika, if they are not presented with exuberant delight and overflowing joy, then even though they may be acceptable to some, they will remain ever disagreeable and indigestible to the general masses.

These observations may have some significance even for coastal literature, but for epochal literature they are of paramount importance. If literature is not presented through the medium of joy, then it cannot really be accepted as literature at all, because in spite of being guided by the thought of benevolence, that thought is unable to take practical shape. Such literature only increases the price of the book, but it cannot in any way increase the value of humanity.

When a presentation is made through the medium of joy, people have the opportunity for comprehensive enjoyment, and the sympathy of the writer makes direct contact with the hearts of his or her readers. Such an excellent presentation is not possible if the writer lacks genuine human feeling. Good or bad, friend or foe, a chaste lady or promiscuous woman – all are human to the author. The author will have to be responsive to the aspirations of their hearts, and must try to give proper expression to their inner thoughts and sentiments. He or she will try to depict their

happiness and sorrow, hopes and desires, and treat every big or small clash and counter-clash of their affliction-ridden lives as an expression of the human heart. To sáhityikas, no profession or propensity is either dignified or lowly; they will only present all these before the people in their true perspective so that the audience, after becoming acquainted with them, may make their individual and collective lives more meaningful. Under no circumstances must the artist or the sáhityika portray humanity as an object of hatred or ridicule. Even the character of a promiscuous woman or a thief must leave on the minds of the readers an impression of sympathy, charged with profound pain.

When artists lack such bold large-heartedness, they view humanity and the world through the spectacles of superstitions. They are incapable of truly acquainting human beings with each other or with the world, because these spectacles of superstition or prejudice distort their vision so much that they are unable to understand the true perspective of anything.

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Weak-minded sáhityikas often try to stirringly exhort their readers with forceful language in order to camouflage their own inherent weaknesses before the public. They think that they will prevail due to the strength of their language, but this is a grave error on their part. Perhaps a few fools may be deluded for some time, but ultimately, recognizing the malevolent repercussions of such literature, people will scrupulously avoid it. A careful examination will enable anyone to discover the flagrant emptiness that always lurks behind such high-sounding utterances. Generally speaking, the more the sáhityikas' vision is clouded by the blind delusions of communalism, provincialism or nationalism, the more this sort of literature will pour out from their pens.

## **Decency and Indecency in Art**

Also, there is a serious difference of opinion among artists and sáhityikas with regard to decency and obscenity in art. The conservative among them,



or the connoisseurs of art and literature, are somewhat like the supporters of the cult of varnáshrama [casteism]. They think that a slight deviation from the established tradition will tarnish the purity of art or literature. Excessively worried about matters of caste and outcaste, about the analysis of decency and vulgarity in art or literature, they lose sight of its main objective. If while writing and drawing or using the chisel and hammer they become entangled in the wranglings of so-called ethics and morality, they cannot make any contribution to any section of the people. If you open a book to find that it contains only moral sermons, you will have a headache before you read even five pages of it. If in a motion picture only moral ideas are paraded over and over again to the exclusion of everything else, the public will never appreciate that film.

The conclusion of all of this is that the thought of public welfare alone should be the motive force behind all artistic and literary creation, and that thought will express itself only through artistic joy –

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only then can subtle intellect awaken in crude minds. So when artists or sáhityikas have to create such a flow of delight as they move forward, they cannot afford to cling to any fastidious notions of so-called purity or impurity, for this will retard their progress. Excessive prudery, like mysophobia, will obstruct their movement.

Mysophobic, conservative writers will compose poems about the sea, mountains and moonlight, will paint literary pictures of the drawing-rooms of the aristocratic Ballygunge elite, but it will offend their pens to write about the endless humiliations, the low standard of living and the vulgar dirtiness of the neglected, uneducated society in the villages, because these matters are unpleasant. The abominable life of corrupt women, the obnoxious environment of the slums, the carnal cravings of antisocial human beasts – all these they seek to avoid, because they are unacceptable by the standards of “decency” and “decorum”.

The human mind has many ideas and propensities that are normal and natural. But mysophobic artists or sáhityikas, with their touch-me-not-or-I-might-lose-my-purity mentality, want to avoid all these. They think that these propensities, if given a place in literature, will jeopardize society. I cannot support this orthodox, rightist mentality.

Yet those who are leftists in the world of art are even more dangerous. The defect of the rightists is their inaction and that of the leftists is their hyperactivity, which is based on selfishness. It seems as though they are deliberately seeking out the dark and dirty aspects of life and, like flies, growing fat on the secretions of society's festering sores. It must be remembered that flies do not heal sores, rather they exacerbate them, because it is the pus of these sores that provides them with their vital juice. So the filthy aspects of society are the only capital on which these artists and sáhityikas subsist.

If art or literature is created around the base propensities of the human mind, people will naturally gravitate towards it in large numbers, and the creators of such literature will earn a great deal of money from it; indeed, this is the only aim of their artistic creation. Engaged in the quest of evil, obscenity and vulgarity, they also [like the rightists] lose sight of the primary goal of art.

In light of the above, I would say that in matters of decency or indecency the middle path is the best; that is, we must not deviate from the ideal. At the time of pursuing the path of benevolence we shall not bother as to whether the brush, the pen or the chisel has touched and taken on decorum or vulgarity, decency or indecency, during its march ahead. If we do, we will stray from our path.

I am not prepared to accept any hard and fast rule that literature must be created focusing on good citizens alone, nor am I inclined to agree to the policy that crude and mean people have to be presented to the readers or viewers as low or vile. In

my opinion, artists must be completely sympathetic to whatever they create. Those who are inferior and neglected, helpless and destitute – whom society considers to be infernal maggots – are the very people who are the most unrepresented in the salons of literature. They are mute, and so the heavy responsibility of expressing the sentiments that are hidden in their tormented minds has to be borne by the artist. The *sáhityika* or the artist has to take the responsibility of enabling them to rise up and sit in the same row with the rest of society, after dusting off the dirt from their bodies.

## **Mundane and Transcendental Love**

Many people complain that a major part of modern literature is full of the whimperings of cheap erotic love. I cannot but agree with their complaint. Such allegations can be brought not only in the sphere of literature but in every sphere of art. After seeing Bombay-made films it seems as though the youth in our society has nothing better to do than to busy itself with so-called love – as though

every college girl of every respectable community is engaged in amorous escapades, throwing all decency and decorum to the wind. In fact the mentality of those artists and sáhityikas who only depict this type of situation is completely inert like that of a eunuch.

Whatever the profound, philosophical implications of the word prema [“love”], the true characteristic of love is supra- physical – beyond the bondage of any limitation. When artists become absorbed in the essence of love and try to convey it to the people through their language, rhetoric and subtle suggestions, the sweetness of their artistic genius reaches the apex of expression. But then this creation of the artist cannot be regarded as popular literature or art, because the subtle sense which is capable of comprehending that transcendental feeling is, in fact, undeveloped in most people. We do find at places in the literature of Rabindranath Tagore some semblances of this pure, supra-physical love, but whenever Rabindranath tried to give expression to it, he became unintelligible to the

masses. The transcendental thoughts and ideas of the sweet, graceful shlokas [couplets] of the Upanishads are also incomprehensible to the common people.

This sublime love has established itself for all eternity beyond the limits of time, space and person. Infinite love is the ultimate ecstatic expression of finite love. This sense that artists try to awaken in the popular mind, when they devote themselves to the task of establishing the link between the finite and the infinite, between the mundane and the transcendental – this awareness, though not purely transcendental, is of the greatest importance in the realm of art. Because it gradually leads that sweetness of the human mind which is apprehensible to ordinary intelligence to a dreamland that is beyond the senses. Rabindranath's poem "Úrvashii" is a composition of this type. There is no dearth of physicality in the poem, nor is it difficult to understand, and yet its crude material expression gradually expands into a subtlety beyond understanding.

