A History of Marathi Literature

Kusumawati Deshpande
M.V. Rajadhyaksha

Sahitya Akademi

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The sculpture reproduced on the end paper depicts a scene where three soothsayers are interpreting to King Suddhodana the dream of Queen Maya, mother of Lord Buddha. Below them is seated a scribe recording the interpretation. This is perhaps the earliest available pictorial record of the art of writing in India.

From Nagarjunakonda, 2nd century A.D.

Courtesy : National Museum, New Delhi.

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PREFACE

Professor (Smt.) Kusumawati Deshpande, who had undertaken to write a history of Marathi literature (from the beginnings to 1920) for the Sahitya Akademi, died suddenly in November 1961. The manuscript of the history she left behind was incomplete. It comprised Parts I, II, and III, and the following from Part IV: 'The Growth of Prose' 'The Growth of the Novel' and only 'Keshavsut' (upto para 2) from the section 'Keshavsut and the Poetry of His Age', as they appear in this book.

Towards the end of 1975, the Sahitya Akademi assigned to me the work of editing and completing the unfinished manuscript, and of adding a supplement to it to cover the period from 1920 to 1960. The editing has kept the content of the original manuscript mostly undisturbed.

The Supplement—Part V of the book—was not intended to go into great detail, but to give a broad idea of the main currents in the literature of the period, dwelling on the work of the major writers. It has therefore had to leave out several writers and books that would ordinarily find a place in a fuller history.

This history ends at 1960. The year is no more than a convenient point for marking off the period from the next one. It does not seal off the period, for the activity the history record is continuous. Some of the authors treated in Part V produced important works after 1960, but all such works could not be dealt with here. Similarly, several important writers whose significant works were published after 1960, have not been included here, though they had started writing before that year. Maybe, this has not been followed very rigidly; but it would be unnatural to be very rigid in a matter like this.

The reader will notice some overlapping in the contents of Parts IV and.V. This was unavoidable, with the work of certain authors falling on both sides of the line drawn at 1920.

I took an unconscionably long time in carrying out the assignment. I owe thanks to the Sahitya Akademi for bearing with the delay.

Bombay,
22 May 1985

M.V. RAJADHYAKSHA

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Part I

The Old Period

Maharashtra

It is hardly possible to give a consistent and authenticated account of the earliest settlement in Maharashtra or to explain the name of the region. Scholars have made various surmises on the basis of references to these in ancient literature. They have tried to determine the history and significance of the words 'Maharattha and 'Rashtrika', and the scope and extent of Maharashtri Prakrit on the basis of references, in various Puranas, to the regio, and to the dynasties of kings. Coming to a period which is historically less obscure, it is that the name 'Maharathi' is found in the Satawahana period. It is likely that the Ratthis of an earlier period began to call themselves Maharatthis, at the time when the prefix 'Maha' seems to have come into vogue. Patanjali named his work *Mahabhashya.* Bharat came to be known as *Mahabharat*. The prefix came to be used very frequently in designations and titles.

Maharashtra seems to have developed a distinctive culture and a palpable unity in the period of the dynamic Satawahanas. Their victories, *yajnas* and celebrations are commemorated on several stone-inscriptions found around Nasik. This was the centre of their Brahmanic but martial culture. Their capital was Paithan. They were great patrons of Prakrit and it was during their regime that the work *Gathasaptashati* was collated.

The first reference to Maharashtra, however, is found in a fourth-century inscription discovered near Eran in the Sagar district in Madhya Pradesh. It is a tablet erected in commemoration of his fallen soldiers by Satyanaga, Senapati of Shridhar Verma who is conjectured to have been a lieutenant of an Abheer king, and had become independent after the decline of the Abhirs. The inscription is of 365 A.D. Satyanaga writes of himself as a 'Maharashtri'. A clearer reference to the three parts of Maharashtra is to be found in the inscription at Aihole (in the Bijapur district) of 634 A.D. which has a stanza by

Ravikirti celebrating the exploits of Satyashraya Pulakeshi, the Chalukya king. The three parts of the country ruled over by Pulakeshi spread from the Narmada in the north to the Tungabhadra and the Krishna in the south. The area broadly comprises Vidarbha, Desa and Aparanta or Konkan. This tripartite region had been united by language and by governance since the days of the Satwahanas, the Guptas and the Wakatakas. The region continued to be under one rule during the reigns of the Chalukyas, the Rashtrakutas and the Yadavas. The political unity continued to a certain extent till much later times under Muslim rule and in a lesser degree under the Marathas until the death of Peshwa Madhavrao I. But afterwards, fissiparous tendencies proved stronger than the innate unity. These were exploited in times to come.

Through all these stages, however, the Marathi language and the literature in it proved to be the primary and the greatest unifying force. The Mahanubhavas were the first to insist on the use of Marathi, to realize the importance of Maharashtra as a 'Mahanta-Rashtra', and also to enumerate its parts as 'Khanda-mandalas', differing only slightly from one another in the language current in them. Under the banner of Dnyaneshwar, the saints of Maharashtra built a cultural democracy on this foundation of the language. Marathi literature has been the unifying force and the most effective cultural leaven in Maharashtra through the centuries.

The Marathi Language

It is not easy to trace the origin of any language precisely. Some older established languages, some dialects, sometimes some foreign influences too, mingle to form and develop a pattern of expression which gradually takes the shape of a new, full-fledged language. It is even more difficult to determine the periods of the various stages in the development of a language. This can be done only with the help of inscriptions and whatever ancient literature is available. Much of the story has necessarily to depend on conjecture. As with the progress of research more light is thrown on the origins and the mutual relationships of the various Indian languages, the obscurity about their early history may diminish.

Marathi draws the major part of its vocabulary from Sanskrit, Prakrit, Pali, Apabhransha and the local languages or '*Deshi Bhashas*' of ancient India. Eighty percent of its words are drawn from these sources. The syntax and inflections in Marathi have evolved from the syntax and inflections in these languages. These are, therefore, the main sources of Marathi. From Vedic Sanskrit was evolved classical Sanskrit, which in its turn led to the four types of Prakrit that are believed to have prevailed in four different parts of the country—Shauraseni in the Mathura Mandal, Magadhi in Magadh, Paishachi in the Balhic regions (usually identified roughly as the North-West frontier region of undivided India) and Maharashtri in Maharashtra. There are indications of the use of these for different purposes in the literature of the same area too. During the heyday of Sanskrit and Prakrit, as for instance, in the days of Patanjali, the vernaculars or *Deshabhashas* were also known as Apabhransa. Desha-*bhasha* seems to have been a relative term, depending on the period in which it was used. At a later stage, newer Desha-*bhashas* of the various regions drew upon the resources of the resional Prakrit and Apabhransha and developed into full-fledged languages. These came to be known as the modern languages: Marathi, Bengali, Rajasthani and others. Some of them resemble one another very closely. It is not very easy to differentiate them in their early stages. An early poetical work like *Prithvi-raj Raso*, for instance, is known variously as a Bengali, or a Hindi, or a Rajasthani work.

Marathi came to be used as a literary language in about the eleventh century. It must have been in use as a Deshabhasha for at least a couple of centuries before then. Traces of its use and some of its characteristics are to be found during that period. There are references to the use of the *Deshabhashas* and even to works in some of them in the sixth century. They were gradually acquiring the position of literary languages, with the resources of the Prakrits of their regions and Apabhransha. Very little evidence, however, is available to help us in tracing the evolution of Marathi from Maharashtri. The Apabhransha influence is traceable more clearly. It is also held by some scholars that Marathi represents a re-Sanskritised stage. During the spread of Buddhism and Jainism, *Apabhransha* was used as the

main language for religious teaching. As the language of the people, it became the chief vehicle for the spread of the new religious cults. Then in the ninth century there followed the revival of Hinduism and its reinstatement as the most powerful religion. The development of Marathi synchronised with this. The proportion of *tatsama* words, the sharp sounds of pointed consonants, and the clarity of pronunciation in Marathi are considered to be evidence of a process of re-Sanskritisation.

In the ninth century, the Rashtrakutas ruled over Maharashtra. It was a great dynasty of powerful kings like Dantidurga, Krishna, Dhruva, and Govind, who ruled over the Deccan for more than two hundred years. They were good patrons of art and learning. But the language of learning in those days was Sanskrit. Marathi had been in use as a spoken language since about 600 A.D. It had spread in far-flung areas up to Mysore in the South. But it was not yet used as a language of literature. Its traces are, therefore, to be found only in inscriptions which were meant to be seen by all the people.

The earliest Marathi inscription (983 A.D.) so far known is the one at the foot of the huge monolithic statue of Gomateshwara at Shravanbelgola, in Mysore. It consists of only one sentence श्री चावुण्डराजें करवियलें. The statue with its remarkable height of fifty-seven feet bears testimony to the exquisite sculpture of the day. The inscription is an index of the spread of Marathi to as far south as Mysore, and also of its position as one of the languages of the people, which the king or his minister thought it necessary to use in an inscription. The other sentence गंगराये सुत्ताले करवियले appears to have been carved some years later. About twenty-eight inscriptions and copper-plates in Marathi, dating from the tenth century to the twelth have been discovered by now. They mark the different stages of the development of the language and its growing position in the life of the people. It is because the language was spoken so widely that deeds of charitable gifts like the one at Patan of 1203 A.D., celebrating the gift of a *math* by King Soidev to his guru, and the imperial mandates of King Aparnaditya of 1183 A.D. were drawn up in Marathi.

Early Marathi Literature

Marathi had acquired a respectable place in court life by the time of the Yadava kings. The Pandharpur inscriptions of 1273 A.D., of the days of Raj Shiromani Ramdevrao, is in flawless Marathi. Marathi was spoken by all castes and classes. Treatises in Marathi were written and read out in the court of Ramdevrao, who was always pleased to have them dedicated to himself. In the twelfth century, during the reign of the last three Yadava kings, a great variety of literature in verse and prose was created. There were folk-tales and stories for children, folk-songs and *pauranic* songs; and also treatises on astrology, medicine and such other subjects of popular needs. Another kind of literature meant to please the patrons and kings also gradually came into existence. It consisted mostly of long, rhetorical poems, based on *pauranic* stories, or religious and philosophical topics. The oldest work available of this type is *Vivek-sindhu* by Mukundaraj.

During the twelfth century there arose in India a number of popular religious cults which broke away from orthodox Hinduism and the domination of Sanskrit. They aimed at a religious awakening of the masses, by offering them simple forms for worship through their own languages. Such were the Jain, Shaiva, Vaishnava, and Lingayat cults in the south, which set aside Sanskrit and chose the medium of a language like Tamil or Telugu or Kannada. Such was also the Nath cult, which had spread almost all over India. In Maharashtra, it resorted to the use of Marathi. It can be easily surmised that many Marathi songs and bhajans must have been in vogue during the days of Macchindranath, Gorakhnath and others. Works like *Goraksh-Geeta* and *Amarnath-Samwad* are attributed to Gorakhnath himself. Mukundaraj, the author of *Viveksindhu*, the earliest available work in Marathi, also belonged to the Nath Pantha.

The earliest book in Hindi, according to generally accepted opinion, is one on *alankaras* or the figures of speech. Hindi literature, 'during the earliest period—between 1000 A.D. and 1400 A.D.—was rhetorical and secular in tone. It consisted chiefly of the work of Jain poets, preserved in Gujarat, or Bengal or Maharashtra. Gujarati, the language of Gujarat, Maha-

rashtra's neighbour, saw the beginnings of its literature in 1185 A.D., in the *Bharateshwar-Bahubali Rasa* by Salibhadra. This was secular and heroic in spirit. The main, or perhaps the sole, current in Marathi literature, however, was of religious and philosophical exposition. This, like the literature in all the other languages, was in verse. Mukundaraj wrote his *Viveksindhu*—the first literary work in the language—primarily with the object of opening out before his patron Jaitrapal a 'sea of philosophy'. He wrote it at the age of sixty, when as he says, 'even breathing was tiring to him'. The work was composed at Ambanagari, identified with Ambhor near Bhandara, in Vidarbha by some scholars, and with Ambejogai, in Marathwada, by others, where he was staying near the *samadhi* of his Guru. He bases his exposition of the basic tenets of Hindu philosophy and the Yogamarga on 'Shankarokti' and he undertook these labours in order that the world should be cleansed and sanctified and made happy.

The work consists of eighteen chapters with a total of 1671 verses in the *ovee* metre. Mukundaraj also wrote other works like *Paramamrit, Paramvijaya and Mulastambha.* He wrote in a chaste and lucid style, worthy of the precursor of Dhyaneshwar. His work may be said to be a confluence of various currents of contemporary life. He used the language of the people. He belonged to a leading religious cult, and aimed at presenting some texts of ancient Hinduism from the point of view of the cult.

Yadav literature however was not limited to religiosity. Hemadri, the versatile administrator of Ramdevrao, was a great patron of learning, art and letters. Under his patronage were written a number of works in Sanskrit. His own work in Sanskrit, *Chaturvarga-Chintamani* lays, down the principles of the caste-system and systematises the relation and respective duties of the four classes, and also lays down the rules about various kinds of ritualistic observances. His *Lekhankalpataru* is a treatise on the practice of writing; it deals in careful detail with such topics as polite modes of address, and forms of letters.

The Mahanubhava Writers

The origins of Marathi prose are also to be found in the Yadav

period. The credit for its creation goes to another religious sect called the *Mahanubhavas.* The sacred books of the seat were unknown to literary history until about fifty years ago. Every lover of Marathi language and literature must gratefully acknowledge his debt to the late Shri V.L. Bhave who discovered for modern Maharashtra this rich heritage of simple Marathi prose. The founder of the sect, Shir Chakradhara (13th century. the years of his birth and death being controversial), hailed from Gujarat. He was the only son of Vishaldev, the minister of Trimalla Dev, King of Gujarat. He was known as Harpal. He lost all his money in his passion for dice and fell into a deep melancholy. He started on a pilgrimage to Ramtek, in Vidarbha. On the way he reached Ridhpur, where he came under the influence of a saint, named Govind Prabhu. He took *gurumantra* from him; and the guru named him Chakradhara. Stories of wide travels and varied experience are associated with Chakradhara. He became a sanyasi in 1267 and founded his own religious sect. He led an extremely austere life of wandering mendicancy. He travelled widely all over Maharashtra, which land he preferred to all others. "One should live in Maharashtra", he said. He had a large following of disciples, like Nagadeva, Mhaimbhat, Nathoba—and also some women disciples like Nagambika and Mahadaisa, the latter of whom is well-known as the first Marathi poetess. Chakradhara spoke to his disciples on not only the great philosophical problems but also on the conduct of everyday life. He carved out for them a path of rigid austerity and vigorous discipline. He won deep and fond loyalty from them, and it has been handed down from generation to generation.

The Mahanubhava writers have left a rich treasure of Marathi prose and verse. They eschewed Sanskrit knowingly, for theirs was a religion for the common people. When Kesobaas wanted to render the master's sermons into Sanskrit verse, Nagadeva said to him; 'Do not do so, O Keshav, the common devotee of my master will be deprived of my master's teachings by this.' The Mahanubhavas workshipped Lord Krishna, Dattatreya, and the three founders of the sect, the chief of whom was Chakradhara. Their most sacred books are *Leelacharitra,* giving the life story of Chakradhara, and *Govindprabhucharitra,* both

written by Mhaimbhat. *Leelacharitra* was complied in about 1286. It is a work deeply imbued with devotion for the master, and records his travels and also his sayings, parables and sermons bearing on one's daily life. The *Siddhantasutras* collected by Kesobaas is also a work of the same nature. Both are written in a simple and direct prose. Chakradhara did not write a single line himself. But the directness and chastity of his style of speaking were imbibed by his disciples. Wherever he went he gave expositions of his philosophy in parables or in illuminating stories. These reminiscences were recorded after he passed away by Mhaimbhat in *Leelacharitra*, and by Kesobaas in *Sutrapath* and *Drishtant-path*. *Smritisthale* is a collection of the reminiscences of Nagdev, the chief disciple and successor of Chakradhara and of many other important disciples.