Love that is completely physical is not love at all according to philosophy. Therefore philosophy will not, and perhaps should not, entertain such love at all. But can an artist ignore it? An ordinary person feels pleasure or pain in every great or small incident of life. Even love concerned with the body cannot be completely isolated from pleasure and pain. How then can the artist, whose job it is to portray human happiness and sorrow, who is dedicated to giving form to the impact of human grief and pain, hopes and desires, neglect physical love? Regarding this, no artist or sáhityika can dispute the statement of Rabindranath:

**Ore kavi sandhyá haye ela,  
 Keshe tomár dhareche ye pák  
 Base' base' úrdhvapáne ceye,  
 Shuńtecha ki parakáler dáak?  
 Kavi kahe, sándhayá ha'la baáte,  
 Base áchi laye' shránta deha  
 Opáre oi pallii ha'te yadi,  
 Ájo haéthát dáke ámáy keha.  
 Yadi hetháy bakul taruccháye,**



*Milan ghaṭe tarún-taruṇiite  
 Duṭi añkhir pare duṭi añkhi,  
 Milite cáy duranta saṁgiite.  
 Ke táháder maner kathá laye'  
 Viiṇár táre tulbe pratidhvani,  
 Ámi yadi bhaver kúle base'  
 Parakáler bhálamandai gaṇi.*

*["O poet! evening has come.  
 Your hair is streaked with grey.  
 Are you listening to the call of the other world,  
 As you sit and gaze at the sky?"*

*"Ah yes, evening has come," replied the poet.  
 "And here I sit, with limbs tired and frail,  
 Waiting for a sudden call from yonder village –  
 A call that might come even today.*

*"If here under this shady bakul (sweet-scented  
 olive) tree  
 Two young hearts meet in longing,  
 And two pairs of eyes seek to merge as one  
 In the eloquent melody of song,*



*“Who will play on the strings of the vina,  
Who will echo the strings of their hearts,  
If I sit on the shores of the ocean of time  
And ponder the virtue and vice of my life?”]*

Here it must be noted that artists must seek to exhibit to people the simple form of truth, sweetened with the sweetness of their hearts. But it is a matter of great regret that a class of modern artists, in the realms of poetry, novels, cinema, drama, etc., employ all their artistic talents for the sole purpose of kindling people’s crude sensuality, instead of portraying human propensities with the idealistic outlook of a true artist – what to speak of portraying their subtle human feelings. Without supporting conservatism, I would say that this class of artists is truly a blot on society.

## **Plays and Dramas**

Some time ago complaints were frequently heard from lovers of plays that no accomplished playwrights have appeared since the great poet Girishchandra, and that although other branches of literature have rapidly developed, plays are gradually dying out. Their complaints cannot be easily dismissed; rather they deserve the attention of the play-loving populace, the playwrights and actors, and the well-wishers of society. Why are good dramas not being produced? Why say that good plays are not being produced? Is the dramatic literature modelled with the touch of a rare genius like Rabindranath not good? Perhaps by “good plays” the complainants mean “box-office plays”, and it is precisely because most of Rabindranath’s plays are lacking in box-office appeal that they do not take them into account.

In literary parlance we may divide plays into two categories: first, the box-office play, and second, the witty stage play of high literary excellence, which demands a little extra intellect to understand and which in English literature is called “drama”.

The first, the box-office play, is a part of epochal literature, and so it is necessary for the writer of such a play to be fully conversant with the problems of the contemporary era. It is only when it gives just expression to current problems through songs and dance, uproar and tumult, laughter and tears, joys and sorrows, that a play becomes a box-office hit. Even slight or sizeable lapses in characterization and treatment of conflict do not in the least diminish popular appreciation of this class of presentation. Light-hearted audiences of mediocre intelligence go home happy after laughing, crying and enjoying songs and dances for some time; they do not feel like criticizing or commenting on the underlying ideas and language of the presentation. So playwrights, too, have to wield their pens in accordance with the demand of their patrons, the common people. If they have any drawbacks or shortcomings of their own as sáhityikas or artists, they can easily disguise them through cheap humour, so that what they have written for the public may justify its existence by offering them a little jollity.

The form and presentation of most of the films of modern India, particularly those with the Bombay trade-mark, pertain to this category of presentation. There is nothing to ponder or comprehend about these plays; there is hardly any question of reality or unreality in them either. If they contain any expression of the age, well and good; if not, there is no harm.

As I have already said, however, a play may be considered successful only if it combines excitement with the vivid portrayal of the era. But for this portrayal of the problems of the age in the drama, it is essential for the playwright to have a clear concept of the age in which he or she lives. Those who have this are, indeed, genuine artists; in their presentations there is a wonderful blending of the public demand and the artist's talent.

Most of the compositions of Rabindranath do not fall into this category of plays. He was a real poet and so his dramas, although not neglecting the demands of the age, always sought to remain

outside the purview of the era. Thus his dramas were seldom popular in the theatre, where most spectators go for a little amusement and not to appreciate the niceties of literature. However, they received the unstinting approbation of real connoisseurs of art and literature. Those members of the audience who were unable to properly appreciate the subtle nuances of his dramas on the stage, nevertheless experienced an indescribable joy when they read those same dramas. This type of dramatic presentation, which in English is called “drama”, is called nááyana in Sanskrit. Playwrights draw their vitality from this very nááyana.

It is noteworthy that some of these dramas written somewhat in the style of box-office plays, enjoy greater popularity even than box-office plays. From this it is evident that, although the common people are fond of riotous hilarities, they have in them a dormant aesthetic sense which may be aroused through song and dance as well as through the portrayal of pleasure and pain, laughter and mirth. Of course, with the increase in the number of

educated people with literary taste, drama, too, is becoming a stage success in many countries. Previously theatre owners suffered appreciable losses when Shakespeare's dramas were staged. But now, with the increase in the number of literature-lovers, Shakespearean dramas have far surpassed even box-office plays in popularity.

Most of the compositions of the great poet Girishchandra fall into the category of plays, for he was associated with the professional theatre. He was well aware that if dramas were staged, they would not receive any appreciable reception in the society of his time, and thus he took to writing plays. He himself was a reputed actor, and so the theatre-goers greatly admired all the characters in almost every composition he wrote. Yet it must not be forgotten that although he had to write plays for the sake of his professional career, he had within him a deep, aesthetic, poetic genius, and so most of his plays had a touch of drama, a suggestion of supra-sensibility. In fact, judging Girishchandra's compositions with an impartial mind, it must be

admitted that he chose the middle path between drama and plays. As he expressed in his own language:

*Álgá táre bol othe ná;  
Tánle cheñre komal tár.*

[Loose strings no tune impart,  
But tension tears the tender strings apart.]

I cannot wholly agree with those who say that no good dramas have been produced since the death of Girishchandra; but then I cannot absolutely disagree with them either. Rather I would say that since Girishchandra we have had quite a number of good dramatists as well as good actors, but we have not seen genius like Girishchandra's; he was a rare combination of a powerful actor and a successful dramatist.