The poetic work of the Mahanubhavas mainly consists of seven long poems, (traditionally referred to as *Saati Granth*) running into hundreds of verses in the ovee metre. Four of them—*Vaccha-haran* by Damodar Pandit, *Rukminiswayamwara* by Narendra Ayachit, *Shishupalwadha* and *Uddhavgeeta* by Bhaskarbhatta Borikar—are based on the life of Lord Krishna. Narendra's work reveals a high degree of originality and delicacy of description. Bhaskarbhatta Borikar was the most versatile of the Mahanubhava poets. He was deeply versed in Sanskrit sahitya-shastra and Mahanubhava philosophy. His *Shishupalvadh* is closely modelled on the Sanskrit epic of the same name by Magha. *Udhdhavgeeta* is a philosophical poem. *Jnanaprabodha*, is another philosophical Mahanubhava poem, and *Sahyadrivarnan* and *Ridhipurvarnana* describe the homelands and sacred places of the Mahanubhavas, and recall memories of the founders of the sect. Mahadaisa, woman-disciple, chose a different metre, the *dhawal*, which was a kind of song. The *dhawalas* are full of simple devotional ardour and celebrate the story of Rukmini's *swayamwara*. Mahadaisa is also believed to have written another long poem.

Mahanubhava literature is still a subject of research and controversy. Some earnest scholars, chiefly from Vidarbha, have dexoted years of study to the writings. These had been rendered into code-scripts by the later Mahanubhavas—at the instance of Ravalo Vyas (of the thirteenth century) apparently owing to

social and religious persecution from orthodox Hindus. It was partly because of this that their literature had remained unknown all these years, but to this circumstance and to the devotion of the Mahanubhavas is due the credit for preserving the texts in such a pure uninterpolated form. Distinguished scholars have been busy, deciphering them, fixing their chronology, and discovering material about contemporary social and religious life and philosophical concepts from them.

The last years of the Yadava period were of great prosperity on the one hand, but of social and religious decadence on the other. The upper classes led lazy, luxurious lives, ritualism under the garb of religion playing an important part in them. Orthodoxy ruled supreme. The Pundits considered it their sacred duty to hold aloof from the lower classes for fear of contamination. Their knowledge of the *shastras* was directed solely towards depriving the masses of spiritual enlightenment. The Mahanubhavas represent one kind of reaction against this social atmosphere. Their sect broke through the barriers of the caste system. It treated men and women alike, and granted the right of *sanyas* to all. These breaches were like gall to the orthodox and led to severe persecution of the Mahanubhavas. In their early days. during the regime of the Yadava kings, they had won some royal petron-age. Perhaps it was because the Mahanubhavas were devout worshippers of Lord Krishna, and the Yadava kings considered themselves to be the direct descendants of Krishna. But their unorthodox creed (which rejected the authority of the *Vedas* and the caste-system), their strange black garments, so different from the saffron of the other sanyasis, and other oddities of behaviour made them very unpopular. The secret code in which their religious texts were written isolated them from the general stream of literature too. Mahanubhava literature, therefore, had little influence on contemporary or subsequent trends in Marathi literature.

Jnaneshwar and the Warkari Panth

The last days of the Yadava period were illumined by the great splendour of the work of Jnaneshwar (also known as Jnanadev). The grace of his life and the glory of his work are

unparalleled in the history of Marathi literature, and perhaps of many others. If any life was divinely inspired or miraculous, it was that of Jnaneshwar. He was, as it were, born to meet the orthodoxy of the Yadav society on its own ground and reveal to it the essence of true religion. He was destined to establish the Bhagwat Dharma, which brought within its fold all true Hindus and gave them the strength to preserve their integrity and their dharma in the face of the onslaughts of Islam. He did not seek to establish a separate cult, like the Mahanubhavas; but his work established the equality of man at least before God, if not in society. The philosophical and poetical height attained by his work yet remains unequalled. But it also broke down the walls of ritualism and opened up the simple approach of Bhakti. Politically, Maharashtra could not save itself from the advent of the Muslim power. But spiritually, it not only survived, but grew stronger. For three hundred years, from the days of the Yadav kings to the rise of Shivaji, the Muslim forces battered at the cultural and spiritual personality of Maharashtra. But fortified by the teachings of the Marathi saint-poets, it did not yield, and held on till it rose up once again under the leadership of Shivaji, when the religious ardour of the people flamed into a fight for political freedom too.

The story of the life of Jnanadev is well known. He was the second of the four children of Vitthalpant, who belonged to a family of Kulkarnis (village accountants) living near Paithan. Vitthalpant was of an unworldly bent of mind, right from his childhood. He was married early, but soon left home to become a sanyasi. When his Guru, however, met one Rukminibai, during his own peregrinations and discovered that she was the abandoned wife of his own *sanyasi* disciple Vitthalpant, he bade his disciple to return home. Nivrittinath, Jnandev, Sopandev and Muktabai were the children of this re-united couple. The return of a *sanyasi* to the domestic fold was against the orthodox canons. Vitthalpant and his family were, therefore, treated as outcastes. Even the thread ceremony of the boys was not permitted by the Brahmins. The whole family, therefore, went on a long pilgrimage of purification. But again, on their return, Vitthalpant was told that death was the only *prayaschitta* (atonement) for the re-

entry of a *sanyasi* into domestic life. Thereupon the parents took themselves away. It is believed that they either went away to the Himalayas, leaving the children, or put an end to themselves at Prayag.

Nivrittinath and Jnanadev, with the two younger children, continued their efforts to placate the Brahmins of Paithan. They did not succeed in getting their sanction for the thread ceremony and thereby entering the Brahmin fold. But Jnaneshwar is said to have established his supernatural yogic power by some miracles, since widely known. He is said to have inspired a buffalo to recite the Vedas, made a wall move and raised the dead. Several rational explanations of these 'miracles' are now offered. Whatever it be, the fact is that Jnanadeva, with his learning, devotion, humility and humanity, won the appreciation and respect of all. His elder brother Nivrittinath is believed to have received illumination from a Nathpanthiya guru, during his pilgrimage with his parents, when he was accidentally separated from them for some days. He and Jnanadeva came to be known as saints deeply versed in ancient learning. They had acquired valuable experience of life and society, even at this young age, on account of the persecution by the Brahmins. But perhaps, because of the family tradition of devotion and unworldiness, and also because of their profound Yogic development, they did not rebel or recoil in anger. Their sufferings made them more humane, large-hearted and gentle. Jnanadeva, especially, took up the great work of interpreting the *Bhagwadgeeta* in the language of the people and bringing the springs of spiritual solace within the reach of the common man. He completed the work in 1290, as he says, with the guidance of his guru, Nivrittinath.

This commentary is known generally as the *Bhavarthdeepika*— the light that illumines the contents of he *Geeta*, or *Jnanadevi* or, more universally, as *Jnaneshwari*. The *Bhagwadgeeta* has proved to be a favourite and fruitful field for commentators in all ages. It has been resorted to for the resurrection of the spirit of Hinduism in almost every age of decadence. It was with such an objective that Jnandev undertook its interpretation and representation to the people, in their own language, at a time when society was threatened by the onslaught of Islam on the one hand by decadent orthodoxy on the other,. Jnanadev ex-

Pounded each adhyaya of the Geeta in his inimitable poetic style, with crystalline images drawn from everyday experience. Behind it all was his profound understanding of philosophical concepts. One cannot miss even the dramatic appeal and the skill of characterisation revealed in the conversations between Sanjaya and Dhritarashtra, Krishna and Arjuna and even the writer and his Guru. The *Jnaneshwari* is not merely a commentary on an ancient text. It springs out of a profound religious and mystical experience. It is based on a thorough study of the *Upanishads* and of *Yogavasishtha,* even to the extent of an attainment of yogic power. All this knowledge and realisation was used by Jnaneshwar for the enlightenment of the common man. The *Jnaneshwari* has remained the philosophic and religious sheet-anchor of Maharashtra through the centuries particularly in the dark periods of tyranny and suffering. *Anubhavamrita,* popularly known as *Amritanubhava,* was written by Jnaneshwar a few years later. It is said that he wrote it when his Guru commanded him to expound his own philosophy and not be content with only a commentary on an old text. It is a work of 803 *ovees,* which is divided into ten chapters in the modern editions. There is difference of opinion about the philosophical position of Jnaneshwar in his two works. One group holds that he propounds the *advaitavad* and *mayavad* of Shankaracharya from the point of view of a Nathpanthiya in both the works. Another group holds that the philosophy of Shankaracharya was not the only influence even on his first work. Jnaneshwar interpreted the Geeta, according to the guidance of all the *bhashyakars* and also of other ancient works of philosophy and religion, in the light of the Nathpanthiya philosophy, and the *Amritanubhava* represents his own philosophic tenets about the unity of Shiva and Shakti, the non-existence of *Ainyan* (Ignorance), the concepts of Sadchidananda and the *Jeevan-mukta*. It is considered to be a position which fully asserts the *advaitavad* of Shankaracharya, but does not stop at his *mayavad*. On the contrary, it asserts powerfully that all is Brahma. It is a closely reasoned work. It does not resort to the poetic embellishments or the gentle persuasiveness of *Jnaneshwari*. It argues powerfully and sets down the ultimate principles with conviction, in a

precise and chaste language.

Changadevapasashti consist of only 65 ovees and was written for the edification of the vainglorious Changadeva. It reiterates briefly the main tenets of Jnanadev's philosophy. Some other works are also attributed to Jnanadev, but they are mostly considered to be spurious.

Jnanadev has also written some *abhangas*. They are the fountain-head of all the *abhangas* of the Bhakti school, and present a world very different from that of the *Jnaneshwari* and *Amritanubhava*. They embody a simple sentiment of devotion and yearning for Vithal. The difference between these *abhangas* and the other work is considered to be so great that they were attributed by some to a different Jnanadev. But this controversy has now been almost laid to rest. and the authentic *abhangas* of Jnanadev have been shifted from the spurious ones.

Jnanadev wrote the *Jnaneshwari* in 1290, at the age of sixteen. If this be a miracle, his end was even more so. Within the next six years he completed the other works, went on a long pilgrimage with Namdev and other saints, and in 1296, at the age of twenty-two, having realised that he had completed his life's mission, he entered into a *samadhi*. His two brothers and his sister did not survive him for long. They too wrote a number of *abhangas*, the sweetest and simplest ones being those of Muktabai. Those of hers, well-known as the *Tatiche Abhang* asking her brother Jnanadev to come out of the room when he had locked himself in, in anger, and expounding to him the true attitude of a saint, were written by her at the age of fourteen.

The pilgrimage of Jnanadev to Pandharpur, and thence to the shrines of the north in the company of Namdev, laid the foundation of the Warkari Panth. The shrine at Pandharpur had already become a centre for devotees of all castes: Gora, a potter; Sawata, a market-gardener; Chokha, a Mahar; Narhari, a goldsmith; Sena, a barber. Theirs was a simple unsophisticated devotion. When Jnanadev visited Pandharpur, this simple devotion was strengthened by Advaitavad. Namdev, a tailor, became the chief disciple of Jnanadev and also the true founder and propagator of the Warkari Panth. He has

celebrated the life of Jnanadev in a work of three chapters in the *ovee* metre, called the *Adi, Teerthavali* and *Samadhi*. His devotional *abhangas* have an urgent poignancy and a simple lovingness. The miraculous life of Jnanadev embodied the ideal of 'sainthood'. The life of Namdev was nearer that of the simple, common man and his *abhangas* express the intense yearning of the common man for the god of his heart. The cult of Vitthalbhakti became widespread. Namdev travelled widely in Gujarat and the North, especially in the Punjab. He also wrote a number of songs in Hindi. Some of these have been incorporated in the sacred book of the Sikhs as *"Namdevi di Mukhbani*. Namdev is thus the first biographer in Marathi poetry, one of the greatest devotional poets and a propagator of the Warkari panth. He, more than anyone else, introduced the Bhakti-Marg of Maharashtra to the people of the North.

With the death of Namdev in 1350 ends the first period of Marathi literature. Socially and politically it was an age of great achievement. Ramdevrao and his son Shankerdev were powerful and wise kings who cared for the cultural and religious life of their people, but they had to give way gradually before Muslim aggression. Ramdevrao's learned minister, Hemadri, founded a new architectural style for temples; and wrote *Chaturvargachintamani,* a handbook of social and religious behaviour and established enlightened procedures for government. He was a strict advocate of the caste system, and of other orthodox observances and he was responsible for much of the persecution of the Mahanubhavas and the lower classes. But the cultural contributions he made, according to his own lights and the limitations of his age, cannot be denied. This period also saw the rise of the four vernaculars of the kingdom: Kannada, Gujarati, Telugu and Marathi. These three hundred years saw not only the beginnings of Marathi literature but also its growth in a remarkable measure. The work of the Mahanubhavas established the importance of the language of the people and laid the foundation of a simple prose. It could not develop further because the sect incurred much unpopularity and consequently encased its texts in secret codes. The Mahanubhava poets followed Sanskrit narrative poems as their models, and consequently their work suffered from decorativeness. But philo-

sophical and devotional poetry reached great heights in the hands of Jnaneshwar and the Warkari poets. It brought to the language strength, dignity and status. The poetry was profoundly philosophical and yet simple and persuasive in its appeal. It made full use of rhetorical and poetic devices, and yet retained a freshness and spontaneity. This literature of the two sects brought about a spiritual and social renaissance in Maharashtra. It considerably weakened the hold of orthodoxy—of casteism for example. The full force of this upsurge lasted only till the death of Namdev in 1350. Then the tide ebbed away, and with the establishment of Muslim rule there followed an age of slow decay.

Not all the poetry of the age was philosophical or devotional. Narrative poems, drawing on the *Mahabharata* or the Puranas, were written by several poets. Two such poems were discovered recently. The poets are Bahira and Chobha (or Chombha). Bahira handles a much-handled story: Rukmini's 'Swayamwar.' Chobha tells the story of the love of Usha for Aniruddha and their union, in his 'Ushaharan.' The poem is striking for its rich romantic colour.

Eknath and Mukteshwar

Muslim invasions, the fall of the Yadav Kingdom, the rise and also the break-up of the Bahamani Kingdom, brought about a deterioration in the life in Maharashtra during the next two centuries. Recurrent famines helped the process. Hardly any name of distinction is to be found during the next two hundred years in the field of literature, or of religious or political life. The Mahanubhavas continued to study and comment on their sacred texts. Some of their pundits, like Navarasa Narayan, Elhan, and Challhan, maintained a steady flow of religious and philosophical works in prose and verse. The sect split up into thirteen schools, known as Amnayas. The stream of the devotional poetry of the Nath-Panthiyas and the Warkaris continued to flow, but in a meagre way. Perhaps, only a part of the work of this period has come down to us. A new religious sect with Dattatreya, as the deity—was founded by two *Sanyasis*, Shripad Shrivallabh and Nrisinha Saraswati, during the Bahamani period. It aimed at the regeneration of the

upper classes according to the orthodox principles of Vedic Hinduism. *Gurucharitra,* the biography of these two *sanyasis,* written by Saraswati Gangadhar in 1558, became the sacred book of this sect. The main poets of the period that followed—Dasopant, Eknath, and Mukteshwar—belonged to this sect.

The Marathi language too underwent a great change during these two centuries, the 14th and the 15th. The Durgadevi famine, which raged for twelve years from 1396, brought untold suffering on the people of Maharashtra. Another famine occurred in 1420. During both these famines, hundreds of people migrated to Karnataka and Telangana and also to Konkan, the coastal region of Maharashtra. Some settled down there permanently but a large number returned after the famine and brought back with them the influence of the language of these regions, as well as of their deities and rituals, folk-lore and games. But the greatest influence was that of the language of the new rulers. Administrative and legal terms underwent a complete transformation. Persian and Arabic terms were incorporated in the Marathi language by the hundred. With the whirlwind of persecution, conversion, demolition of shrines and temples, the people were debilitated and stunned into submission to tyranny of all kinds. The Muslim rulers adopted a more tolerant attitude when the first flush of victory had passed away and especially when they were themselves divided by discord and personal ambitions. They began to win over the upper-class Hindus. This both extended and deepened their influence on life and language. But it also led to gradual prosperity for many of the Maratha sardars and statesmen. And in course of time it brought about a resurgence of self-confidence in them. Some of the sardars became virtual king-makers. This rise in self-confidence in the social and political life was also accompanied by a cultural rebirth. The work of Eknath (1533-1599) was the main spring and also the high water-mark of this current.

Eknath

Eknath was the greatest successor of Jnanadev, deeply imbued as he was with the spirit of the *Jnaneshwari.* He rendered invaluable service to the culture and literature of Maharashtra by

copying out and editing the *Jnaneshwari* (1584), the text of which had become greatly corrupted during three hundred years. He was himself a prolific and versatile writer. His works include commentaries, songs, *abhangas*, folk-songs known as *gaulans*, semi-prose narratives known as *bharuds*, and long narrative poems in the classical style known as *akhyans*. His chief work is his commentary on the eleventh *Kshanda* of *Bhagwat*, written during his stay at Banaras (1570-73). The work is highly respected by the orthodox. Even as Jnanadev gave a new orientation to thought by his commentary on the *Geeta*, Eknath propagated to new and richer concept of Bhagwat Dharma by his commentary on the *Bhagwat*. His work was at first severely criticised by the pundits of Banaras, especially because it was written in a language other than Sanskrit; but it was later accorded the greatest honour a work could possibly win in those days: it was taken in a procession in a palanquin. Eknath's work was a philosophical corollary of the work of Jnanadev. He brought the philosophy of Jnanadeva within easy reach of the average man. He presented the Bhakti-marg in a less intense but a more practical form than was done by Namdeva. He co-related the ideal of spiritual life with the needs of a practical life by urging the values of right conduct, kindness and humanity. He brought versatility to Marathi literature by the variety of his work and also by the dignity of his style and maturity of emotion. His *Rukmini-swayamwara* is in the best tradition of classical *akhyanas*. But his most characteristic work is his *Bhavartha-Ramayana*. He narrates the story of Rama in a chaste and refined language. But what is of more vital interest is that it reveals a keen awareness of the efficacy of the story of Rama as an ideal hero even in contemporary conditions. It is aimed at inspiring the higher classes with a renewed vision of the *dharma* of kings and warriors, of the significance of sacrifice and suffering, of heroism and duty to society. His *bharuds*, about 300 of which are available, aim at conveying spiritual knowledge to the common people through the medium of *gondhalis, garudis, wasudeos* and others who under the garb of entertainment instilled spiritual lessons in the lowliest of people. He has utilised an infinite variety of folk-songs, and popular rituals for a spiritual purpose, and has added to their charm

and appeal with his literary skill. They are a fine specimen of *Madhura-bhakti*.

Eknath was by no means as great a genius and thinker as Jnaneshwar. But he was a great missionary and populariser of certain spiritual and social ideals. Saintly in his ways, he treated all alike, including the untouchables. By his work and by his long life devoted solely to the resucitation and uplift of a decadent society, he was the most benevolent influence on the life of the period. He reveals a finely integrated mind which succeeded in synthesising the world of the spirit and the world of the flesh in his work as well as in his life.

Dasopant and Others

Dasopant was the most important contemporary of Eknath. He was a voluminous writer, skilled in recounting anecdotes, versatile in argument and exposition. His commentary on the *Geeta*, known as *Geetarnava*, is his longest work (and also the longest in Marathi) with a lakh and a quarter *ovees*. Only thirteen thousand of these have yet been published. His *Granthrai* discusses several aspects of wordly life. It gives a closely observant description of a worldly man's life, the characteristics of a guru and of various types of disciples. He was a Dattasampradayi, and was also well versed in ancient learning. His *Padarnava* (Sea of Songs) is simple in style and expresses the deep sincerity of his *bhakti*. Dasopant's three best works thus represent three different aspects. One is an erudite commentary on an ancient text, another discusses various aspects of worldly life, and the third is a lyrical expression of his devotion. He was also a strong advocate of the use of Marathi rather than of Sanskrit.

Eknath, Dasopant, Rama Janardan, Jani Janardan and Vitha Janardan are known as the 'Nathpanchayatan'. Another devotee, Vishnudas Nama, has written the lives of several saints, and also a number of religious stories. His greatest work is his *Mahabharat*. He was the first poet to render all the eighteen *parvas* of the *Mahabharata* into Marathi.

Another noteworthy work of this period is the *Christ-Purana* of Father Stephens (1549-1619). It is an index of the extent to

which the language and literature of Maharashtra had spread by this time. Father Stephens came to Goa in 1579 and worked there as a Jesuit missionary for forty years. He deeply inbibed the spirit of the *Jnaneshwari* and the works of other saints. He came to love this language. He said that among all the languages Marathi was "like a jewel among pebbles, like a sapphire among jewels, like the jasmine among blossoms; and the musk among all perfumes, the peacock among birds . . ." The style of *Christ-Purana,* and the structure of its *ovee* show an unmistakable imprint of the work of the Marathi saint-poets. A few other Christian poets too wrote in Marathi.

Mukteshwar and Secular Poetry

Together with this strain of religious and philosophic poetry, there was also one of pure narrative poetry during the sixteenth century. The poets of this school also depended upon the *Ramayana, Bhagwat* and *Mahabharat* for their stories, but they rendered them in verse with the objective of affording delight and entertainment rather than moral elevation or philosophic exposition. A small beginning is to be found in the work of Vishnudas Mudgal. His *Ramayana Yuddhakanda,* written in a vigorous style, was very popular and had even become a source of inspiration in the early days of the Maratha rule. Shivkalyan, a great commentator on *Amritanubhav* of Jnaneshwar wrote on the life of Krishna in a purely secular vein. Mukteshwar's *Mahabharat,* however, is the finest and most conscious effort of this kind. This grandson of Eknath was reared in the Eknath tradition. He began writing early, but his early work is not extant. The five *parvas* of his *Mahabharat* which are available indicate the possibility of his having rendered the whole of it. He wrote a number of other miscellaneous narrative poems, based on Pauranic stories, and also some expositional ones.

Mukteshwar's *Mahabharat* is a fine specimen of imaginative, and graphic poetry. He wrote in a rich, flowing style and could command all the *rasas* with equal skill. His descriptions of the beauty of the seasons, of battles and tragic sufferings, his character sketches and descriptions of court life are vivid and effective. Sometimes his worldiness verges on obscenity. He lapses into

a strange kind of anachronism when his Pandavas fight even against the Muslim and the European invaders! But his work-reflects contemporary life in many other ways too, in the descriptions of court-life, of battles and even of manly sports. It has a clear imprint of contemporary life.[1]

Tukaram

While Mukteshwar and others were writing in a style more or less modelled on the Sanskrit classics, the poetry of the Warkari Panth reached its pinnacle in the *abhangas* of Tukaram. Although the 'democratic mysticism'[2] of Namdev and his contemporary Warkari saints had mostly dried up after 1350, its thin stream still held its course in the work of the minor poets, and even more so in the life of the people. Bhakti was their only panacea. 'Hari-bhajan' had become the only solace for the oppressed and poverty-stricken masses of Maharashtra. The 'synthetic mysticism'[1] of Eknath, with its fine integration of the spiritual and the worldly, influenced the outlook of the middle classes to a great extent. But it could not wholly stem the decay of Hindu culture and religion. The growing dependence of the Muslim rulers on Maratha Sardars and the consequent infiltration of Muslim culture in Maratha life only hastened it. The fall of Vijayanagar left no royal protection and patronage for Hinduism. Priestly learning began to disappear; the priestly class fell on evil days with the abolition of many *watans* and grants to temples and sacred places. When orthodoxy was orphaned, nothing better than utter ignorance of ritual, religion and philosophy ruled the day. The caste system had become even more rigid than ever but, on the other hand, the worship of the *dargas* and *pirs* became the order of the day. Tukaram has himself given a vivid picture of this religious decay in his *Gatha*[3] His voice, invoking his god Vitthal, exhorting the people to take to the path of godliness, teaching them humanity and the right kind of devotion, exposing the sham and hypocrisy of bloated

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1. There is yet a difference of opinion about Mukteshwar's dates. Some place him in the days of Shivaji and hold that he was born in 1609. But his work reflects the late Moghal period rather than the Mara by period.
2. *Mysticism in Maharashtra*, R.D. Ranade.
3. *Ibui.*

Sadhus, was a beacon-light to them and still shines across three centuries.

Tukaram was born in about 1608 (some hold the date to be 1598) in a fairly well-to-do Vaishya family engaged in trade His early days were apparently spent in looking after his ancestral business. But the death of his wife and son in the famine of 1630 and losses in business set him on a path of renunciation and spiritual fulfilment. His first important work was the *Mantra Geeta*[1] It was written after years of suffering and spiritual contemplation. Tukaram had studied sacred works and also composed some *abhangas* before he attempted this interpretation of the *Geeta*. However, it is not a work of the quality of the *Jnaneshwari*, It is tentative, more an expression of the views of Tukaram and of contemporary conditions than an elucidation of the *Geeta* It is also unsophisticated and downright in its style, with the unadorned language of everyday usage. It created a furore in that caste-ridden world which held that Tukaram, as a Sudra, had no right to read the sacred works—much less to write about and interpret one of them—and that too in a language other than Sanskrit. But, if Tukaram made many enemies, the storm over, the work itself gave a distinction and popularity to him. He faced the enmity of many pundits, but on the other hand, he won the devotion of a large number of followers and disciples.

There is legend about the miraculous preservation of the manuscripts of Tukarams *abhangas* even when they were thrown into the river by his Brahmin detractors. Thenceforth, he waged a ceaseless war in his compositions against casteism, ignorant ritualism, pedantry, hypocrisy, and sinfulness of all kinds. All such *abhangas* reveal vividly the militant reformer, the true believer in the equality of man, the enemy of all social shams and hypocrisies. Tukaram is unsparing in such onslaughts. His words become as hard as flint. He cares not for empty standards of form and propriety, for, according to him, it is the duty of the servant of God to shield the good and demolish the 'nettles' in the world. 'Sharp words' are the arrows of this soldier of God.

These *abhangas* of chastisement provide a clear portrait of

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1. V.S. Bendre, *Introduction to Mantra Geeta*, p.8.

the times. Others reveal an intensity of longing for a vision of god, for union with god, for ceaseless service and worship of Vitthal. This lyrical intensity is unparalled in *abhanga* literature. Namdeva's *abhangas* are softer, gentler and more refined in style, but they cannot compare with those of Tukaram in their intensity. Tukaram writes in a freer and and bolder style. He yearns primarily for a vision; often he quarrels with the god of his heart for his forgetfulness; he blames him for preferring *nirgunatva,* when he has burdened his devotee with eyes and ears. Tukaram was not unaware of Advaitism. He was well-versed in the philosophy of the Upanishads, the *Gita, Bhagwat* and the *Jnaneshwari.* He had truly realised the Absolute behind the manifold variety of deities in vogue. But the infinite sea of his spiritual fervour played incessantly round the feet of his favourite deity Vitthal. Every *abhanga* of this type is like a vivid piece of conversation with his god. It is an expression of constant communion. In Tukaram Maharashtra saw the height of 'personalistic mysticism.'[1] In his work Marathi poetry attained its greatest intensity of lyricism.

This two-fold strain gives a variety to the *abhangas* of Tukaram which is hardly to be found in those of any other saint-poet. His downrightness and realistic approach to the evils of the day infuse a rare vitality in this work. Even a few of such *abhangas* would be enough to show how Tukaram was not just an other-wordly nincompoop, who had failed in all practical affairs or who drained away all the urge for life of his followers, by the propagation of the *Nivritti-marg*. He condemns the worship not only of *pirs* and *dargahs,* but also of the innumerable deities created by ignorant Hindu superstition and empty ritualism. This virility of attitude inevitably finds for itself a style which is straight and simple even to the extent of being bare; sometimes it can be very crude, with the use of gross, and even obscene, words. Tukaram's work does not reveal the cool poise of Jnaneshwar; not is it as exquisitely creative. It is not even as mellifluous as that of Namdev. But it is more human. It scintillates with all the passions of man. These passions are all directed towards the one goal of the demolition of the ungodly and

1. *Mysticism in Maharashtra,* R.D. Ranade.

the realisation of God. This human element has ensured a wider appeal to his work. So many of his *abhangas* have remained on the tip of the tongue of countless people in Maharashtra; so many of its verses and expressions have passed into the common idiom of the language.

Excepting the *Mantra-geeta,* the work of Tukaram is mostly occasional. It consists of stray lyrics, forming loose sequences of a dozen or twenty *abhangas.* One such series is a letter to his God Vitthal, the sequence describing how he eagerly awaits the return of his Warkari comrades from Pandharpur, or the sequence written to guide a woman disciple, or again those describing the duty and strength of the soldier of God, known as the *Paik abhangas.*

The spiritual and literary influence of Tukaram is manifest in the work of his followers. The autobiography of Bahinabai, one of his disciples, is as simple, direct and vivid in its style and narrative as the work of Tukaram. Her deep faith in the guru she accepted in a dream-vision, her simple righteousness, and tender feelings are fully revealed in her *Gatha.* Above all, she provides valuable material for a biography of Tukaram. She gives a graphic account of the miraculous incident of the torture of her cow by Mambaji, and the consequent suffering of Tukaram, demonstrating the unity of all souls. She also describes the end of Tukaram which, like the passing away of Kabir, is shrouded in mystery and has given rise to fanciful stories. Tukaram is said to have faded away bodily on Falgun Vadya Dwitiya in Saka 1571 i.e. 1659. A clear description or reasonable explanation of this miraculous event is yet to be found. All contemporary accounts are vague and mysterious. But even so, the deep sorrow of his devotees, some of whom had once been his enemies, the helplessness of his brother, the dismay of the people around, as expressed in so many *abhangas,* are a clear testimony to the great reverence won by Tukaram. He created a new school not only of devotion and mysticism but also of poetic expression. The expression was simple, direct and spontaneous. It dwelt on a small occurrence of everyday life and lifted it into a spiritual experience. It opened the inward eye of the common man and transformed his mean existence. It infused a strange power into words of everyday use and images drawn from the common-

places of life. In its integration of the innermost essence of being and the superficialities of life, in its equal emphasis on the ideal of self-realisation and of social reality, Tukaram's work represents the apex of Maharastriya Bhagwat-dharma.

Ramdas

If the poetry of the Warkari *panth* reached its pinnacle in the work of Tukaram, the cautious nurture of socio-religious ideals in the work of Eknath found a powerful advocate in Ramdas. Ramdas's whole life and literary work was devoted to the task of reviving the religious life of the people and organising it on a new socially effective pattern. He advocated the worship of Dhanurdhari Ram (Ram, the Warrior) and of Hanuman as the devoted servant of Shri Ram. He created an order of disciples and trained them for a missionary life. He built *maths* and temples, and instructed his disciples in even the smallest practical problems. His literary work is also inspired by the same ideal.

Born in 1608, Ramdas, ran away from home as a boy and wandered over the country for several years. He visited a number of sacred places in the hope of illumination and in search of a guru. But, at the same time, he also observed the conditions in which people lived. He saw their degradation, their supersititious, ignorant worship of gods and goddesses, their faith in *pirs* and *dargas,* and even their growing incapacity to manage their worldly affairs. In his peregrinations, he reached the valley of the River Krishna in 1644 and chose it as the region of his life's work. He moved about ceaselessly in this region till the end of his life.

Ramdas advocated a wise and alert synthesis of religiousness and secularism. In his magnum opus *Dasabodha,* together with the conventional philosophical and religious subjects like the greatness of a guru and of saints, the nine types of Bhakti, the significance of death and renunciation, or the concepts of Siva and Sakti, Ramdas wrote at length, and even repetitively, about virtue and vices, about types of individuals and the ideal man (*uttam purush*), about the good disciple and the bad one, about the ways and means of organising the people, about temples and their precincts, in plain language. His mind was wholly

occupied with the task of dispelling the lethargy of the people, of rousing them into a consciousness of the right *dharma*, of organising them into an active religious unity. The basis of the work of Ramdas is a religious ideal. But he envisaged its realisation in such a practical, realistic manner that the work has been naturally and somewhat justifiably interpreted as having a close bearing upon the rise of the Marathas under the leadership of Shivaji. In any case his work affords a trenchant criticism of contemporary life and also gives a clear reflection of a mind which pondered unceasingly over the training of an order of disciples for the uplift of the people both spiritually and temporally. Ramdas wrote in a simple, direct style close to living speech. So it can be bold and even prosaic to suit the content. But it is precise and telling. Many of his lines have become proverbial. His descriptions of types of people like the pedantic fool (*padhat-moorkha*) have become a part of common knowledge, and his terms for such concepts are an original contribution to the language. He attached great importance to the functions and place of the poet, whom he describes as the lord of the world, the glory of manliness, the most loving of all loving creatures, and a veritable cloud of nectar.