## **Song and Dance in Plays and Dramas**



Among modern critics we can observe a sizeable difference of opinion regarding the necessity of song and dance in plays. There is no doubt that background music greatly helps to create a dramatic atmosphere. Background music cannot, however, be said to fall exactly in the category of songs and lyrics; it is just a subtle device to help the mind apprehend the sentiments portrayed; there is nothing natural or unnatural about it. People go to the theatre knowing that they are going to watch a dramatic performance, and they feel no difficulty in accepting music as a natural part of the plays. But I cannot accept that songs must be in plays. Let there be an abundance of songs and dances in those plays which are written to elicit cheap applause from the audience, or let wholly unnatural songs be forced into the mouths of the hero and the heroine as explanations of each event or situation; but while writing dramas one must be extremely careful about this. There are plays in which, after a tragic event such as the death of a dear one, the bereaved mother or wife starts singing a plaintive song, and that, too, to the accompaniment of rhythmic musical



instruments. Those who do not analyse this objectively may perhaps be moved to emotion by such a song of lamentation, but those who are connoisseurs or lovers of literature will leave the hall in utter disgust; it is not only unreal, it is absolutely offensive to the taste. Even heroes and heroines who did not know each other at all before, are seen singing a duet. Did they rehearse the song beforehand?

Truly speaking, with the exception of musical plays, it is necessary to exercise restraint and good judgement before introducing songs in other dramatic presentations. We can tolerate the character “Conscience” singing a song in a musical play, for Conscience is an allegorical role. But in the mouths of the hero and heroine, any song that is incidental to the story is absolutely unbecoming and out of place. No matter how richly imbued the song is with thought and sentiment, it is not at all desirable to use it to indicate the future of the dramatic plot. People do sing and dance in the course of their daily lives; such songs and dances do

depict their joys and sorrows, hopes and despair, but they sing and dance in particular circumstances. The plaintive song is sung long after the mournful event – with the dead body on their laps, they do not sing sorrowful tunes over it. Upon receiving any happy news, people shout or jump for joy, but they do not start dancing according to the accepted rules, with proper posture, gesture and rhythm. Song and dance may be introduced in a play portraying people's daily lives, but one must be cautious that they do not appear unnatural to the discriminating readers and spectators.

A drama is concerned with the subtler portions of the mind, and so the songs of dramas have to be imbued with elevating thoughts and sentiments. Just to maintain the purity of classical music, a drama cannot indulge in substandard compositions. The songs in a play are composed in order to attract the popular mind, and hence there is nothing to be said against them. But one must be careful that the songs do not contain the seeds of malevolence.

## Short Plays and Mystery Plays

Today people are extremely pressed for time; they do not have much leisure to read or watch plays. The relentless urge to triumph over time has gradually obsessed the human mind. Hence playwrights, and directors too, are obliged to adopt a policy of compromise and adjust to public demand. A short play does not have the same scope as a longer play to vividly portray life, or to effectively represent the conflicts of the characters. Nevertheless, today more stress is being given to short plays, since for most people the value of time has considerably increased.

It is impossible for a short play to be as wide-ranging as a long play. That is why almost all playwrights who try to do that fail. In a short play it is impossible to deal with the story of the characters' whole lives; even a particular event or conflict cannot be fully dealt with and done justice to. One must be satisfied with presenting only a

small part of any situation or theory. It is only by combining several playlets that the playwright can properly portray any situation, problem or ideology; several one-act plays joined together can thus give a good idea of the multifarious life of society.

The success of a play, particularly a mystery drama, depends largely on the creation of suspense. Unless the theme is very complicated, the readers or spectators do not feel particularly disturbed if the suspense is introduced in the very beginning; their feelings of appreciation remain unaffected. But if the plot is complicated, it is desirable to give the reader or audience time to form a rough idea about it before introducing suspense, instead of introducing it at the very beginning, as this will help them to appreciate it more. Otherwise, if the audience has not even understood the suspenseful situation, it is impossible to create in them the desire for release from the suspense. Instead people will spend most of their psychic energy pondering over what they do not understand in the complicated plot instead of being curious about what is coming next.

In my opinion this applies equally to both screen and stage plays. The difference between them is that the author of a screen play derives assistance from the art director or the studio technicians, whereas the author of a stage play does not. The latter has to arrange the environment through the dialogues of the characters.

## **Short Stories**

The range and scope of short stories are exactly the same as those of plays, but short-story writers must know the technique of presenting a long story concisely. Suspense is equally effective in short stories as in plays; dramatic skill is essential for the writer of those short stories which come in the category of sketches, because a sketch holds an intermediate position between a story and a play. Some critics think that sketches also come within the category of plays, and I do not see any reason to contradict their opinion. Actually the most significant difference between a play and a story is

that the characters in a drama act and talk before the readers or the audience in living form, whereas in a story or a novel it is the writer who talks, either personally or through his or her mentally created characters. The chief characteristic of a play – be it an opera, ballet, drama, play, shadow play, etc. – is that it contains expressions of living characters.

Whenever literature properly utilizes the opportunity to relate any actual incident or imaginary event cohesively and adroitly, such a creation is called a long story. In Sanskrit a long story is called *kathá*, and a short story is termed *kathániká*. The responsibility of the novelist, however, is a great deal more onerous than that of a story writer, for in novels the systematic narration of a story is not the sole or primary element; psychological analysis as well as the conflicts of the characters must also find proper expression. To compose coastal literature around stories is extremely difficult, if not impossible; but in novels it is quite possible. Novels are a form of fiction, or *kathányása* [sometimes called *upanyása*]. (It is

difficult to find exact equivalents in Sanskrit for these two words, “novel” and kathányása. The word kathányása, current in languages such as Bengali, Hindi, etc., means “to place together, to juxtapose”. There is some confusion about the meaning of the word in Bengali and Hindi. In some Indian languages the word kádambarii is used for kathányása; this is probably due to it being related to the Sanskrit book entitled Kádambarii. Novels never existed in ancient Indian literature, and thus there is no Sanskrit term for this word.)

Generally, we see that the human thinking capacity becomes somewhat dull in the wake of a major catastrophe. This accounts for the present psychic state of the human race which, as a result of two major wars which took place within a short period of time, is suffering from various miseries and tribulations. Humanity is at present unable to think, read or comprehend anything serious. Even artists and sáhityikas who are capable of thinking or discussing serious matters do not feel any urge to do so, thinking that if they do, they will not get any



encouragement or patronage from the public. To say that there are no artists today is completely incorrect; there are still some, though they lack vitality. What is scarce is not artists but patronage and encouragement. Even if we accept that a real artist does not create art in the hope of receiving encouragement, I would say that even when artists undertake to create something propelled by their heart's emotion or engaged in the endeavour to lose themselves in the expression of their art, it is necessary to provide them with the things they need in order to express their vital force. The lack of such a provision means that both artists and their art meet a premature death. So instead of blaming artists, rudely condemning their worthlessness, one has to admit this paramount truth: that since we ourselves are incapable of thinking or understanding anything serious, we are actually pushing the truly creative, high-quality artists towards destruction.

## Poetry



The essence of poetry or poetic literature is its penetrating appeal, where the feelings of the heart are the main thing. Whatever is narrated in prose in simple, direct language, if expressed in poetry will be tinged with sentiments from the core of the heart and with subtle suggestions of the unknown. The readers are required to understand the dynamic relation between the past and the future through the feelings of their hearts. That is why poetry cannot be comprehended by merely listening or by reading; to understand it one must touch the poet's heart with one's own heart.

These days humanity has lost its aesthetic appreciation for poetry as a result of torments caused by the harsh blows of reality. Poetic literature, particularly the epic, has become completely obsolete. And yet when human beings first attempted to determine the relation between the natural and the supernatural, when the subtle aesthetic sense awakened in them for the first time, the basket of literature was filled with cowrie shells(7) of poetry. But today these cowries are

obsolete – they have no value in the market – and poetic literature, too, is in the process of decay. Few people buy poetry books to read. Yet during the spring of youth, when the ebullience of the heart is pronounced, adolescents still read poems and try to explain them to others or recite them with all the sweetness of their hearts. But with advancing age, when the once sensitive mind, smitten by the blows and counter-blows of the world, becomes hardened like an over-burnt brick, charred in the fire of worldly ordeals, then its capacity to appreciate poetry is reduced to nothing. People come to like only those things that have some relation with reality, and the ebullience of the emotion of the heart no longer has any appreciable value. Of course there are exceptions, but generally we find that the poems that elderly people recite are invariably those that they had memorized during their early youth. In order to survive poets are now tending to compose realistic poems. This is not altogether bad, for at least in this way poetic literature may find the path to longevity.

## Lyrics

The poverty of lyricists is not so marked at present, since the market for songs still exists due to the cinema, radio, stage and recordings. Although what lyricists receive as remuneration is nothing compared to their labour, still their prospects are far better than that of poets. Any serious lyrics are heading for destruction – all that is left is the showy glitter of language. The purity of rágas or ráginiis [classical melodies] has been lost, and what remains is merely the glamour of adulterated, non-classical tunes; from the viewpoint of lyrical value, modern songs are gradually heading towards bankruptcy.

## Essays

Similarly, there is no current demand or appreciation for essays with serious themes. People today want light and attractive essays. Thus to satisfy this demand, novelists and essayists have started writing charming compositions in which seriousness has no place. Essayists take small or

great themes, from the lowest to the highest, and tell their stories lucidly with a few flashes of erudition here and there. The writers of such narratives or descriptions have no recognized standard before them, nor do they make any constructive endeavour to create one. Writers seem to give more importance to linguistic jugglery than to their main theme which is thus relegated to a secondary position. When the contents of a composition arouse a sense of literary appreciation or express the author's sense of responsibility, only then can such a composition be called an ideal essay.

While more superficial compositions lack profundity of thought, authors of serious compositions must acquire the skill of narrating in an absorbing conversational tone. Many good novelists lack this ability, and hence they fail to write attractive compositions.

## **Children's Literature**

There is yet another form of literature which is gradually gaining importance, and that is children's literature. Here the author's sense of responsibility and proficiency is more important than in any other branch of literature. Every sentence of children's literature should have a wonderful power to attract the mind and a crystalline simplicity, and should embody an attempt at open-hearted expression. The author has to explain through language and ideas how to live a pure straightforward life.

The child's mind is filled with fanciful imagery, and so the sáhityikas will also have to spread their wings and soar in the sky of imagination. However, they cannot afford to indulge in intricacies and complexities during their visionary ascent. The thirst for the distant and the earnest zeal to know the unknown that abides in the child's mind must be satisfied by drawing pictures of magical lands and relating colourful fairy tales. What is "real" or "natural" is not so important. What is more important is to carry the child's mind along

in the current of joy, and in the process to acquaint the child with the world in an easy and simple manner. The harshness of reality should not be portrayed – the child will not want to read about it or listen to it. “The prince of the mind with his wings outstretched in the azure sky, soars to the kingdom of the old witch beyond the worlds of the sun and the moon. He ties his Pegasus to the golden branches of the pearl tree and heads off in search of the sleeping princess in the silent, serene palace. He gets a tip as to where to find the magic wands of life and death, and rouses the princess from her centuries-old sleep. Then he finds out everything he can about the den where the demons sleep and sets off into the world to become a hero...” Picture after picture, colour after colour, must accompany the words; this is what the child’s mind craves.

Among those who are a little older, that is, boys and girls in their early teens, farces and satires are quite successful. In these children can find ideals that are conducive to the formation of their characters. But for those who are comparatively

young, simplicity will be the guiding principle in whatever is written. Overindulgence in wordplay, flowery language, figures of speech, or long, didactic preaching will turn children's literature into trash.

## Lullabies

A much neglected aspect of children's literature is the lullaby, which generally falls in the category of verse. As a form of literature it also has its own special characteristics. The lullaby portrays the visionary environments in which all children's literature should dwell; but the unfolding of the story takes place much more rapidly in lullabies. The child sees picture after picture in his or her mental mirror and slowly falls into the bosom of sleep. So the composer of lullabies has to be an accomplished painter at heart:

*Shánta haye' shoñre khoká*

*Bale' geche tor dádá,*

*Kine' debe duií ghórá*

*Kálo ár shádá.*

*Sakál beláy sháda ghóráy*

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***Be'ábe tumi ca're',  
Kálo gho'ráy ca'rbe yakhan  
Belá yábe pa're.***

*["Hush, my child, listen!" said your brother  
tonight.*

*He'll buy you two horses, one black and one  
white,*

*You'll ride the white in the morning bright,  
And ride the black one in the failing light.]*

The mind of the child gets lost in the horses, their colours, the time of day, and the joy of riding on horseback, and while musing over these pictures, he or she slowly and gradually falls asleep. It is important that lullabies should convey the inspiration to develop heroism and knowledge, but there should be no frightening ideas in them. If any fear is created in the children's minds even inadvertently, it cannot be regarded as a lullaby. Through such verses a child can easily become acquainted with nature in a way which makes the world delightful and captivating to them:

***"Boltá ghumáy, bhomrá ghumáy, ghumáy máchi,"  
Shiulii phuler gách'ti bale "Ámi jege' áchi"***



***Khoká – “Shiulii kena jáge?”  
 “Jhaře pařbe ha’le bhor,  
 Sei samaye soňár khoká ghumťi yábe tor.”***

*[“Asleep, asleep, all asleep  
 The wasp, the flea and the bumble-bee.  
 Awake am I, awake I keep.”  
 Says the shiulii-flower (coral jasmine) tree.  
 Child: “Why does the shiulii stay awake?”  
 Mother: “Because the blossoms will fall at  
 daybreak,  
 And at that time, my darling, you will awake.”]*

Indispensable domestic duties may also be taught through the medium of delight, as in such verses:

***Chi chi chi chi ráníi rándhte shekheni,  
 Shuktonite jhál diyeche ambalete ghi,  
 Jyátháimáke bale jhole mashalá doba ki?  
 (Ár) Parmánna reṇdhe bale phyán phelba ki?  
 (Edike) Bhojbárite khoṇj pařeche ekhan upáy kii?***

*[Alas, alas, hasn’t Rani learned the cooking art?*

*She puts chillies in shukto,(8) ghee in ambal tart!(9)  
 Asking Auntie, "Shall I put spices in broth?  
 From the sweet rice porridge, shall I drain off the  
 froth?"*  
*While the guests wait for dinner, hungry every one,  
 Now what's to be done, oh what's to be done?]*

Often through these rhymes even the weary,  
 long-suffering images of oppressed people may be  
 vividly expressed, and contrasted with the pomp  
 and glamour of prosperous society. But this, too,  
 should be expressed in a light-hearted fashion:

***Khukur doba biye ámi Haítamálár Deshe  
 Tárá gái balade caśe,  
 Hiirey dānt ghaśe.  
 Ruimách-pátol táder bhárebháre áse,  
 (Kintu) Khukuke ánte gele  
 Khukur shváshuříi  
 Pichan phire' base.***

*[Khuku will be wed in the wondrous land of  
 Haítamálá,  
 Where they till their fields with oxen and bulls,*

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*And brush their teeth with diamond-powder;  
Where there's fish and green gourd by the basketful.  
But going there to fetch Khuku,  
Her mother-in-law scorns her by turning her back.]*

Thus these neglected folk-lyrics and lullabies have enormous value in the formation of children's character. Enlightened sáhityikas should pay attention to this aspect of literature also.