Ramdas also wrote a number of miscellaneous poems and verse treatises. They are mostly of an occasional and didactic or philosophical nature. He also wrote two *Kandas* of *Ramayana*. One of the miscellaneous poems, known as *Anand-van-bhuwan* or *Bhavishya Purana* describes a Utopia seen in a dream. It is popularly believed to be a description of the Maharashtra of his dreams. But the finest and also the most popular of his miscellaneous poems are those in a subjective vein, often depicting a mind striving for peace and spiritual consolation. Such are his *Karunashtak* and *Manache Shlok*.

But with all his practical wisdom, social awareness and simplicity of style, the influence of Ramdas was limited to the upper and middle classes. It was to them that he addressed his work. He is considered by many to be a conservative in social ideas and an upholder of the caste-system. Ramdas cannot be considered as a revolutionary, but be sought to reorganise a decadent society and revive fallen ideals. He even gave a new significance to the concept of *sanyas* and harnessed this spiritual energy for social

uplift. If Tukaram and the Warkari saints brought the masses together in a spiritual republic, Ramdas strove to make the upper classes selfless, godly and efficient in spiritual and social service. The renaissance begun in the days of Jnaneshwar thus reached Tukaram. From the purely literary point of view, hardly anything that was produced later can vie with the inspired work of Jnaneshwar, but the course of poetry became broader, more human, more varied and more closely related to practical life, in the centuries that followed.

High poetry was the major, but not the only, form which prevailed in this age. The zest for independence lifted up the spirits of the people. It opened out new and varied channels of life. It filled them with vigour and self-confidence. The spirit found expression in folk-songs of various types. They ranged from simple *ovees* and songs sung by women while doing their household work to thrilling *powadas* (ballads) describing battles and conquests. The earliest *powada* available was written by Agnidas (or Ajnandas) during the days of Shivaji. It describes one of the most critical incidents in the life of Shivaji: the liquidation of Afzul Khan by Shivaji. It is written in a vigorous style. It is unchiselled and, at times, prosaic, but its compelling rhythm makes it highly effective. The *powada* is believed to have been composed soon after the event in 1659, and is said to have been recited by the poet himself before Shivaji and his mother Jijabai. The poet proudly records this at the end of the song. Another *powada* of this time is one by Tulsidas on the capture of Fort Sinhagad by a lieutenant of Shivaji's. It is not as powerful as that by Agnidas, but it is more polished and picturesque in style.

The Prose of the Age

We have seen how the foundations of Marathi prose were laid to a certain extent by Hemadripant's *Lekhankalpataru,* and chiefly by the Mahanubhavas in the thirteenth century. The form did not develop much during the next two centuries. Only a few specimens like the *Arjadasta* by Eknath are found. There is also the preface to his *Crist-purana* written by Father Stephens. A different urge for prose-writing was created in the day of Shivaji. Despatches passed to and fro in the ever-widening Maratha

kingdom. Accounts of battles, orders and instructions of political and administrative kind had to be written in clear and precise terms. A form called the *bakhar* (apparently from the inversion of the Arabic word *khabar*) came into prominence. It was based on the pattern of the *tawarikhs* of the Muslim courts. There were a few old *bakhars*. The *Rakshastagdichi Bakhar*, describing the battle which brought about the fall of Vijayanagar and Ramdevraya, was one of them. But, with the end of the Hindu Kingdom, such historical writing also came to an end. It was revived in the days of Shivaji. One of the most important specimens of such historical writing of this age is the *Sabhasadi Bakhar*, or the life of Shivaji written by Krishnaji Anant Sabhasad, who was a leading statesman of the days of Shivaji. He wrote in an unadorned but clear and precise style like a man of the world. His *bakhar* provides a living reflection of the age. Equally valuable and powerful are the letters of Shivaji and of his men, discovered and identified after patient research by scholars. This kind of prose-writing gathered a greater tempo in the days of the Peshwas, later.

With the death of Ramdas in 1681, the middle period of early Marathi literature comes to an end. Life and literature underwent considerable changes during the hundred odd years between the rise of Eknath and the passing away of Ramdas. The age began with social and religious harassment. Political tyranny and famine joined together to impoverish the people of Maharashtra. But the people clung to their spiritual heritage and faith in God, through the strength of the *Bhagwatdharma*. The break-up of the Bahamani kingdom, the consequent policy of appeasement of Maratha Sardars by the ruling Muslim princes and their political rise, ushered in a new age of comparative prosperity and stability for some classes of society. The work of Eknath placed a new kingly and heroic ideal before the people. He set an example, by his life and literary work, of a fine adjustment of spiritual and worldly duties. The ethereal saintliness of Jnaneshwar yielded at least some of its place to a more mundane approach, and religious ardour came closer to daily life. This two-fold consciousness grew and developed steadily in the poetry of the period, until it flowered forth powerfully in the work of Tukaram. The work of Eknath also laid the foundation of several varied trends in lite-

rature. He created a keen interest in the stories of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata by his *Akhyan-Kavya*. The species became one of the most popular types of poetry and afforded an easy and effective medium for a synthesis of idealism and realism, of philosophic exposition and entertainment. This form of narrative poetry contributed richly to the development of the language and basic technique. The language developed into a rich, chaste and dignified vehicle. The verse became pliant and varied. The work of Mukteshwar is a fine specimen of this conscious cultivation of poetic style and delight in its beauty.

The last days of Mukteshwar and Tukaram saw the beginning of a new age in Maharashtra. The *Bhagwatdharma* of the Warkari saints, the conscious nurture of noble ideal of kingship and heroism by Eknath and the other *akhyan-poets*, the keen social awareness of all these writers and their distrust of an alien culture all came to a point in the efforts of Shivaji to found an independent kingdom. The whole of Maharashtra began to throb with a new life and a new vigour. The literary and organisational work of Ramdas went a great way in channelising this energy towards a political ideal. It proved to be fine ideological complement to the task that Shivaji set for himself. Maharashtra saw one of the greatest periods in its political and cultural history during 1640-1680.

Twilight Days

After the death of Shivaji (1680) and Ramdas (1681) a long-drawn twilight descended upon Maharashtra. Shivaji's son, Sambhaji, undid some of his father's work with his misrule. In literature, the new urges seemed to lose their edge. The tradition of Ramdas may be said to have continued only because his disciples called themselves Ramdasis, followed the pattern of his style and devoted their labours to extolling the life and greatness of their master. None of them wrote on the philosophical or socio-political themes that were typical of Ramdas. Four contemporaries of Ramdas, Jayaramswami, Ranganathswami, Keshavswami and Anandmurti Brahmanalkar, are supposed to form the Ramdas pantheon. But their work has hardly any resemblance with that of Ramdas. Of his closest disciples,

Kalyan and Uddhav wrote nothing; but Vcnabai wrote some narrative and descriptive poetry of a fairly high standard. The only other truly noteworthy work was *Swanubhava-Dinkar,* a verse-biography of Ramdas himself, written by Dinkar Gosawi.

Compared to this, the Warkari panth continued its hold over the people's mind and also retained some of its creativity. Bahinabai, a devoted disciple of Tukaram, kept the banner of the *panth* flying with her poems and her autobiographical writing (in verse) which also casts an illuminating light on the life and personality of Tukaram. Mahipati who later distinguished himself by his series of lives of saints, Niloba, who was blessed and accepted by Tukaram as a disciple in his dream, and Tukaram's brother, Kanhoba, all contributed genuine poetry to the Warkari tradition.

Mention must be made of the fact that devotional poetry, akin to that of the Warkaris, was also written by Muslim poets like Shaikh Mohamad, Shaikh Sultan, or Dadu Pinjari Hussain. Ambar wrote *Ambar Hussaini,* a commentary on the Gita. This shows how the movement cut through the barrier of religion.

Wamanpandit and the Akhyan Poets

There was also another trend of poetry which harked back to the *akhyan kavya of* Eknath. The foremost poet of this type was Wamanpandit (1608-6195). He had in his writing the philosophical erudition of a work like the *Jnaneshwari,* as well as the conscious literary artistry of Mukteshwar. The former is prominent in some of his writings, the latter in the others. This has led a few scholars to the conclusion that the two sets of writings were done by two different authors. But the thesis has not been well-supported.

Most of the works of Wamanpandit belong to the latter part of his life. He was originally from Bijapur. He had to leave the town to avoid conversion to Islam by the King of Bijapur. He spent twelve years in studies in Banaras, and then travelled widely. During the travels he met most of the Marathi saints and went further south until he met his Guru, Shri Sachhidananda. He has mentioned many of these autobiographical details in his first important work, *Nigamsar* (1673). He wrote many scholarly and philosophical works in Sanskrit, like *Siddhanta-*

vijaya, Shruti-Kalpalata, which reveal his command over the *shastras* and the Vedanta. He also translated Jagannath's *Ganga-lahari* and Bhartrihari's *Vairagyashatak* with a fine precision and stylistic resemblance. His *Samashloka* translation of the Bhagwad Gita—in the same metre, and verse for verse—is well known. He named it *Yatharthadeepika,* a light which illuminates the correct meaning of the Gita. He claimed a greater precision for his book over the commentaries of Jnaneswar, Dasopant and others. He adopts a scornful attitude towards his predecessors; and writes in a terse, clear and vigorous style; but it is dry. No doubt he has a command over language, but it results more in pedantry than in poetry. The work consists of about twenty thousand *ovees*—that is, it is about three times the length of *Jnaneshwari. The ovees* are not very regular; the imagery is pedestrian. The work seeks to convince, it does not reveal and inspire. The emphasis in the *Jnaneshwari* is on *Bhaktimarg.* That in *Yatharthadeepika* is on knowledge.

But Wamanpandit is more well known for his *Akhyan Kavita,* written in the tradition of Eknath. He sustained the tradition and enriched it. His main objective here, like that of Eknath, was spiritual enlightenment through *Sagunbhakti*; and to achieve it, he depicts episodes from the *Bhagwat* and the *Ramayana* in a devout spirit. Of Wamanpandit's other writings, *Gajendramoksha* impresses with its tone of self-surrender and devotion; *Venusudha* and *Vanasudha* have been very popular for ages. They describe the playful gambols of the boyish Krishna on the banks of the Jamuna. Some of his works celebrate episodes like Ramajanma and Seetaswayamwara. But obviously, the life of Krishna drew him and his poetic art more than the life of Rama. In some *akhyanas,* like *Radhavilas,* however, he reveals a gross sensualism which verges on obscenity. This trait strengtioned the case for two Wamanpandits! But beyond the probability that a few poems written by some of his disciples like Hari Dixit, the author of the well-known *Bhismayuddha,* got mixed up with the authentic work of Waman, the canon of his work is almost clear. Stylistic characteristics and philosophical tenets both show that philosophical works like *Yatharthadeepika* and secular poems like *Venusudha* and *Radhavilas* were both written by the same author.

Wamanpandit's work reflects his period only indirectly. He led a secluded life, unconcerned with the social and political upheavals of his time. The rise of Shivaji, the consolidation of the Maratha kingdom, the difficult days it had to face after the death of Shivaji—none of this seems to have affected the tenor or content of his writing, although in his later days, he seems to have lived in the heart of Maharashtra. One of his *samadhis* is on the banks of the Warana; and the other, probably built by his disciple Hari Dixit, on the banks of the Krishna. It is only in the rich elaboration of his style and its Sanskritised diction that his work reflects the renaissance-like spirit of the days of Shivaji. He is an adept in the use of varied metres: the sing "Sushloka Wamanacha" (the correst *shloka* is that written by Waman) has become proverbial. His descriptions are vivid and picturesque, with harmony between sense and sound. But almost the whole of his work is fanciful, and elaborate, its appeal being more to the mind than to the heart. His style is studded with metaphors and conceits. His lines ring with alliteration, sometimes to the extent of becoming jarring. His learning does not sit lightly upon his shoulders, nor does his work radiate the ease and tranquility of a Jnaneshwara. Wamanpandit entered into a samadhi at a considerably late age in 1695. He had a number of disciples like Samrajya Waman, Hari Dixit, Vishwanath, Narhari, Vitthal and Nagesh. They closely imitated the style of their guru, with its elaborate alliteration and metaphors. Some of their work, as seen before, has even been incorporated in the canon of Waman.

Akhyan-Kavya was further popularised by some other poets of this period. Most of them, including Samaraj, the oldest of them, Nagesh and Vitthal Bidkar, drew upon the stories of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* for their material. Not only that, most of their poems are elaborate accounts of weddings! For example, they celebrate the *swayamwars* of Sita, Rukmini or Damayanti, with all the verbal ingenuity and variety of versification and figures of speech they can command. Their work does not rise to the spirituality of Eknath, nor even to the artistic achievement of Mukteshwar. But to them goes the credit of further popularising this form and of providing a fairly erudite

repast to the people.

One of the richest poems of this tradition is *Damayanti Swayamwara* by Raghunathpandit. He and Anandtanaya belonged to Tanjore. The Marathi language followed the Maratha soldier wherever he went. When Shahji, Shivaji's father, first went to Chandichandavar, modern Tanjavur, a number of Marathi families of different castes accompanied him. Some of them settled in the new kingdom, and so did their culture and language. Their literature also took root there. Several philosophical works in verse—though of the conventional type—written there are available; at a later date, a number of puranic plays—supposed to be written by Shahu Maharaj, but actually written by poets under his patronage—were also produced. But the most important work of this region, which has won for itself a distinctive place in Marathi literature, is *Damayanti-Swayamwar* by Raghunathpandit. It is written in the classical style, with a good deal of skill and artistry. It is picturesque, and carries a fine word-portrait of Damayanti. The work closely follows Harsha's *Naishadha Kavya*. Most of these poets patterned their poems on the Sanskrit *kavyas*. For instance, Nagesh's description of Chandravali is almost a literal rendering of the description of Sita in *Raghuvansa*. This does not however mean that these poems are merely translations, nor even that they are wholly parasitical. There is a good deal of originality in description, characterisation and prosodic effects. This type of poetry is fanciful and somewhat artificial. It depends on puns and conceits and lacks a truly creative imagination. Often it is gross, and even obscene, in its descriptions. But with all these faults, it has enriched Marathi literature. Nor can it be ignored that it has added to the grandeur and flexibility of the language.

Krishnadayarnava and Shridhar were the last of the *Akhyankavis* of the period. They form the link between the period and the one that followed—the Peshwa period. Shridhar (1658-1729) was one of the finest and the most saintly of these *akhyankavis*. He recalls the chastity of style and devout attitude of Eknath. His style is often even more mellifluous and crystalline than that of Eknath. His works like *Harivijay* (1702), *Ramvijay* (1703), and *Pandavpratap* (1712) became popular in his own lifetime, and have since been an important medium for the cul-

tural and religious training of Marathi families. His *Vyankatesh-Mahatmya* still forms a part of the daily recital of hundreds of Marathi women. Sincerity is the hallmark of Shridhar's work.

The death of Aurangzeb in 1707 gave the Maratha kingdom a respite from the continuous struggle for the preservation of freedom. For about thirty years Maharashtra had to concentrate all its energies on the struggle. They were dark days for it, but all the same, they were days of great idealism, co-operation and alertness. To a great extent its literature also was in tune with this spirit. May be it was not as creative or dynamic as in the days of Eknath, Tukaram or Ramdas. But in its own way, if in a somewhat lower key, in works like those of Shridhar, it strove to maintain the same values of life.

The Age of the Peshwas

Life in Maharashtra changed to a great extent with the death of Aurangzeb. A sense of security, and with it an ambition of not only to stabilise but also to expand the kingdom, pervaded it. Shahu was also fortunate enough to be blessed with capable peshwas (Prime Ministers) like Balaji Vishwanath and Bajirao I. The Maratha power became a dominant force in the country. With its forces flung far in the north and the south, and with its hold even over the Moghul throne of Delhi, it ushered an age of comparative prosperity in Maharashtra. Life became colourful and full of variety. It was not of course wholly secure. None of the Peshwas had a very peaceful time. They were continually harassed by onslaughts from outside and rifts within the kingdom. Their personal ambitions added to the troubles of the kingdom. But during this period the central parts of Maharashtra had a greater security than ever before. Poona, the seat of the Peshwas, became a centre of learning, culture and also of luxurious social life.

This phase is best represented by the work of Moropant. He enjoyed the patronage of the Baramatikars, a family related to the Peshwas by marriage. He had received a thorough training in the Sanskrit classics and religious texts. He was also adept in the use of classical diction and prosody. His main vocation was that of a *Puranik*—of reading out verse stories from the

Puranas in temples, commenting upon them and elucidating them to men and women, young and old, high and low. He was naturally inspired to compose verse stories to embellish the Puranas—stories in a style that was attractive and yet within the grasp of such a mixed audience. He brought to bear upon them all his learning and also his gifts of perspecuity and ornateness. Interestingly enough, this eighteenth-century Marathi poet reveals some of characteristics of eighteenth-century English neo-classicism. "What oft was thought but ne'er so well expressed," might very well apply to his 'wit'. He narrated the story of Krishna in his erudite *Krishnavijaya*, and the stories from the Bhagwat in his *Mantrabhagwat*. He avoided metaphysical discussions and concentrated on the story element, providing skilful touches of character portrayal. He recorded the chronicle of *Hariwansha* and, most characteristically, he is belived to have written one hundred and eight versions of the story of Rama, with different narrators for different episodes and in a large variety of metres. Ninety of these are available. Some of them, like the one with Sita as a narrator surrounded by the happy company of sisters-in-law and friends after her return from *vanawas*, and known as *Seetageet*, show great ingenuity of invention. Moropant was also fond of what is known as *chitrakavya* or poems with all manners of verbal ingenuities.

Aryabharat is regarded as Moropant's greatest achievement. It condenses the Sanskrit epic *Mahabharata* in about seventeen thousand verses; but it also expands and fills out some portions of the original. And it presents a new interpretation of some of the characters. Thus the work is much more than a mechanical adaptation. It has a distinct originality. There had been several renderings of the epic into Marathi : some of them incomplete, the others inadequate as poetry. Into this poem has gone not only great learning and impeccable craftsmanship, but also genuine poetic fervour.

The favourite verse form of Moropant was the *arya*. He infused new life into the old Sanskrit verse, and gave it a wonderful finish and variety. In all he wrote some lakhs of *aryas*. He also wrote polished *slokas* in various metres.

Ingenuity in narration was the forte of Moropant, but that was not his sole achievement. In his later days he wrote some

lives of saint poets and hymns that have made him even more popularly known and read than have his narrative works. Such are his *Gangaprarthana* and *Kashistuti*. But the best among these shorter poems are his *Kekavali* and *Sanshayaratnamala*. They evince lyricism of a high order. They are much simpler in style than his other work, though not without his characteristic ingenuity. They are his personal prayer and invocation to God. Generations of young readers have been brought up on the choicest poems of Moropant. He gave the language a new stature and dignity, a new range and subtlety of expression. He had a large number of followers,who wrote the *arya*, as perfected by him (but not always with his felicity), and most of whom were content with imitating his ingenuities. The rise of the Peshwas brought about a fresh efflorescence of the *powada* and the *lavani*. A host of *shahirs* arose to celebrate the exploits of Bajirao I. and Madhaorao I: later, there was a tragic theme too — the assassination of Narayanrao. Honaji Bala, Saganbhau, Anant Phandi, Ramjoshi and Prabhakar were the more well known of these *shahirs*. They gave vent in a language and rhythm close to living speech to the thrill felt by the people in the reborn glory of the Peshwa court. In the *powadas* they presented vivid pictures of the Maratha soldier in his war glory, and in the *lavanis* they gave a free and robust expression to his love of sensual pleasure: mainly of the erotic. Intended for recital before large gatherings—from the court to the village green—to musical accompaniment however modest, this poetry had a geniune folk flavour about it; it was so refreshingly different from that of the *pundits* who drew their themes from the *puranas*, and their diction from Sanskrit as far as they could.

Philosophic and erudite poetry in the coventional mode continued steadily in this age too. It kept up the 'classical' tradition. It yielded an even richer harvest than ever before in the works of Moropant. But the *shahirs* were the poets of the people. They sang of the love and longings of the soldier's beloved, of the rich preparations that she made for her lover, or husband, or her anxiety at his departure on campaign after Dasera, of her pleadings with him and, most poignantly of all, of the torments of separation from him. But her *sardar*, however loving, was not to be tempted into delaying his departure. His pride,

and his loyalty to his lord and master's cause struck a chord in the listener's heart.

As is natural with the Indian mind, *shahir* poetry was also used for popular erposition of the Vedanta, and for allegorical presentation of philosophical problems, particularly in the later years of the Peshwas. Metaphysical riddles, exposition of the relation of the *atma*, the individual soul, to the paramatma, the universal soul; or of the devotee to God, in the amorous idiom of the lavani, became very common. It was obvious that degeneration had set in. Metaphysical acumen was getting blunted. The devotional urge was on the wane; so too the verve of a soldier's life.

Kirtan was a popular form of entertainment in which a simple exposition of some philosophical theme was followed by the narration of an episode from the epics or the puranas, with *pads* (songs) punctuating it all. The poets whose *pads* were drawn upon widely for the purpose were Madhwamunishwar and Amritrai. Niranjan Madhav combined an active political career with writing poetry of different types from *stotras* to descriptions of places.

Marathi biographical verse dates back to the days of Jnaneshwar. In the early days it chiefly centred round the lives of saints. Prose works of this kind date back to the beginnings of the Mahanubhava movement. In verse, the life of Jnanadev, written by Sachchidananda Baba, his contemporary, is the first noteworthy attempt of the kind. It was followed by the lives of Namdev, Eknath, Dasopant, Ramdas, Tukaram and others. written by various persons. There were a few autobiographies too. Most of these attempts at biography or autobiography are rudimentary. They do not show much concern for authenticity of material. Most of them bank on the miraculous. However, this type of writing acquired a literary character with the works of Mahipati, a poet of the days of the Peshwas. In his life of Tukaram, he took the trouble of going to the original sources, and collecting information from the relatives of the saint. He wrote the lives of a number of other saints. His *Bhaktaleelamrita* is still read very widely in orthodox Marathi homes. These writings, simple to imitate, brought forth a crop of imitators.

We have seen how historical writing and political and ad-

ministrative correspondence gave a fillip to Marathi prose in the days of Shivaji. Such writing developed further during the days of the Peshwas. The *Ajnapatra* of Ramachandrapant Amatya is a fine specimen of an exposition of political policy and theory. A number of *bakhars* were also written during this period. The Peshwas had *bakharkars* in their employ. Well-written accounts of various contemporary events, narratives of historical events of the days of Shivaji, and the collection and rewriting of old *bakhars* continued to be produced. *Shivdigvijaya*, written in 1718 by Khando Ballal, is comprehensive and detailed, but a good deal of the material seems to have been incorporated at a later date. Its style is well-organised and dignified. Another good *bakharkar* was Chitre, alias Chitragupta, who also wrote in a vivid, if rather elaborate, style. His masterpiece is the *Panipat Bakhar*, which he undertook to write at the instance of Parvatibai, wife of Sadashivrao, the hero of Panipat. It is a moving elegy in prose. But *Bhausahebanchi Bakhar*, written by Krishnaji Shamrao, surpasses it in poignancy. It has striking pictures of the battle of Panipat, and the debacle and sufferings which followed. It is written in a style which varies with the mood of the content. There are crisp word-portraits of various personalities, and there are touches of humour. Another outstanding work of historical significance is the autobiography of Nana Phandnavis. It is incomplete, but is remarkable for its frank self-analysis. Malhar Ramrao, who was the *chitnis* of Pratap Singh, ruler of Satara, put out voluminous work, during a few years around 1810. He wrote a *bakhar* of Shivaji in seven chapters, an account of the whole history of the Marathas, and also lives of the five Chhatrapatis. His *Marathyanchi Bakhar* is the finest attempt at historical writing made in the days when the art of writing of history was yet to be known. At a later date, Grant Duff considered it worthwhile to take his help for his own compilation.

None of these historical writings, however, bear the stamp of genius. They were not the products of master-minds—like Jnaneshwar or Tukaram in the field of poetry. Their literary merit is therefore not to be compared with that of the poetry of the age. Even from the historical point of view, the work is a mixture of fact and fancy, of banal narration and romantic

idealisation. There is no attempt at philosophic interpretation, which again presents a sharp contrast with the best in Marathi poetry.

Historical correspondence, to the extent of forty thousand letters, has been collected by researchers during the last fifty years. This forms a more vital and reliable form of historical writing. It is capable of giving a truer picture of contemporary political life, with its all its vicissitudes. Many statesmen and *sirdars* of the Maratha and Peshwa periods employed skilled writers for their despatches. These contained description of battles fought, and orders or instructions about administration. The political accumen of the masters, and the facility of expression of masters as well as scribes, combine to make these despatches vigorous but cautious, full of practical insight but still lofty in tone and intent. The correspondence dates back to the days of Shivaji himself. One of the best known documents is a letter from Shivaji to an officer of his army. Some of the letters of Bajirao I. Nanasaheb Phadnavis, and others are not only written governance of Maharashtra in those days.
self-confidence and sense of balance that were manifested in the in a commanding style, but they also evince the statesmanship,

With all its variety and polish, however the literature of this period as a whole does not rise above mediocity and conventionalism. It lacks the urge of original thought and deep feeling found in the work of Jnaneshwar or Tukaram. It is devoid of the missionary spirit of the work of Ramdas, or even the simple devotion of Shridhar. Religion had degenerated into ritualism again. The barriers of caste and class had become rigorous. Poetry became a form of enlightened entertainment with just a flavouring of religiosity, or a frank source of erotic excitement as in the *lavanis*. Prose was growing in virility and scope, but it was hardly yet used as a form of literary expression, and so was more or less topical and occasional.

A bird's-eye view of Marathi litrature over the long period from its beginnings in the Yadav period to the end of the Peshwa period would reveal that, like most other Indian literature, it was mainly concerned with the propagation of religious ideas and philosophical expositions in its early days. Poetry devoted itself solely to this. It was the only armour for the Marathi

mind during the onslaught of Muslim rulers and their religion. When kings and warriors failed to protect them, when the administrators went over to the conquerors, the morale of the people was maintained by this religious and metaphysical poetry. It was the only power which not only maintained the traditions of the language but also enriched it. It was the sole repository of their thought and culture. When better days dawned, it spread itself out with greater assurance and embraced the material life of the people in the poetry of the pundits and the *shahirs*. The saints, pundits and *shahirs* were, thus, the three major types of poets during the period. Marathi prose began as early as in the days of the Mahanubhavas. It did not, however, build up a tradition, because it soon became locked up in a secret code. In the later part of the period, prose acquired more and more strength. In the Bahmani period, the language came under a strong perian influence. The vocabulary, especially the administrative, became predominantly Persianised, but the trend was reversed during the period of Shivaji. The prose of the Peshwa period, as found in *bakhars*, informative books on astronomy, medicine, horselore, administration and other such subjects, reveals its growing power. These trends however suffered a great setback after the third battle of Panipat in 1761; and after the fall of the Peshwas in 1818, there was further deterioration, at least for a while.

Part II

The Pre-Modern Period : 1 (1818-1874)

Political and Social Background

The history of the early days of the British power in Maharashtra makes dismal reading. The seeds of the tragedy were, of course, laid long before, in the heyday of the Peshwas. The tendencies which led to the downfall of the Peshwas took root in the days of their splendour. The feeling of solidarity among the people was lost. Family feuds and personal jealousies raged among the rulers. The *sardars* began to fend for themselves, and even went to the extent of taking help from the foreigner, to secure greater personal power. The Brahmin pundits entrenched themselves in ritualism. Ritual and superstition dominated even the conduct of battle at Panipat. After that disastrous defeat, complete decay, political, social and economic, set in.

A favourable background had thus already been created for the advent of the British. In 1818, with Montstuart Elphinstone liquidating the rule of the Peshwas, the British became the rulers of Maharashtra. This was almost the last step towards the British soverignty in India. The British were conscious of the importance of Maharashtra, and also of the difference between the social and political atmosphere in Maharashtra and that in the other parts of the country. In spite of all the degeneration and disintegration that had taken place during the preceding few years, Maharashtra was bound to prove a difficult field for the British. The soil was not as favourable as that in Bengal, for example, which had been longing to be rid of the tyranny of the Nawabs and the insecurity of life and trade.

The early British administrators were conscious of this and, with true statesmanship, they did all they could to ameliorate the condition of the *sardars* and the upper classes and to win them over. They succeeded easily. The petty sardars and jagirdars found that, for various reasons, their rights over their property—their *watans* and *jagirs*—were going to be respected by the new overlords. Their co-operation, often amounting to dis-

loyalty to their erstwhile rulers and to their people, was rewarded most generously by the new rulers. They soon settled down into a life of ease and unconcern for the general good. They lapsed into an almost complete moral and intellectual atrophy. The British proceeded rapidly with the process of the creation and consolidation of an empire, political as well as cultural. They were quick to see that maintenance of the empire would require the willing co-operation of the people of India in administration. They would have to train them differently. Some of the early administrators were as zealous as missionaries in propagating their own learning and language. Some of them, like Montstuart Elphinstone, werer educators with a true insight. They believed in imparting education, in spreading the new learning even if it would mean paving "our high road back to Europe." They laid the foundation of a cultural revolution in India.

Prose

In 1800 a college was established at Fort William in Calcutta, for training British officers in the Indian languages and learning. It became a vital point of contact for some Indian pundits and the British. About the same time the Royal Asiatic Society was established in Calcutta; and at the Serampore Mission, near Calcutta, the missionaries began their endeavours to acquaint themselves with the Indian languages and to use them as a medium for their work. They established a press, and under the guidance of Dr. William Carey, they vigorously started work on a Marathi dictionary. Dr. Carey also secured the help of the pundits of the Fort William College. Pandit Vaijnath Sharma, the chief Maratha 'pundit' at the Fort William College, was one of his important co-workers for this dictionary which was published in 1810. Dr. Carey also prepared and published some of the earliest Marathi books of the period, like 'A Grammar of the Maharatta Language (1805), the Gospel of St. Mathew (1805), the Bible (1807), *Sinhasan Battishi* (1814), *Panchtantra* (1815), *Hitopadesa* (1815). The American Mission (1815) and the Scottish Mission (1822) also soon came into the field. They were established in Bombay. All these brought

out a variety of Marathi books on different subjects and of different types. Many of them were directed against Hindu ideas of worship and Hindu superstitions. Some aimed at belittling the Hindu gods and sowing the seeds of Christianity. Quite a number were translations of English stories or novels. One of the outstanding ones in this category was *Yatrik Kraman* (1841), a translation of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* by Hari Keshavji.

The style and language of these books hardly belonged to the tradition of Marathi prose of the Peshwa period. The links of tradition were completely lost. Although the missionaries obtained the help of some pundits, none of the books written by them shows any awareness of that earlier tradition. It was almost as if a new language with a new diction and syntax was being created. It was as halting and awkward as the speech of a foreigner. These foreigners believed that they were giving a form and precision to a totally undeveloped language. What is more surprising is that the Marathi pundits also persuaded themselves into a complete obliviousness of their rich ancient tradition. They followed the lead of their new masters in writing awkward, plain sentences. The new subject matter issued forth in a new style which was crude and bare. This style was appropriately deprecated as the *'Ingraji Awatar'* of Marathi prose, by Mahamahopadhyaya D.W. Potdar in the title he gave to his book[1] on the subject.

In 1827, the Bombay Native Education Society was established with Capt. Jarvis as its Secretary. Three outstanding Indians were appointed members of a committee with twenty-odd other members. Of them, Sadashiv Kashinath alias Bapu Chhatre rendered pioneer service in the preparation and publication of books. Of the scores of books on all kinds of educational subjects published by the Society, a majority were due to the labours of Jarvis and Chhatre. One of the most important works undertaken by the society was the compilation and publication of a Marathi dictionary, 1829, with the help of Parshurampant Godbole, Balshastri Ghagave, Gangadharshastri Phadke, Sakharam Joshi and Dajishastri Shukla. It was followed by Molesworth's great dictionaries. Several pundits prepared

1. *Marathis Gadyacha Ingraji Awatar.*

grammars of Marathi, the best of them being that by Dadoba Pandurang Tarkhadkar (1836); it held the field for generations together. The Bombay Native Education Society offered generous prizes and rewards for books on educational and scientific subjects. The Secretary gave clear instructions that the style employed should be such as would be understood by the common people, and should not therefore be erudite or pedantic. Another source of encouragement was the awards by the Dakshina Prize Committee, a body which was formed to utilise the amounts which were used for distributing *dakshina* to Brahmins by the Peshwas in the holy month of Shravan.

The early British administrators thus proved to be patrons of Marathi and also did their best for the spread of the new learning through it. But the whole policy underwent a change in 1840, when all the expenditure over the development of Indian languages was stopped by the Government.