## **Towards the Transcendental Entity**

As the sense of subtle aesthetics developed in human beings in the course of evolution, a desire to create art also awakened in them. The artist's ideal is to be established in transcendentality beyond the bounds of the sensory world. So artists, or more precisely, worshippers of fine art, have to be spiritual aspirants if they want to move in the right direction. The cultivation of fine arts by those who have not developed spiritual sentiment or accepted the spiritual ideal as the goal of life is merely a

mockery. Only those who look upon all worldly things from a spiritual perspective can realize in everything the blissful Transcendental Entity. The greater the realization of this Transcendental Entity, the greater the understanding of one's oneness with that Entity, and thus the greater one's success in the creation of art.

The successful creation of art is absolutely impossible for those who do not seek that subtle Entity, even though they possess some capacity to create. Such people's thought processes go adrift, like a sailboat with a torn sail. Their mental aberration is reflected in all of their writings, which ultimately become strange and grotesque.

Besides this, in the individual lives of such artists there occurs a serious catastrophe. In the battle between their transitory sense of aesthetics and their desire for material happiness, their strength of character gets destroyed by the tension between the subtle and the crude. That is why we find that in the history of the world those who

lacked purity or spiritual ideals and spiritual austerity, no matter how great their genius as poets, sáhityikas or artists, no matter what reputation they earned in their respective fields of art, could not command respect and prestige as human beings in society due to their loose characters. It is due to lack of strength of character that the talents of many good singers, actors and other kinds of artists have prematurely withered away before attaining full development.

As mentioned above, the greater the contact with transcendentality, the greater the success of the artist, for knowingly or unknowingly the human mind is seeking transcendentality. People yearn for the unknown; they cannot remain content with the known. Thus where there is an endeavour to create art merely out of the events of daily life, it does not appeal to the intuitional faculty of the human mind.

Can there be an artist without genius? Is art the result only of sincere endeavour, of hard labour? Quite a knotty question! I think the answer lies in

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the inherent spiritual thirst of human beings. In other words, a genius is born into this world with a powerful innate spiritual hunger, whether he or she realizes it or not. For those who do not have this spiritual hunger, the endeavour to become artists by effort and labour alone is absolutely useless. But then, if a person who has no creative genius succeeds in kindling his or her spiritual urge and desire for the infinite, it will not be impossible for him or her to develop genius.

## **Naturalness and Unnaturalness in Art**

Another question which has started to be discussed is the question of naturalness in art. According to many, art should faithfully express itself in the same natural way that, for example, people normally eat, sleep and talk; otherwise, they say, it will be defective. In the field of drama much emphasis is being given to this idea these days. This has also affected recitation and other forms of artistic expression. But I cannot fully agree with this view.

Depending upon the theme and nature of the topic, the introduction of diversity in theatrical expression is quite natural. To express crude ideas one must resort to crude language, crude gestures and crude forms of expression in daily life. These, however, cannot be employed to give expression to subtle feelings. For this a particular language, a particular diction and particular gestures will be necessary. Then it will be easy to appreciate the beauty of the dramatic performance at its face value, instead of looking at it as an expression of naturalness.

Actually, the vivid presentation of the artist's ideas is of primary importance, and to achieve this any means should be adopted. We should not be too concerned with naturalness or unnaturalness; none of the illustrious actors of the world have ever worried about this point. The dogmatic assertion about the importance of naturalness in art has not come from the mouths of important personages of

the theatrical world, but from petty people with superficial knowledge.

The combination of language and mudrá [gesture] that makes acting successful must be fully utilized by the actors. To maintain naturalness one should not use confused or incoherent language or make the characters gesture-less and awkward. In individual life, in our so-called natural state, we seek to express our inner ideas, and often the communication of these ideas to others is secondary. In a dramatic performance, however, this communication is of primary importance.

## Music

The same holds true for music. The combination of giitá- vadyá-nrtya [song, instrumental music and dance] is called saṁgiita [“music”]. When a song is composed only to express the laughter and tears of ordinary life, it is not very difficult to convey this to the ears and hearts of the people; the song discharges its responsibility well



enough using ordinary language and melody. But where the feelings and sensibilities are deep and subtle – where one has to create vibrations in the molecules and atoms of the body, in the chords of the heart – the music has to follow an extraordinary path. Hence, to those who are incapable of ingesting the subtle feelings of the science of music, the álápa [introductory portion of a classical piece] will be nothing but prálápa [delirious raving].

If music must descend to the ordinary level of life to conform to the desire for naturalness, then pre-eminence will be given to doggerels, and the sweetness and charm of real music will become extinct. Indeed, the music that is in vogue in the world today in the name of popular music is nothing but doggerels of this type, though expressed in better language. Language, rhythm and melody are indispensable parts of a song – one cannot exclude any one of them. (The difference between a song and instrumental music is that songs are comprised of rhythm, melody and language, but in [Indian]

instrumental music rhythm is predominant, melody is subordinate and language is absolutely nil.)

## **Dance and Recitation**

Dance is customarily divided into two categories: gestural and rhythmic. Many people are loathe to accept that gesture-less, rhythmic dance can be considered dance at all. If one looks at the characteristics of dance, one must admit that both gestures and rhythm are important components of a dance: the gestures give expression to the inner sentiment, and the rhythm gives it dynamism. If dance has only gestures but is devoid of rhythm, it is called pantomime, not dance. And dance devoid of gestures is merely a form of physical exercise – it is not art.

The greatest difference between recitation and acting is that in acting there is both language and gesture, while recitation consists of language only. Thus in acting there is greater scope for the

expression of refined aesthetic taste than in recitation.

## **Painting and Sculpture**

For architecture a perfect mastery of the science of engineering along with knowledge of art is necessary; thus there is a wonderful blending of the crude and subtle arts in architecture. No matter how great the suggestion of subtle aesthetic sense in architecture, it never has the scope to be unnatural. Yet it is in painting and sculpture, which are considered to be the subtlest of all the arts, that we find the true expression of the wonderful aesthetic quality of the human mind. In the calm stillness of a painting or sculpture, everything has to be vividly expressed – laughter and tears, hopes and fears, gestures and language. Indeed, painting and sculpture beautifully bridge the gap between the mundane and the supramundane.

In painting and sculpture, as in drama, the question of naturalness or unnaturalness arises, and

here, too, the same answer holds true: the mode of expression must be chosen to suit the sentiment expressed. In fact, to raise the question of naturalness or unnaturalness in painting is absolutely unfitting. At the time of giving physical expression to his or her mental image, the artist is not bound to reproduce a particular part of the body according to physiological science. Giving form to a thought or idea is what is important; the artist is not a teacher of physiology. Bringing thought or idea into the world of form is his or her artistic sádhana.

## **Society's Responsibility towards the Artists**

Artists and sáhityikas are the guides of society, and it is society's sacred duty to keep a watchful eye on their ease and comfort and to help them preserve their existence. This sense of duty is all the more necessary where art and literature is practised as a part of social service, not as a profession. People can on no account evade their responsibilities towards the artist, since art and literature are dedicated solely to the service of the

people. Where the state belongs to the people or is run according to their will – that is to say, in a democratic state – the government, as the representative of the people, should take on this sacred responsibility.(10) When the government is facing difficulties due to financial stringency, or where due to a particular policy or any other cause the state is reluctant to give encouragement to art, people outside the government in the broader community will have to directly shoulder the responsibility.

If we consider the financial condition of those who are cultivating the different fields of art today, we find that those who are practising music are the most solvent. Not to mention cinema, radio and recordings, musicians on the whole have ample opportunity to earn money by displaying their skills at social gatherings and variety shows.