The Rise of Periodicals

The change in the Government educational policy might well have proved a deadly blow to Marathi, but the roots of the new lerning had already struck deep. A new vigour of thought had been created, and so, even when official patronage diminished, the production of books not only continued, but took a new line. Private publications took the field. There arose a spirit of resistance to the missionary propaganda and to blind acceptance of the ideas of the rulers. There was an effort to revive the traditions of ancient learning and literature. Publishers were no more occupied with merely anglicised books of schoolboy standard. They turned their attention to older Marathi poetry and other classics. Most of this work was done through the medium of periodicals. Balshastri Jambhekar was the first to realise the importance of periodicals of the English pattern, and also to establish one. His *Digdarshan*, a monthly magazine, and *Darpan*, a daily newspaper, were founded in 1832. Within the short span of a life of thirty-four years (1812-1846), Balshastri Jambhekar put forth a remarkable amount of journalistic writing, together with his academic teaching and other writing. He was one of the earliest progressive thinkers and active reformers of Maha-

rashtra. *Prabhakar* (1840), another weekly, was started by Bhau Mahajan. It too was progressive in its approach to social questions as well as to political ones. The *Jnanachandrodaya* (1840), of Pandurang Bapu Joshi devoted itself mainly to printing extracts from classical Marathi poetry. This trend gathered great strength in a few years. The *Sarvasangraha* (1860) of Madhav Chandroba Dukle affords another example of this type. Another group of periodicals aimed at repelling the attacks of the missionaries on Hinduism. In reply to the *Jnanodaya* (1842) of the missionaries, Morbhat Dandekar started the *Upadesh-Chandrika* (1844) and later Vishnushastri Chiplunkār's *Vicharlahari* also took up the same cause.

The language of these periodicals was by no means that of the early anglicised writing. That *awatar* of Marathi prose had almost vanished. The new kind of writer wrote in a spirited manner, arguing skilfully or slashing satirically. Krishnashastri Chiplunkar (1824-1878) was an adept in sarcasm and ridicule. He was also a considerably versatile writer, and wrote with case on literary and linguistic subjects. He was the principal of a Government training institute for teachers. He edited some time a monthly magazine, the *Shala-Patrak*, which was sponsored by the Government and was meant chiefly for teachers. It published serially his essays on grammar, and his translation of Dr. Samuel Johnson's novel *Rasselas*. His volume of essays, *Anek-Vidya-Multatva-Sangraha* (1816) (a repository of the basic principles of many branches of learning) also contains essays on a variety of interesting subjects. Vishnubuwa Brahmachari (Vishnu Bhikaji Gokhale) (1825-1871), a remarkable writer of this age, made a frontal attack on the propaganda of the missionaries. His *Vedokta-Dharma-Prakash* (1859) was not only a solace to the common man confused and harassed by the missionaries. It also shows a remarkable vision into the future, arising out of a deep understanding of the Vedic religion. His tract on benevolent rule, *Sukhadayak Rajyaprakarani Nibandh* was almost a precurser of socialistic concepts of government and social organisation. Jotiba Phule (1827-1890), who was from one of the lower castes, worked against heavy odds as a pioneer in education for women and the uplift of Harijans. He wrote trenchantly, often bitterly, about the unjust, orthodox Hindu social order, the ritua-

lism and narrowness of the Brahmins. Sometimes his arguments had a flavour of bitterness and even of hatred; his language sometimes verged on crudeness. But he achieved great work in social reform, as well as in the development of Marathi prose, to which he brought a directness and bluntness it needed much.

Gopal Hari Deshmukh (1823-1892), the eldest and perhaps the most versatile and effective of all these reformist writers, contributed hundreds of short essays to various periodicals like *Prabhakar, Jnanprakash, Vritta-Vaibhava*, under the penname of *Lokahitwadi*. Like many of his contemporaries, he came of a middle class family which had seen the last days of the last Peshwa. He began earning his livelihood at the age of twelve on account of the death of his father and elder brother. However, later, he managed to join the Poona Government School and also appeared for the examination for munsiffs. He worked in the judicial department and rose to many high positions. But he was also keenly conscious of the social degeneration he saw all around him and was greatly pained by it. In 1848-1850, he contributed his *Shatapatre* ("A Hundred Letters") to the *Prabhakar*. Later, he also wrote a number of treatises on the caste-system, the essence of the Gita, the Ashwalayan Sutras and other subjects. The most significant of all his writings however are the *Shatapatre*. They give a vivid picture of the time: the superstition, lethargy and ignorance which then prevailed. With a deep sincerity, though sometimes with a little harshness, he exhorts the people to take thought and banish the evil customs and false conceptions about religion. He did not fail to see and to point out trenchantly how their own faults, their corruption, selfishness, shortsightedness and dissensions had paved the way for British supermacy; but at the same time, he pleaded that the virtues of the British, their learning, efficiency in governing, industry and scientific knowledge—their whole way of life, as a matter of fact was worth emulation. Again and again he exhorted his readers to discard the decadent and imbibe the new spirit. He was himself a Brahmin, but he slashed at the ignorance and hypocrisy of the Brahmins with all his vigour. He advocated social reforms and the new education. He is often blamed for an uncritical admiration of the British, but a close study of these letters will reveal only the fire of indignation at the degenera-

tion that had brought about the downfall of the people and the loss of freedom. His mind reached out to even a sense of responsibility to the generations to come, visualised democratic rights and the establishment of a parliamentary government in India. He wrote in a chaste, simple style, though only in one strain: of advice, exhortation and chastisement.

This period also reveals faint glimmerings of a new attitude towards history. Grant Duff's *History of the Marathas* was translated into Marathi in 1830 by Captain David Capon and Baba Sane. It seems to have roused the Maratha mind with a challenge by some of its glaring mistakes in facts and especially its warped outlook and interpretation. A young student, Nilkanth Janardan Kirtane, was the first to criticise it boldly and ably. His essay gave an original historical point of view. Lokahitwadi, Bhide, Phadke, and others took up research of historical papers, wrote short biographies of leading, *sardars* and heroic figures and later, even the first struggle for independence in 1857 found a number of historians. Various periodicals played their part in the publication of such historical material.

Fiction : The Beginnings

These different trends of thought—social, historical, and literary were reflected in fiction. This was a new form which came into existence chiefly through imitations of the English novel. Weaving of enthralling stories and vivid character-portrayal were not unknown to Marathi writers. But fiction in prose was clearly the outcome of the study of English fiction and the availability of the printing press. The first few years were devoted primarily to translation of English stories and novels. A few stories from Persian and Arabic sources were also rendered into Marathi. The first of the translations from English was that of John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* by Hari Keshavji. It was called *Yatrik Kraman.* It was followed by translations of *Gulliver's Travels Robinson Crusoe, Paul and Virginia, Rasselas. Aeson's Fables* oriental tales like the *Arabian Nights;* and from Sanskrit *Kadambarisar* (an abridgement of Banabhatta's *Kadambari*), Hitopadesha. *Panchatatantra;* from the Hindi. *Vetal-panchavishi* and others. The varied these sources manifested themselves in

the different styles of fiction that came to be written in Marathi.

The Realistic Novel

The first important type—first in importance as well as in appearance—was the realistic novel aiming at social moralisation. *Yamunaparyatan* by Baba Padmanji appeared in 1857. It reflects the contemporary social and religious scene as well as the literary vogues. Padmanji was a convert to Christianity. He wrote assiduously for the spread of Christian ideas under the auspices of the Bombay Tracts and Books Society. His autobiography *Arunodaya* and the novel *Yamunaparyatan* have acquired a significant place in the history of Marathi literature. The position of the novel as the first original Marathi novel is, however, disputed by some critics. Structurally, it is not much more than a series of incidents of one and the same type, brought together by the very simple device of the heroine's journey to various places. The novel aims at exposing the miserable condition of Hindu widows and encouraging them to embrace Christianity. It was not surprising, therefore, that the novel did not become popular and was soon forgotten. But it has in it the beginnings of the realistic tradition. Padmanji used the form for social analysis, achieved some success in characterisation, and wrote in a fairly chaste style, though it bore some traces of anglicisation.

The 'Romances'

Muktamala (1869), which is considered by many as the first original Marathi novel, was of a different kind. It arose out of the Sanskrit tradition of story-telling, in form as well as matter. Laxmanshastri Halbe, the author, was deeply imbued with Sanskrit learning and also with the poetic tradition of the Peshwa era. He wrote in a richly Sanskritised style with the orthodox object of upholding moral values. He sought to vindicate the virtue of the good and decry viciousness and cruelty. But his novels are romantic in style. They are saturated with high-flown sentiment, with the love of mystery and suspense, and with exotic and exaggerated descriptions. They show no regard for probability. Anachronisms of thought and fact

abound. In his second novel *Ratnaprabha* (1878) exaggeration and decorativeness reach an even higher degree. These novels created a school of their own. Naro Sadashiv Risbud followed suit and even went one step further in decorativeness. His style is very artificial. His depiction of incident and character is even more unnatural. His *Manjughosha* exemplifies these traits. To the same type belong K.L. Jorvekar's *Vichitrapuri* and P.G. Parkhi's *Mitrachandra*. A woman writer, Salubai Tamtwekar, too tried her hand at this type of fiction in her *Chandraprabha-Viraha-Warnan*. These novels are fantastic in matter, and pedantic in style. But they became extremely popular in a society whose life had become colourless, and insipid, especially with the new idle-rich class of *sardars* and *malguzars* who had been relieved of all their burdens of responsibilty and leadership by the British. These novels satisfied the craving for sensation and day-dreaming under the garb of high moral philosophy. The characterisation in these novels is in sheer monochrome; the good are all good, and the vicious are unredeemably vicious. The type became very popular and, understandably, it evoked strong criticism. Kashinath Balkrishna Marathe wrote a critical pamphlet called *Naval ani Natak Hyavishayi Nibandh* (Essay on the Novel and Drama, 1872) is which he severely criticised the artificiality of style and the craze for phantasy in such writing. Neither did he spare the idle, degenerate readers who sought to dispel their ennul by such stuff.

In their richness of style, fantastic descriptions of improbable incidents, and in their high moral tone, these novels hark back to Banabhatta's prose romance in Sanskrit, *Kadambari*. This had already been translated into Marathi (though in an abridged form), and its name came to serve as the name for the literary form in Marathi. The *Muktamala* species is known as *adbhut kadambari*, the fantastic novel. It manifests a strange amalgam of the moralistic vein of pauranic stories, the rich decorativeness of Sanskrit prose with its exotic imagery and word play, and the sensuousness and romantic feeling of the Persian tales. There is also a sprinkling of dilettantish interest in contemporary controversies, like the ones about widow-remarriage or women's education, which only results in obvious anachronisms. Destiny is always ready to work miracles for the heroes and heroines.

Accidents turn in their favour and virtue always wins in the end. With all their fantasy and exaggeration, however, they rendered a great service to Marathi prose. They put it on its own feet. They established firm links with the rich heritage of Sanskrit. Not only that: they created a new pattern of Marathi prose. They drew upon the rich resources of older Marathi literature, chiefly pundit poetry and religious verse, for diction and imagery, and moulded them into a pliant form of prose.

The Historical Novel

A third important trend in Marathi fiction also originated during this period. *Mochangad,* the first historical novel, was written by Ramchandra Bhikaji Gunjikar in 1870. It was a natural product of the spirit of the times when a young student like Kirtane challenged the historical misconceptions of Grant Duff. The story of *Mochangad* cannot be said to have a very sound historical basis. It is more romantic and imaginative than historical. But it opens a new approach to the history of the Marathas. It created a prototype of the character of Shivaji in fiction and also laid the foundation of the tradition of the historical novel in Marathi. Gunjikar had a fairly clear conception of what a novel—especially a historical one—ought to aim at. As he put it in his own foreword to *Godavari,* another historical novel of his, the novelist must try to portray the customs and traditions, the dress and manners, the political and religious views of the people of the age concerned. Gunjikar wrote in a chaste, readable style. His successors were not as keenly conscious of their objective, nor were they masters of the form, as Gunjikar was *Mochangad* was followed by three similar novels, *Sambhaji, Chitturgarh, and Panipatchi Mohim* by N.V. Bapat. V.J. Parwardhan wrote one on the revolt of 1857, named *Hambirrao and Putlabai.* A number of others on various periods of Maratha history followed, but none rose to the level of *Mochangad.*

Drama : The Beginnings

Of all the literary forms in their early stage, Marathi drama was the least affected by foreign influence. It developed naturally from certain indigenous forms of entertainment and enligh-

tenment like the puppet-show, the *lalit* or the *dashavatari khel*, or other semi-religious shows. These drew their characters from all social levels as well as from the *Puranas*. Entertainments of this type in Maharashtra were enriched by fashions from Kar nataka, which in their turn had imbibed a great deal from some plays from Tanjore. Shivaji's step-brother, Vyankoji, headed a small kingdom in Tanjore, which had developed from a jagir of their father Shahaji. Vyankoji and his successors were well-known for their patronage of arts and letters. Some Sanskrit plays had also been written for their pleasure. The tradition of these plays seems to have travelled northwards to Maharashtra, through Karnataka. A peripatetic group from North Karnataka known as Bhagwat Mandali, visited Sangli in 1843. Vishnudas Bhave, who was till then engaged in performing puppet-shows based on pauranic stories, was inspired by the shows of the Bhagwat Mandali. He greatly improved upon them, and created a new type of pauranic play in Marathi. The play consisted chiefly of a number of songs, using the classical *sloka* metre, or the tunes of popular folk songs. The prose dialogue was mostly impromptu. Bhave wrote more than fifty such *akhyanas*. But they were never printed. Several other companies also sprang up with the growing popularity of this form of the theatre. Then came, though gradually, the foreign influence. Social skits, fantasies, and sensational historical themes came to be pressed into a type of light play called a 'farce'. Such plays gained quick popularity with their hilarious social satire, often quite reactionary in spirit. The new education, remarriage of widows, women's education and similar reforms came in for cheap, often grotesque, criticism. At the same time, a wave of translation of Sanskrit plays also set in. Despite the rich heritage of Sanskrit drama, for centuries together drama had fallen into disrepute, and actors were taboo. There was now a revival of the art, and also of Sanskrit drama. It is surprising to see how many Sanskrit plays were translated and given a true Marathi garb during the few years from 1857 to 1874. When there arose a new spirit of self-respect and resistance to the influence of Christian missionaries in the world of periodicals too, these and other plays were published as books. Perhaps because of that, they were known as 'bookish' plays. The major part

of the translation work was done by Parshuramtatya Godbole. He translated *Venisamhara* (1857), *Uttararamacharita* (1859), *Shakuntala* (1861), *Mrichchakatika* (1862), *Nagananda* (1865) and *Parvatiparinaya* (1872). Many others like Krishnashastri Chiplunkar, followed his example and added to the treasures of Marathi drama. These plays gave a form and a vigour to Marathi drama that have proved invaluable. They were supplemented by translations of English plays. By this time, the first generation of university products was in the field, and they tried their hand at translating Shakespeare's plays. In the midst of this medley of influences and inspirations, came the first powerful Marathi historical tragedy, *Thorale Madhavrao Peshwe* (1861) by Vinayak Janardan Kirtane, brother of the pioneer writer on history. This was the first original Marathi play. It still makes very effective reading. It is surcharged with a feeling of the grandeur and the tragedy of the life of that great Peshwa. Kirtane wrote one more play, *Jayapal* (1865). From then on, historical and social plays prospered. Pauranic plays of the school of Vishnudas Bhave continued till the twentieth century, but they too underwent a great metamorphosis.