[Yet] except for a few prominent individuals, the condition of the majority of dancers and instrumentalists is not at all good; it is worse than

that of singers – although dance and instrumental music are far subtler than vocal music.

Reciters, too, have very little scope to earn money. Many talented reciters stop their artistic endeavour due to lack of sufficient encouragement by society.

People may perhaps think that these days actors and actresses are riding on a wave of popularity. This may be true for a handful of people, but not for the majority. Only those who have earned their reputation in the cinema or on the professional stage have a good income and indeed they do very well; but for actors of mediocre talent the scope to earn money is quite limited. No one is willing to give new actors and actresses a chance. Even if they are given the opportunity to perform, the wages offered to them will not even be adequate for their subsistence. Most directors do not want to take risks with new, young actors and actresses. Producers and distributors find it more convenient to increase the sales of their films by using old and

seasoned stars. Most producers with experience in the film industry have little knowledge about techniques and standards in the art of filming and so they also do not come forward to help new artists. Therefore, on the whole, in all the countries of the world the only hope for newcomers with acting talent is the professional stage. Amateur theatre is in a decrepit condition due to its failure to compete with cinema except in countries where it receives appreciable state aid. So it is not possible for it to accommodate new artists.

If dramatic art is to develop properly – indeed, if it is to be kept alive at all – then every country must adopt a strong policy. The first step of this policy will be to build up fully- or partially-government-aided theatres in every major village and city, which will be exempt from amusement taxes. Of course, people should expect that the government will adopt a liberal policy and award full freedom to connoisseurs of art in the selection of the subject matter of the plays. And if the condition is imposed that no political groups shall be allowed



to use plays as media for their party propaganda, this will be a welcome measure. When the number of theatres increases and dramatic performances become popular, there will be a greater demand for dramas. This will certainly encourage talented authors to write dramas. It is because plays do not sell well that powerful authors do not want to write dramas. If plays receive proper remuneration, then there will certainly be a change in the outlook of authors. Furthermore, if the number of theatres increases, playwrights will no longer have to depend upon the generosity of a few big theatre magnates; for if plays prove their worth in the theatres, playwrights will not have to worry about how to sell them.

One more step, in my opinion, that may be taken in order to encourage playwrights, is to give them financial help in the form of a daily honorarium for the number of days their plays run on the stage, regardless of whether it is a professional stage or a non-professional stage. This will give playwrights the opportunity to earn money

whenever their plays are staged, and thereby free their minds from the cares of subsistence. Then they will be able to apply their minds to writing more new plays for society.

Gone are the days when poetry was a commercial proposition. Books of poetry sell even less than dramas and it is hard to say how far the slogan “Read more poetry” will help. But I think we can expect good results if we introduce the custom of presenting books of poems at social ceremonies and festivals. Poets may even feel sufficiently encouraged if a variety of books of poetry are selected as textbooks for higher classes. Each book will be written by a single poet because if the poems of different poets are compiled in one book, none of the poets will reap any financial benefit.

## **Encouraging Painting and Sculpture**

Painting and sculpture, the two subtlest art forms, are the most lacking in popular encouragement and sympathy. It may be argued

that in countries where idolatry is prevalent, sculptors have been able to preserve their art due to popular support, and the problem of their subsistence is thus being solved without government aid. Is this not, some say, the most significant sign of popular support? I cannot persuade myself, however, that the people of idolatrous countries are connoisseurs and patrons of sculpture. There is no doubt that the people of such countries buy images from the image-makers, but they do this due to the inspiration of their religion and not out of love for art. If love of art were their motivation, then they would certainly not throw those symbols of art into the water after worship.(11) The situation is different where people buy images of metal, wood or stone to permanently establish a deity in their homes; but there, too, the buyer's intention is not to encourage art. Although they pay some attention to the beauty and sweetness of the image, they do not give a free hand to the sculptor to create it as he or she wishes and the artists' work remains confined within the boundaries of the religious eulogies to particular

gods; they seldom have any opportunity to display their own original ideas. Hence the observation that the people of idolatrous countries patronize art by buying images is not correct – they only help to preserve a particular class of artists.

In order to encourage the art of sculpture, sculptors should be given full freedom as artists, or else their creations will be mere made-to-order, commonplace things. These artists should be free to sculpt images of human beings, animals, natural objects and all natural and unnatural events. Then, freely giving shape to new ideas, they will go on producing new gods every day, and the dhyána mantras(12) of the gods will evolve around the products of their art. Then alone will art find its justification. The artists' creations will not remain confined within the four walls of the temples, but will rather be in close contact with the common people in all spheres of social life. Statues, deities and other creations will attain a place in every field of life – in homes, drawing rooms, clubs, schools,

parks, and indeed, everywhere. Sculpture must also be popularized by occasionally holding exhibitions.

Image-makers do receive some patronage, whether or not it is thanks to idol worship, so that category of people do have a chance to make a living, but as regards those who practise painting, there is no longer any such opportunity.

Nevertheless, at one time small groups of painters emerged in different lands. In Bengal, for instance, there was a community of people who took to painting as their trade; they were known in society as painters or *patúyás*. Of course, while painting gods and goddesses they had to work according to the specifications embodied in the sacred hymns and thus had very little scope for original expression. However, apart from these divine images, they used to paint many other things as well, taking full advantage of their freedom and opportunities. People used to patronize these *patúyás* in the same way as they did other artisans. When they went shopping they would also buy one or two *país* [paintings] painted by the village artists.

But those days are now gone. Today such paintings have lost their prestige due to various psychological and economic factors. With the development of sophisticated techniques of printing, it has become far too easy for people to collect all sorts of cheap and showy pictures. This has afforded opportunities to a few reputed artists to earn money, and they, in turn, have no doubt provided opportunities to other traders to earn money as well, but in the process they have uprooted the patúyá community from society.

Lack of proper appreciation is one of the causes of the destruction of this art form, if not the chief cause. The people of India have failed to appreciate the pictures painted by the village artists, considering them to be very ordinary or even unnatural. Instead they buy, at higher prices, pictures of the same kind or inferior quality, which are painted by reputed artists from distant lands. Previously people looked down on the paintings of Jamini Roy as pictures of Kalighat, but when a famous gentleman from a far-off country showered unstinting praise upon these very Kalighat pictures,

the local people deigned to take a little interest in him. Jamini Roy should have received long ago the recognition which he has today.

Actually, most people have consistently ignored the merits and demerits, the speciality and charm of paintings, and that is why it is incumbent on the state or cultural institutions to keep this form of art and its practitioners alive. Furthermore, they must awaken in the people an aesthetic sense; that is, it is the duty of these institutions to teach people to appreciate art. The names of the artists Nandalal Bose and Aban Thakur are well established today; yet I think people would have taken much longer to recognize them had Rabindranath not preceded them.

To buy original paintings is often beyond people's means, and so, in spite of their love of art, they are generally satisfied with inferior substitutes; in other words, they decorate their homes with copies. Artists do not usually benefit financially from this, and indeed very often they suffer losses – and



not only financially. To remedy this, art galleries should be maintained in all major clubs and libraries; original paintings could then be lent to the members in exactly the same way as books are loaned from the libraries. In this way artists, especially new ones, would receive great encouragement. Clubs and libraries could even take a venture and print the most popular pictures.