Poetry : A Variety of Strains, Old and New

It the prose of the early British period suffered on account of the break with tradition, the poetry of the period was weighed down with the burden of tradition. The three main trends of the Peshwa period continued, but in a feeble manner. The *shahir* school suffered the most, for it depended upon the heroic elements in the life around. With the slime of slavery all around, what could the shahir sing about? "So topsy-turvy are the times, ants have swallowed the Meru (mountain)", says Prabhakar. Nor was there any source of inspiration for *lavanis* in the slothful *luxuriousness* of the sheepish *sardars*. Prabhakar and Parsharam were the last of the shahirs. The school of Bhakti poetry however rested on a more enduring foundation. But while it continued its even tenor, it hardly rose above mediocrity. Daptardar, Palande, Khandekar wrote commonplace religious songs or didactic slokas and stotras (hymns), their main virtue being prosodic correctness. The third strain was that of the Pundit

school—the learned men who wrote in the 'classical' style. This school however underwent considerable change. They still wrote in Sanskrit verse-patterns in a highly Sanskritised diction. But they came out of the rut of stories from the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. They turned towards the works of Kalidasa, Jagannatha Pandit and other 'earthly' poets. Parshuramtatya Godbole and Krishnashastri Chiplunkar were the chief of these. Godbole also rendered invaluable service to Marathi diction and verse by his efforts for the revival of old Marathi poetry. He conducted a periodical, *Sarvasangraha*, devoted to the publication of such poetry. This endeavour of his was crowned by his excelltnt anthology of the poetry of the earlier periods. *Navaneet* (1854). It has been rightly remarked that had it not been for the labours of Godbole, it is doubtful if the newly educated generations would have at all remembered the poetic treasures in their language. Godbole himself also composed chaste verses in the orthodox style. His *Balbodhamrit*, *Namarthdeepika* and other poems have nurtured generations of young minds. With his translations of Sanskrit plays and his work on old Marathi poetry, Godbole will be gratefully remembered as one of the makers of modern Marathi. Krishnashastri Chiplunkar's chief contributions were a translation of Kalidasa's *Meghdoot* and one of the *Karunavilas* of Jagannatha Pandit.

The most novel strain, however, was of the poetry of those who had been influenced by their anglicised education. A great change had come over their outlook, taste in literature and literary values. They were deeply impressed by the English poetry they had studied, and they sought to introduce those patterns in Marathi. They tried to translate some long poems, imitated the English lyrical vein, and imbibed English theories of diction and verse. Bajaba Ramachandra Pradhan, for instance, adapted Scott's *Lady of the Lake* into a long narrative poem called *Daivaseni* (1867). It was an index of the new values in both poetry and social thought. M. M. Kunte, an educationist and a keen student of science and philosophy, went a step further. He was deeply impressed by the Wordsworthian ideas about poetic diction, and proceeded to use the language of everyday life in the most unsophisticated manner in his long poem *Raja Shivaji*. The first three parts of this poem were published in

1869. It was an original venture, boldly undertaken. But the crudeness of its style and the lack of any genuine poetic quality drew volleys of criticism, and even of ridicule. The second instalment of three more parts, published in 1871, did not improve matters. The poem remains now only as a curiosity. Such was the effect of an ill-equipped effort, however well-meant, to break away radically from a tradition which still had a strong hold. The poet's preface to it, which sets out his ideas about his innovations, has however considerable historical significance. So different were the results of innovation in the fields of prose and poetry.

Vishnushastri Chiplunkar, who had by then risen to eminence as a writer, was one of the severest critics of *Raja Shivaji* His monthly *Nibandhamala* ushered in a new era in Marathi literature. During the sixty years which preceded his rise, the ground, as we have just seen, was well-tilled by a number of writers. The process of a great conflict and confluence of cultures was set afoot. The currents whirled and eddied. For a while, the weaker, older one of indigenous culture seemed to be almost completely overwhelmed by the vigorous new one, especially because the latter was supported by political power. But eventually the advent of the new led to a revaluation of all aspects of life. It created a Lokahitavadi who mercilessly analysed the old way of life, it also brought forth a Vishnubua Brahmachari who sought to synthesise the two on a high plane of political and philosophical reconstruction. The conflict of cultures created reformers of the calibre of Phule; it also inspired men of letters like Godbole to revitalise forms of literature like poetry and drama with traditions of centuries behind them. At the same time, new forms like the essay and the novel, and new media like the magazine and the newspaper opened out channels of expression. The tide of resurgence of life gathered great force.

As one looks back at all that achievement, however, across a distance of almost a hundred years, it is obvious that it was tentative and halting. Thinkers and writers were looking out for new directions but they were not yet sure of themselves. Many of them were still weighed down by a sense of defeat and lost glory, although there was also a growing awareness of the potentialities of the new era. Self-confidence, clarity of vision

and mastery of style and form were yet to be born. These were achieved during the next generation: the age of Vishnushastri Chiplunkar.

Part III

The Pre-Modern Period : 2 1874-1885

Vishnushastri Chiplunkar (1850-1882)

The work of Vishnushastri Chiplunkar supplies a vivid contrast to the literature of the preceding age in many ways. But the contrast is a product of natural evolution. It is like the contrast between the leaf and the flower. Many of the earlier writers were filled with a sense of the shortcomings and decadence of the Indian way of life; they were with each other in learning from the foreign rulars. Some others were making efforts to revive-orthodox patterns in life and literature. Chiplunkar asserted the inherent grandeur of Indian traditions. He sought to rouse self-respect and self-confidence in his readers, preferring sometimes even a bigoted, militant attitude to one of servility and blind imitation.

He was the son of Krishnashastri Chiplunkar, a writer of eminence, and principal of a government training college. Krishna-shastri was also in charge of a government-sponsored educational periodical, *Shalapatrak*. Vishnushastri began writing for this periodical in his teens. He completed the translations of *Rasselas* begun by his father, and published it in instalments in the periodi-cal. He decided to dedicate himself to writing and to the task of rousing the people by means of it. English writers like Macau-lay, Johnson and Addison inspired him to follow their vocation. But he did not imitate them blindly or admire them indiscrimi-nately. In 1872 he took sole charge of *Shalapatrak*, and gave it a new vigour. But it was too outspoken and too openly criti-cal of the schemes of the Government and of the missionaries to be approved by the education department. The publication of the periodical was soon stopped by the Government. In 1874. Chiplunkar started his own periodical—*Nibandhamala*, a monthly —and with it a new era in journalism, and literature, and in the intellectual life of Maharashtra generally.

Chiplunkar had very clear notions about his objectives in starting the periodical. He was keenly aware of the power and richness of the Marathi language, and of how an artificial poverty

had been enforced upon it by neglect and lack of appreciation. He declared that he was going to rehabilitate the language. He would write with malice towards none, but with the ambition of not only to delight but also to instruct his readers and make them realise their heritage of centuries. He did not propose to do this by presenting translations and adaptations of dramas, fiction, travelogues, as many others did. He called his periodical *Nibandhamala,* a garland of essays; and the essays would be on the condition of the language and of the country, the ways of life of the people, and sometimes also on branches of learning like history. An analysis of the eighty-three numbers of *Nibandhamala* produced by him shows that they cover a very large range of subjects, six types of which stand out. They are: the linguistic problems of Marathi, literary criticism, social problems and current attitudes about them, political questions, psychological problems, philosophical and didactic topics.

These essays brought about in the readers a change of attitude that cannot but be called revolutionary. It was a many-sided revolution. In the first place, Chiplunkar transformed Marathi prose. He gave it precision, a compactness and a refinement of diction that was never found before. He increased its range of expression from lofty indignation to subtle ridicule, from close argumentation to trenchant exhortation. He was an adept at illustrations and vivid description of social attitudes. In an age when others resorted to English for their learned and scientific treatises, and wrote sometimes even the prefaces to their poems or novels in English, Chiplunkar not only slashed at such people for their parasitical slavish mentality, but also worked hard to build up the resources of his language. His style has a smoothness and ease, a scintillating variety and polish. But as he himself pointed out, "It is not possible for one who has not been through it himself to realise how arduous is the task of pleasing the goddess of expression." At the same time, Chiplunkar was dispassionate enough to acknowledge how much could be learnt from the English language and literature. It was this rich influence that helped him in moulding modern Marathi prose.

In the *Nibandhamala* also to be found are the beginnings of Marathi literary criticism. Chiplunkar was the first writer to

cultivate the essay as a literary form. He was also the first writer to attempt an evaluation and elucidation of literary works. In one of the early issues of the *Nibandhamala* (No. 15) he discussed the basic principles or the characteristics of true criticism. In a later one, he demonstrated these by his analysis of *Tara*, a translation of Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*. His *Sanskrit Kavi-panchak* articles on five Sanskrit poets contributed to the *Shala-patrak* during 1865-1870, may be said to be one of the first full-fledged attempts at the revival and elucidation of classical Sanskrit poetry. It fixed the norm of poetic criticism for years to come. His critique of the poetry of Moropant is a fine example of his close study of the subject, of the power of marshalling material and of literary perspective. The work, of course, suffers from certain tendencies which were inevitable historically and from some others arising out of Chiplunkar's temperament. While refuting certain charges of the critics of Moropant, Chiplunkar gave full rein to some of his favourite prejudices against certain contemporaries. He could then hardly keep within the limits of literary criticism, and made continuous inroads into current affairs and personalities. But, nevertheless, he set an excellent example for those who make a close study of a work; and he stimulated interest, and pride, in the literature of his own land.

Chiplunkar was not a wholly bigoted critic. He had not closed his mind against everything. This is abundantly borne out by his biography of Dr. Samuel Johnson which filled eight issues of his periodical. This may be said to be the first Marathi literary biography. The translation of Johnson's *Rasselas* (done partly by him) was also a valuable contribution to the development of the early Marathi novel.

Chiplunkar founded a strong school of socio-political and educational thought in Maharashtra. After conducting the *Nibandhamala* single-handedly for seven years he wound it up (after the eighty-third issue) probably because his ambitions grew more varied and extensive. In 1878, he started another periodical called *Kavyetihas-sangraha*, devoted to poetry, drama and historical writing, but did not use his own name as editor, as the government had already grown hostile to him. The educational and political policy of the British took a different turn after Elphinstone. It became unfriendly to indigenous culture and

literature, thanks largely to Macaulay's minute. It became much more so after the struggle for independence in 1857. On the other hand, self-respecting Indians like Chiplunkar grew restive under the heel and could see through the shams of the educational fervour and reformism of the British. In 1879 Chiplunkar resigned his post as a teacher in a Government school; and started the New English School in 1880. He launched a printing press and publishing house, called 'Chitrashala'. He also founded the weeklies *Kesari* (in Marathi) and the *Maratha* (in English), in 1881. In starting the school and the weeklies he had such distinguished colloborators as B. G. Tilak (the 'Lokamanya' of later days), and G.G. Agarkar (who, however, joined the school after a year). Chiplunkar thus laid the foundation of the most important literary, intellectual and political activities of his age. But, in the midst of all these and when he was at the apex of his powers, the thread of his life was suddenly cut off. That was in 1882. On hearing the news of his death, M.G. Ranade, the doyen of scholars and reformers in Maharashtra, remarked with intense sorrow, "He had no business to die so soon."

Drama

The decade of Chiplunkar's great achievement in Marathi prose was fruitful in other fields too. Drama, especially achieved maturity, all of a sudden, as it were in the work of Balwant Pandurang Kirloskar. He surpassed all the previous achievements in the form of Vishnudas Bhave, the writers of 'bookish' plays, the translators of Sanskrit and English plays. His work synthesised the best elements in all those. It maintained links with tradition, but was not weighed down by it. It gave a new vitality to traditional themes: its form was moulded by classcal discipline; and it was refined by the beauty of classical music. His first play *Shakuntala* (1881) was a translation of Kalidasa's play. Kirloskar's predecessors like Trilokekar and Nene had established the vogue of introducing plenty of songs and assigning them to the various characters, as against the old one of the *Sutradhar* singing most of them. But the opera-like *sangeet natak* achieved its full form only in the work of Kirloskar. He was able to

bring together all the components of a good performance for the first time: a good script, melodious and appropriate songs, skilful acting, and enlightened patrons. Kirloskar had had a long and devoted apprenticeship as a dramatic craftsman. He had persevered in the composition of songs and poems, and writing plays for amateur performances on historical or biographical themes—like *Shankar-Digvijaya*. All that bore full fruit in his *Shakuntala*.

His next attempt was a more original one. He took the story of Subhadra and Arjuna from the *Mahabharata* in its outline, and giving free play to his imagination filled in vivid, human details to create *Saubhadra*, which has had an undimmed appeal to the theatre-goer to this day. It is not merely a well-constructed play. Its characters are truly human; they are as modern as they are pauranic. It makes skilful use of music. The songs are an integral part of the play. Their wording is felicitous. Kirloskar used several old metrical forms.

In setting his songs to music Kirloskar used a variety of *ragas* in the classical tradition—of the Karnataka school as well as the North Indian—and also of tunes from folk-music. It was a veritable feast of music and the songs were dramatically effective, bringing out the significance of action and character. The characters of Arjun and Subhadra—and especially of Krishna with his sly manoeuvering, providing a humorous contrast to that of his blustering brother Balaram—have become immortal.

Unfortunately Kirloskar died prematurely in 1885 at the age of forty-two leaving behind an unfinished tragedy, *Ramarajyaviyog*. In his short career, Kirloskar accelerated and stabilised the development of the Marathi theatre. He took up the vogue of the pauranic play, and gave it a neatness of form. He used music to enrich his plays. He humanised the pauranic characters. He brought them down from the pedestal of a godlike state, made them dynamic, and so more effective. And, above all, he gave status and respectability to the profession of an actor, by his art as a writer and producer, and his personality.

Fiction

The realistic trend in fiction, manifested in the first Marathi

novel, Baba Padmanji's *Yamuna Paryatan,* had been almost swamped by the extravagances of the romantic novels of Halwe and Risbud. But it gathered force again in the late eighteen seventies as seen in M.V. Rahalkar's novel *Narayanrao ani Godavari* (1879). The realistic atmosphere, the vivid character sketches, and the flowing style, are so impressive that some critics would have this acclaimed as the first true and full-fledged representative of the form. Rahalkar depicts a poignant picture of the social prejudices of the middle class and the viciousness of the idle new rich. The story opens as an idyllic love-story but ends tragically on account of the machinations of the rich villain. Vinayak Kondadev Oka, in his noval *Shirastedar* (1881) ventured at this early stage into an exposure of the corruption in government service. Another novel, *Venu* (1886), by Ganesh Mahadeo Limaye depicts, on the other hand, the story of an officer harassed by domestic and social problems. It seeks to bring out the folly of the hasty, early marriage of girls. *Shikshak* (1883) by D.N. Randive may be described as a sociol-political novel, from the contemporary point of view. The author undertook the risky task of depicting the condition of those petty Indian States the rulers of which were refused permission to adopt heirs; and thus became victims of Lord Dalhousie's policy of 'Lapse'. To disguise the daring effort, the author seems to have chosen the device of concentrating attention on the teacher of the adopted heir rather than on the latter.

Poetry

The influence of English poetry, so palpable in Kunte's *Raja Shivaji,* assumed a more refined and better assimilated form in K.R. Kirtikar's *Indira.* Dr. Kirtikar was a widely travelled person. He had been abroad twice and had also been on the front during the Afghan War. His poetic turn of mind had broadened his sympathies. There was also a strain of deep devotion in his mental make-up. *Bhakti-sudha,* his first book of verses, was very popular in the Prarthana Samaj circles. Many of the songs were used in their devotional services. The lyrical vein in Kirtikar reached a fuller expression in his elegy

on his wife, *Vilaplahari* (1882). But Kirtikar is best known for his long narrative poem, *Indira* (1885). It is a skilful adaptation of Tennyson's *Princess*. It is an index of a new social outlook. Kirtikar had a considerable ease of style. But his verse does not succeed in attaining the grace and precision of Tennyson's verse. Nor could he capture the depth of sentiment of some of the famous songs in the original work.

The work of Vishnu Moreshwar Mahajani (1851-1923) has perhaps been more effective than that of Kirtikar in building up a tradition, or in increasing the impact of English poetry upon Marathi poetry. Mahajani preferred the form of the lyric to that of the long poem. He was the first to attempt the adaptation and translation of English lyrics into Marathi on a considerable scale. He also showed a fine taste and insight in his choice of poems for translation. Mahajani's translations also show a grace of diction and a feeling for rhythm. Since his days, romantic lyrics and Victorian poetry have proved to be one of the major influences on Marathi poetry.

This vogue gathered considerable strength as the century neared its end. Kanitkar, Bhandare, Lembhe, Mogare and many others contributed to it. These poets drew upon the rich treasures of the English lyric. They also wrote long poems, narrative or elegiac, of a fairly high quality. Many of them were inspired by the new spirit of patriotism and pride in the past. They tackled quasi-historical themes in a new style. Most of them wrote in a polished, but simple, style. Above all, these poets introduced the subjective element in verse. Their efforts were of an elementary kind, but they brought about a change. They were the harbingers of the change which was to clearly distinguish modern Marathi poetry from old Marathi poetry. There was considerable transformation. Poetry wound itself into and around sights, subjects, and sentiments of everyday earthly life. It became more closely related to the 'here and now'.