## **Authors' Publishing Cooperatives**

When we consider the most numerous and prolific sáhityikas today, we find that their literary efforts have generally not been able to solve the problem of their subsistence. In most cases the sugar of their profit is being gobbled up by ant-like publishers. We hear everywhere that there is a slump in the book market, and the royalty rates for new writers is not even discussed. If those pioneers of society, who portray the past in the present and the present for future posterity, who paint a picture of the future for the people of the present, are forced to starve or half-starve, this will certainly not be to

the credit of human society. It is unthinkable for these creative geniuses to have to curse their own fate.

In my opinion sáhityikas themselves will have to find the solution to this problem. They should publish their books themselves on a cooperative basis. It is not possible for insolvent sáhityikas to operate this business individually, nor is it desirable, for then they might develop a capitalistic, materialistic mentality. Nor is it desirable to constantly blame governments without reason; indeed, if the book publishing business falls into the hands of the government, sáhityikas may suffer more harm than good. The publishing business must be kept completely in the hands of organizations other than governmental ones, or else literature will cease to be literature and will be transformed into the bulletins of various parties, as has been, and is, the case in many countries of the world.

## **The Critics and Patrons**

All have the right to criticize artists or their art – artists who do not like criticism have no future. But it is also appropriate to say a word or two about critics. First, their criticisms should help artists, not discourage them or belittle them. Secondly, those who criticize others should also be well-versed in art and literature. To pass opinion without having studied or written anything oneself, after merely going through a few books of criticism, is nothing but officious meddling and interference. Such critics, who lack adequate knowledge, indulge in literary gasconades based on superficial views, and are able to get away with it. (Such sham and hollow intellect has no value when people comment on science writings, or on philosophical writings or other kinds of scripture; for it will ultimately be exposed.) So even sincere and discriminating artists who are truly willing to change often feel greatly disturbed by such criticism.

In this connection there is one more important point to make: those who could not succeed as authors themselves, even after writing

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dozens of books, are the most vocal in criticizing others. In other words, they betray their own repeated failures through their criticism. It is futile to expect any help or constructive guidance from this class of so-called critics. In all spheres of life it must be remembered that if one seeks to display one's authority, one also has to shoulder responsibility. We have the right to walk on the streets, and so we also bear the responsibility of keeping them in good order by forming a municipality. Those who love art and artists should criticize them with a sympathetic mind. In such criticism there may even be caustic censure of serious and sizeable flaws, yet behind all this the sympathetic feeling of the critic's heart should be easily understood by any sáhityika or artist; then the artist may easily accept the critic. Indeed, today we need this type of critic.

These days Sáhitya Sarasvatii [the goddess of art and learning] is mortgaged to Lakśmii [the goddess of wealth], for the value of the goddess of learning now depends upon the favours of the

goddess of wealth. Whatever the quality of the writing, if the publisher is well-established, the book will sell well in the market due to effective advertising. Thus the indigent sáhityika suffers humiliation as he or she cringes at the doors of reputed publishers; and publishers are quick to exploit this situation in their favour. Due to publicity stunts and propaganda, it has become impossible for the common people to know which book is good and which is not.

There is a flagrant dearth of developed critical literature or critical magazines in every country of the world. Books sell in the market on the strength of publicity skills, or on the strength of how they excite the lower human propensities, or in some cases by their crude ability to provide entertainment for the common masses. That is why we find that books published by the authors themselves, regardless of how good they are, do not sell well in the market. On the other hand, books which excite people's sexuality, whatever might be their content or language, sell extremely well. Every

reader knows that books such as those of Sasadhar Dutt's Mohan series or Dinen Roy's Rahasyalaharii series sold much better than any of the good-quality books of Bengali literature. Thus sales are not a criterion for judging the superiority of a book. It is therefore a great problem for the readers, purchasers and library directors to select books, and there will be no solution to this problem as long as high-quality critical literature and critical reviews are not available.

Caught in the eddies of commercial and party cliques, sáhityikas have to face yet another disadvantage. Literary criticism, whether right or wrong (though in my opinion all samálocaná is just samálocaná(13) and should always be constructive), must acquaint the readers with the writer. But where literature is not given proper recognition for any particular reason or where the writer is kept remote from the readers and does not receive an introductory review, the situation is very difficult for the writer. It is to avoid such problems that today's writers have started knocking at the doors

of reputed publishers. This is certainly not a healthy sign for the world of literature.

Powerful people have exploited sáhityikas in various ways, taking advantage of their indigence. This has been going on since ancient times. In those days even kings and emperors encouraged court poets, giving them gifts of tax-free properties, and in that way bought their head and their hands. Talented sáhityikas or artists frequently had to do uncongenial jobs under circumstantial pressure for the amusement of their patrons. To satisfy the whims of their licentious patrons, they had to compose obscene poems and sculpt obscene statues and images. To make their patrons' enemies look contemptible, they had to besmirch their names with scandals and calumnies. To extol the dress, colour, family, caste, class and ancestry of their patrons, they had to resort to lies and fraud and cite the revelations of the gods as substantiation. The same condition has continued even today. With very few exceptions, most sáhityikas belong to the lower stratum of society. In spite of their desire to work



independently, most of them have pawned themselves, from the grey matter of their brains to the very tips of their fingers, to particular people and organizations. Even those who appear from their writings to be bold and spirited, have, under circumstantial pressure, become the playthings of political parties.

In contrast to olden times, today the different countries of the world have allocated numerous awards for sáhityikas. But that is where the danger lies. Every government, whether monarchical, republican or autocratic, is run according to a particular ideology, and so there is little chance for the government to suddenly become impartial in bestowing awards on sáhityikas. Naturally it will judge the merits and demerits of the sáhityikas in accordance with the bias of its own party, and consequently sáhityikas will be compelled to sacrifice their ideals to feed their stomachs.(14) These observations are generally applicable to different types of governments, but especially to democratic states, for in democratic states

ideological clashes are more in evidence, and hence the need to propagate ideologies is also more acute. That is why democratic states want to use sáhityikas as propaganda tools. Needless to say, such made-to-order writings cannot be called literature at all – political propaganda can never be called literature.

If a government sincerely wishes to give encouragement to good and honest sáhityikas, it should form a board of non-political educators to give awards. This task could also be performed by the universities for, on the whole, universities still maintain their non-political nature. Nevertheless the appointment of a non-political board is preferable, for these days there is an increasing tendency among universities to flatter political leaders in the hope of getting an increased government subsidy or grant. By liberally awarding doctorate degrees to ministers and their deputies, regardless of whether they deserve it or not, the impartiality of the universities is being gradually eroded.

There is one kind of critic who become extremely upset when sáhityikas attach themselves to a particular literary group; they say that since literature is for all, why should a sáhityika be attached to any particular group? I, however, hold a different view. The ideal of literature is to promote the welfare of all, but the path this endeavour will take cannot necessarily be the same for everyone. What is there to grumble about if those sáhityikas whose mode of service is similar, choose to work in a group? Those who object to the formation of literary groups and societies that dub themselves “Anti-so-and-so” lack tolerance as well as civic sense. Sáhityikas may also form “Pro-so-and-so” groups, and no one should object.

## **Acquiring Proper Knowledge**

The greatest obstacle to the collective progress of the human race is the ignorance of the individual mind. Knowledge is for all – it should be available to all and free like the light and air. It is undeniable that the most powerful medium for the

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dissemination of knowledge is a good book. That the value of an object is assessed in the field of application is undoubtedly true. And so the greatest means of assessing the value of knowledge is its successful application in the practical field. We cannot accept purely theoretical knowledge as true knowledge – either it is self-delusion or a luxury. Even recognized knowledge loses its value if, after we acquire it, we stow it away like a pile of sacks in a corner of our mind. Of course, if some people lack the ability to express through language either their own feelings or the knowledge that they have acquired through study, I have no complaint against them. Yet I would say that an artist should try to convey whatever he or she knows to the hearts of the people in an easily understandable manner. Anyone who does not do this is, in my opinion, not properly conscious of his or her social responsibility. Of course, it is quite a different matter if a person suffers some sort of inconvenience or disadvantage in this regard. Those who prove their sense of social duty by placing their

feelings properly before people are indeed artists; they are truly distinguished sáhityikas.

The sole cause of the internal weakness of human society is its ignorance. The superlative intuition that removes this ignorance is nothing but the thought of the Cosmic Mind. Art or literature is one of the sources from which common people get the opportunity to become established in the Cosmic Mind. If the mind of one fails to know the minds of others, if the minds of many are not comprehended by the mind of one, then how is the establishment of unity possible? The sádhaná of the artist or the sáhityika has been continuing throughout the ages, and its aim is to see one among many and lead the many to the path of one. In this effort there is no imposition, no legal injunction, no imperious pressure by any administration, only a sweet and cooperative relationship. Though separated into many countries, many states, many religions, many communities and many languages, the human race is an indivisible entity. Every human mind is but the diversified individual manifestation of that same

indivisible Cosmic Mind. Today we look forward to the advent of that artist, that sáhityika who will convey this truth to the hearts of humanity in a still sweeter language, still more strongly and deeply.

The human race is moving at an irresistible speed. Today humanity wants to forget those whose works have centred around various kinds of fissiparous tendencies. Human beings want to channelize the full range of their vision towards the bright future – a future which will transcend all individual or group interests, all territorial limits of countries and states, and transform the individual fates of many people into one destiny. Human beings no longer want to rely on so-called providential favour.

Individual heroism is about to lose its vibrant spirit. Nowadays people have learned that if the thrill of victory is due to anyone, it certainly belongs to humanity. About seven hundred years ago the Asian poet Chandidasa, from an obscure corner of Bengal, sang about the same great possibility:

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***Shuńa he mánuś bhái,  
Sabár upare mánuś satya  
Táhár upare náí.***

*[O human beings, my brothers and sisters,  
Humanity is the highest truth,  
There is nothing beyond it.]*

Today not even the Pacific Ocean between Asia and America is difficult to cross. The people of Asia and America are touching each other's minds and have learned to accept each other sympathetically as their own. Europe, Africa, Australia, Mercury, Jupiter, the stars, the comets, the constellations – none of them are alien to the others, none are distant from the others. Gradually everyone has begun to realize the vibration of the one integral mind.

It is my firm conviction that the future of humanity is not dark. Every human being will reach that inextinguishable flame that is forever alight beyond the veil of the darkness of the present – and reach it they must. Those who carry the message of that effulgent light will be forever revered by all

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humanity. I see in the sáhityikas and artists of today the potentiality to become such memorable and venerable people, and that is why I hold them in great regard. The American poet Carl Sandburg has said:

There is only one man in the world  
and his name is All Men.

There is only one woman in the world  
and her name is All Women.

There is only one child in the world  
and the child's name is All Children.(15)

In exactly the same strain, in perhaps sweeter language, the same idea has been expressed by the Asian poet Satyendranath:

*Jagat júriyá ek játi áche*  
*Se játir nám mánuśa játi;*  
*Ek prthiviir stanye pálita*  
*Eki ravi-shashii moder sáthii.*

*Shiitátapa, kśudha-trśńár jválá*  
*Sabái ámrá samán bujhi;*  
*Kaci-kāṇcáguli dāṇto kare' tuli*

***Bāṇcibār taře samán yujhi.***

***Dosar khuṇji o básar bāṇdhi go  
Jale đubi, bāṇci páile đauṇá;  
Kálo ár dhalo báhire keval  
Bhitare sabái samán ráuṇá.***

***Báhirer chop áṇcaře se lop  
Bhitarer rauṇ palake phóte.  
Bámuṇ-shúdra, brhat kśudra  
Krtrim bhed dhúláy loṭe.***

***Ráge anuráge nidrita jáge  
Ásal mánuś prakat hay;  
Varṇe varṇe náhika visheś  
Nikhil bhuvan Brahmamaya.***

*[There is only one race in the world,  
And that is the human race,  
Nourished with the milk of the same Mother Earth,  
Dwelling within the same compass of the sun and the  
moon.*

*The same heat and cold, hunger and thirst,  
We all equally feel.*

*Together we raise tender green plants and make  
them strong.*

*We all struggle to preserve our lives.*

*We seek friends and comrades and build happy  
homes,*

*We all drown in water, we all thrive on land.  
Black and white are merely external hues –  
Internally the blood of all is red.*

*By penetrating below the surface,  
The true inner nature is instantly revealed.  
The Brahman and the outcaste, the great and the  
small,  
Are all artificial distinctions that ultimately crumble  
to dust.*

*When love awakens in sleeping souls,  
Then true human beings will emerge.  
There is no difference between one colour, one race,  
and another*

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*For the entire universe is pervaded by one Infinite  
Consciousness.]*

Human beings of today, in chorus with  
Chandidasa, Sandburg and Satyendranath, will move  
together shoulder to shoulder towards an exalted  
human oneness, towards the highest fulfilment of  
their individual lives.

***Nivir̥ aekye yáy mishe' yáy  
Sakal bhágya sab hrday;  
Mánuśe mánuśe náiko prabhed  
Nikhil mánava Brahmamay.***

*[Inseparably united, all faiths and hearts will merge.  
For there is no distinction among human beings –  
The whole humanity is an expression of the Supreme  
One.]*

14 February 1957

## Footnotes

(1) There is no equivalent word for sáhityikas in English. Sáhityikas are those who write with the thought of the welfare of all humanity uppermost in their minds. –Eds.

(2) “Coastal literature”. Taástha, “coastal”, refers to the “coastline” or “shoreline” between the temporal and the eternal (see the section “Building the Road to the Future”). –Eds.

(3) The spirit of this mantra is that all human beings are inseparably united. For the complete mantra and the English translation, see “Social Psychology”, “Ananda Marga – a Revolution” or “Problems of the Day”; for the author’s line-by-line explanation of the mantra, see “Saṁgacchadhvaṁ” in Volume 3. –Eds.

(4) See “Práña Dharma” and “Deprivation of Práña Dharma” in Volume 2. –Eds.

(5) Compiled by the late poet Vasanta Ranjan Roy Vidwadvallabha.

(6) Philosophically, Shiva-liuṅga refers to the Entity from which all things originate. For further discussion on Shiva-liuṅga, see “Tantra and Indo-Aryan Civilization” in Discourses on Tantra Volume 1, 1993. –Eds.

(7) Cowrie shells were once used as money. –Eds.

(8) A vegetable dish which is not meant to be hot or spicy. –Eds.

(9) A sour sauce-like disk which never contains ghee. –Eds.

(10) See also the later section The Critics and Patrons. –Eds.

(11) As is the custom with, for example, the statues used during the annual Durgá Pújá festival. –Eds.

(12) A Sanskrit verse listing the attributes of a deity, to be used for visualizing that deity in meditation. – Eds.

(13) Samálocaná is normally used to mean “criticism”, but more precisely means “proper criticism”. –Eds.

(14) See also the earlier section Society’s Responsibility towards the Artists. –Eds.

(15) This is part of the last stanza of “Timesweep”, published in Honey and Salt, 1963. –Eds.

# The end

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# DECLARATION

Read Prout and let others read it for the purpose of finding a just solution to the economic, political and other problems of all people of the world.

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If you have any question, you may ask.

Acarya Satyabodhananda Avadhuta

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