These changes, however, also led to a narrowing down of the scope of poetry. The rapid development of Marathi prose in the hands of Chiplunkar and his contemporaries had already made the medium of verse unnecessary for many themes for which it had been used. The subjective element narrowed down

the scope still further. This was, however, a blessing, qualitatively. Mechanical, prosaic verse—the sort that used to pass for poetry—exposed itself for what it was. Poetic energy was gradually channelised into an expression of the poet's personality. The ground was prepared for the advent of Keshavsut.

Biography and Criticism

The interest in historical research gave a fillip to the form of biography, though it was yet in a crude stage. The high-water mark for the age was again set by Chiplunkar with his *Life of Dr Johnson.* The example was diligently emulated. A number of historical biographies, like those of Bajirao I (1879) by N. V. Bapat, and of foreign heroes and statesmen like Benjamin Franklin and George Washington by several writers were published. A favourite and widely read variety was that of the lives of saints like Ramdas, Tukaram and Eknath. Even the comparatively modern figure of Vishnubuwa Brahmachari became the subject of a biography by R. P. Ajrekar. A number of short biographies of poets were complied by Janardan Ramchandraji. The historical biographies were never wholly authentic, nor did the form have much precision or literary excellence. The characterisation was mostly elementary. But yet it must be said that the foundation of biography with a varied choice of central figures was laid. Not only that, even autobiography took root. Vishnubuwa Brahmachari's is short and incomplete, I but vivid-Baba Padmanji wrote a detailed, exhaustive and interesting one: *Arunodaya.*

A beginning was also made in literary criticism. We have already seen how Chiplunkar wrote articles on the nature of appreciation, or evaluation, of books in his *Nibandhamala.* His *Sanskrit Kavipanchak,* essays on the Marathi language and on the poetry of Moropant did pioneer work in this field. They introduced a new spirit in criticism. Even at this early stage. Marathi criticisms branched off into two different main trends. There were the short treatises elucidating the principles of Sanskrit Sahitya-shastra. These had only a semblance of relation to Marathi poetry.

A pre-indication, as it were, of Vishnushastri Chiplunkar's

approach to literary criticism had been provided by Dadoba Pandurang Tarkhadkar's *Yashodapandurangi* (1865), a commentary on Moropant's *Kekavali,* and K. B. Marathe's essay on the novel and drama (1872). Tarkhadkar's *Marathi Bhasheche Vyakaran* (1836) was the first methodical grammar of the language and it earned him the description the Panini of the Marathi language.' His autobiography, one of the earliest writings in that form, was however first published in 1927 in a magazine, and in 1947 in book-form.

Thus, during the Chiplunkar era—a very short spell—Marathi literature, and life in Maharashtra, got rid of the spinelessness of the early British days. The literature grew in self-confidence and powers of self-expression. It ceased to be overwhelmed by foreign influences, but imbibed a new vigour from that 'milk of the tigress', as Chiplunkar called the English language. It did not forget the past, but acquired sufficient strength and confidence to look ahead towards a new life and the shaping of a new nation. New forms like the essay were created and a new spirit was infused into the old ones like poetry and drama. The age which followed saw the consummation of these trends.

Part IV

The Modern Period : 1 (1885-1920)

The Growth of Prose

The wave of resurgence which arose in Maharashtra by the middle of the nineteenth century kept on rising till the end of the century, and even for two decades beyond it. The period between 1885 and 1920 saw some of the greatest writter in Marathi. Several literary forms flowered forth. Literature became an expression of the vigour and vitality manifested in the social and political life of the people. In 1885 was laid the foundation of the Indian National Congress. The soil had been prepared for it by two great pioneers and prophets of Indian nationalism: Dadabhai Naoroji and Mahadeo Govind Ranade. Dadabhai held that no progress or prosperity could be achieved in India until the exploitation of its material wealth by the British came to an end. For this, self-government was the only remedy. "In self-government lies our hope, strength and greatness," he said. Ranade did not wholly agree with that view. He was temperamentally inclined to emphasise the silver lining to all things human. He launched the 'moderate' school in politics which would take recourse only in constitutional means in the struggle for freedom. He also stressed the need, and a priority, for social reform. In the writings and exhortations of these two leaders are to be found the seeds of the two-fold ideology of resurgent Maharashtra, and even of resurgent India: the extremist and the moderate.

Ranade was also deeply interested in an all-round cultural renaissance. As Lokamanya Tilak wrote of him, when Maharashtra lay like a cold and lifeless lump, it was Ranade who devoted all his energies to revive and activise it in every possible way. He initiated and encouraged activities for the spread of education and social reform. He was a founder of the National Social Conference, and its guiding light. The conference which, for some years, held its session immediately after that of the Indian National Congress and at the same venue, gave to the movement for social reform on all-India basis. It also empha-

sised the need for secularism. Ranade was, above all, very devout, though unorthodox, and played a great part in the foundation of the Prarthana Samaj (in 1867), which sought to stem the decay of Hinduism on account of blind orthodoxy and ritualism, on the one hand, and the new-fangled scepticism born out of the impact of Western thought on the other. Rather like the Brahmo Samaj of Bengal in its rejection of idolatry and its congregational worship, the Prarthana Samaj was different from it in having its roots firmly in the land: it drew sustenance from the *bhakti* tradition of the saint poets.

Ranade also rendered considerable service to Marathi literature, particularly by his two reports on Marathi publications. The first dealt with the books published upto 1864, and the second with those published upto 1896. The reports were a part of his campaign to regain for Marathi its lost place in university education, and were therefore naturally written in English. But, whatever their language, they form one of the earliest sources for authentic data for a Marathi bibliography and history of literature. Ranade's critical comments on the books he reviewed are also illuminating. Another English work of his, *The Rise of the Maratha Power* is especially noteworthy for his assessment of the Marathi saint poets. In this book he brings out—for the first time—the great role played by the Marathi saints in the life of the people, and underlines the close relationship between their work and their environment. A keen student of saint poetry, he was particularly devoted to the *abhangas* of Tukaram and Namdev. He sponsored a conference of Marathi writers in 1878, the first of its kind. Ranade was thus in many ways one of the makers of modern Maharashtra—in most aspects of its life.

Agarkar and Tilak

The schism between the extremist and the moderate camps dominated the socio-political and intellectual life of Maharashtra for two generations. It threw up a public controversy, the chief protagonists in it being G.G. Agarkar and Lokamanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak. Born in the same year (1856), they were fellow-students at college, where they pledged themselves to creating an awakening among the people. They worked together in the

New English School and later in the Fergusson College, which they had founded in 1885, with some others. Of the two weeklies the *Kesari* (in Marathi) and the *Maratha* (in English), started by them under the guidance of Vishnushastri Chiplunkar, Agarkar edited the former, and Tilak the latter.

These two men of genius have, to a very great extent, moulded the mind of modern Maharashtra. Their intellectual vigour, integrity and spirit of self-sacrifice, endowed Maharashtra with a keen sense of purposeful service. Their seasoned and eloquently argumentative style gave to Marathi prose its golden age. Their work has to be considered in some detail.

Gopal Ganesh Agarkar (1856-1895) was born of very poor parents in a village near Karad. Even his primary education was a matter of hardship for his parents. He knocked about from place to place for his secondary education, staying for some time with his grandparents, at others with some distant relatives in whose houses he had to be something of a domestic help. His intelligence won him the sympathy of his teachers, and even some financial help from them. He joined the Deccan College in Poona, and there too he had to struggle very hard to pay his way to a degree. All the same, he read widely and deeply. With his deep study of Victorian philosophers like Mill and Spencer, he became an ardent lover of liberty, an individualist and a rationalist. He dedicated his life to the emancipation of society from slavery and superstition. In spite of all his experience of poverty and hardship, he chose a path of life-long sacrifice and hardship. Along with Tilak, he devoted himself to Chiplunkar's great creations, the *Kesari*, the *Maratha*, the New English School and, later, the Fergusson College.

Agarkar's first literary work, *Dongarichya Turungatil Amche Ekshe-ek Divas* (Our Hundred and One Days in the Dongari Jail) gives a vivid, but good-humoured, account of his incarceration together with Tilak (as editors of the *Kesari* and *Maratha* respectively) in 1884, in connection with what is known as the Kolhapur Case. The case had arisen out of the bold exposure the *Kesari* had made of the cruelties and indignities inflicted on the young Maharaja of Kolhapur by his *dewan* with the support of the British Resident. This was typical of the zest and courage with which the four young men used their weekly to champion

the cause of the oppressed. It was a fortunate thing for Marathi literature that Agarkar thought of writing about his experiences of life in a jail. This may be said to be the first specimen of a type of literature which was enriched during the next sixty-odd years of struggle with British Imperialism: literature depicting the experiences of political prisoners. The little volume is also interesting for its inherent qualities. It reveals a remarkably modern sympathy for the delinquent mind, a deep sense of humanity, and of humour, in facing the hardships of prison life. Above all, it is a testimony to the genuine friendship between Tilak and Agarkar —all the more yaluable because it became clouded later by sharp differences of opinion on a variety of subjects.

These differences came to a head in 1888. Tilak preferred to adopt a comparatively orthodox attitude towards social and religious matters. He grew more and more inclined to concentrate his energy on the political struggle. Until 1888, Agarkar bore the major burden in editing the *Kesari*. But his social radicalism soon grew unpalatable to the *Kesari* group. He realised that they had come to a parting of ways. So he left the *Kesari*, and started his own weekly, the *Sudharak*. The controversy whether the struggle for political freedom should precede the movement for social emancipaion, or vice versa, raged for a long time in Maharashtrā. It is highlighted by the parting of ways of Tilak and Agarkar. But it had already started in the earlier period—of Lokahitāvadi and Chiplunkar. Agarkar's position was however much more broad-based than that of Lokahitavadi. He slashed the evils of social stagnation, superstition and slavery of women even more vehemently than Lokahitavadi. But, unlike Lokahitavadi's his attack had a firm philosophical basis. His was the reasoned, scientific approach of a rationalist and an agnostic. Earthly happiness was the ultimate objective of his philosophy of life. He refused to harbour any consideration of the other world, or of any supra-terestrial, non-intellectual and non-rational standards. He was above all a humanist, believing firmly in the equality of all, respecting the individuality of everyone. He devoted all the power of his pen to the awakening of this power of reason, to the sharpening of the intellect and to the establishment of equality among his people. He did this at the great cost of estrangement from friends, ridicule by his people,

bitter poverty and broken health leading to premature death. And yet, he never called for any truce with foreign rule. He was far from labouring under the favourite misconception of some of the thinkers of the earlier generation that British rule was a divine dispensation. Agarkar was also keenly conscious of the economic exploitation owing to foreign rule, and the rapid growth of poverty in India. In some of his essays he has dealt vividly with the flow of raw material to Britain, the flooding of the Indian market with British goods, and the consequent impoverishment of the country. He was farsighted enough to claim that India must have a parliamentary system of government like that in Britain.

Agarkar had a profound understanding of historical processes. He pointed out frequently how the downfall of the Peshwas and the easy victory of the British were mainly because of the social decay and religiosity of those days. He argued that if freedom was to be won and maintained, the struggle for it must be fought simultaneously on the political and the social fronts. Political freedom and social slavery could not go together. "How can a country where the homes are schools of slavery and tyranny create a tradition of great men, and how can it attain knowledge, art, wealth and freedom?" he wrote. "If you do not want slavery in life outside, you must eradicate slavery within the home." It was for this purpose that he wrote on a wide range of problems: from dress to free choice in marriage, from 'the age of consent' to the torture of widows, from the celebration of festivals to faith in God. It is often said that his horizon was limited to the middle class, and the higher castes. But the statement is superficial. Agarkar fought for the basic human freedoms, and for keeping the individuality of man inviolate.

His open letter to Maharashtrians is poignant in its sincerity. It is almost a testament of his faith; and it also reveals his feeling for Tilak, in spite of their differences. His *Sudharak* always stood up for the common man's right to happiness, and to his development.

Agarkar tried his hand at some other kinds of writing too. He translated *Hamlet* with the title *Vikar-Vilasit*. It is only moderately successful; but it has a long preface on the problems

of translation and the state of the Marathi language. He also wrote a book on Marathi syntax, *Vakya-Meemansa*. This attempt was the first of its kind in Marathi and was obviously inspired by the English concepts of sentence structure.

However, Agarkar's imperishable gift to posterity is his *Sudharak* and his contributions to the *Kesari*. He wrote in a style which was as varied as it was crystalline in sincerity. Sometimes he piles sentence upon sentence, the effect rising in a crescendo; sometimes telling effect is achieved through a short sentence, as through a rapier thrust. He contributed richly to Marathi vocabulary by coining Sanskrit-based equivalents for English words, and also by boldly adapting to Marathi English words in everyday use. He gave a new pliancy to sentence structure and increased the range of expressiveness of the language in a variety of ways. He made effective use of sarcasm and rhetoric, of moving appeal and trenchant exhortation.

Agarkar's whole life was an incessant struggle and constant sacrifice: a noble and dedicated life. He faced unpopularity as a champion of social reform—and therefore as an adversary of Lokamanya Tilak. But he did not flinch. Harassed by poverty and a wasting disease like asthma, he died at the age of thirty-nine.

Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1856-1920)

Tilak's versatility and many-sided activity made him different from Agarkar. They started life together, to work for a common ideal; but, as has already been stated, they parted company on account of ideological differences. Tilak was by nature a leader of men, practical in his approach and downright in his views and words. He was as great a scholar as a political leader. Not only that, even his erudition and his command over language were used as weapons in the fight for freedom. His endeavour as a scholar was directed towards inculcating a positive activism in his people, towards stimulating a consciousness in them of their philosophic and religious heritage. His was a peculiar synthesis of political radicalism and social conservatism. As a political leader, it was necessary for him to carry the people

with him. And this necessity dictated the course his public life took.

It would be difficult, and also superfluous, to go into even the major events in the life of this 'Father of Indian Unrest'. His weekly, *Kesari*, dominated Marathi journalism, the thought and life in Maharashtra, and indirectly even Indian thought and life, for about thirty years: from 1890 till his death. His editorials fill four large volumes, the last one comprising articles on literary and cultural topics. These topics were chosen by him according to the need of the hour; but the articles have attained a place for all time on account of the incisiveness of the style, the force of argument, the erudition and, above all, the sincerity of the writer. Everything that Tilak wrote bears the stamp of his powerful personality; his precise scholarship, the clarity of his thought, and his deep experience and understanding of human affairs. He had occasion to write on varied themes of political, social or economic import, on books of different kinds, on personalities of as different types as Max Mueller and Gokhale, Chiplunkar, and Vivekananda. He also did a series on the state of the Marathi language, its script, and its development. But whatever the subject, Tilak's writing was underlined by the one central motive of all his endeavours: fighting the battle for the freedom of India.

Even the scholarly pursuits of Tilak were inspired by this motive. The *Geeta-rahasya*, his voluminous exposition of the *Bhagavadgita*, was written during his six years' imprisonment at Mandalay in Burma. It brought to bear on the subject his deep study of Indian and Western philosophy. It incorporates a lifetime of thought. It marshals the various systems of philosophical thought in a masterly way. It was the first effort, at least in Marathi, and perhaps in all Indian writing, of a comparative treatment of Indian and Western philosophical systems. Its central thesis, of disinterested activism—*Karmayoga*—as the highest duty of man, cannot fail to strike one as an effort to convince the intellectual classes of the need for positive and selfless action in the national struggle. This magnum opus of Tilak played a great role in endowing the distinherited Indian intellectual with a philosophy of life rooted in his tradition and yet vibrant enough to meet the contemporary situation.

Tilak's two other erudite works, *Orion* and *The Arctic Home in the Vedas*, are in English, and deal with the problems of the date of the Vedas and the original home of the Aryans respectively. They bear testimony to his profound knowledge of astronomy. A long list of the treatises he had planned is also available. Death cut short these varied pursuits on 1 August 1920.

Shivaram Mahadeo Paranjpe (1864-1929)

Agarkar and Tilak were Chiplunkar's associates. Another essayist whose imagination was also fired by the writings of Chiplunkar, if not by his personal influence, was Shivaram Mahadeo Paranjpe. He was a conservative in social thinking, but a radical in politics. As a student in university he had employed himself in prolific and careful reading of the history of many nations, of economic theories, of literature, and philosophy—both Indian and Western. On entering public life, he flowered forth suddenly as one of the finest orators of Maharashtra. He started a weekly of his own, called the *Kaal* (Time). In this appeared his powerful leading articles, scintillating with intense patriotism. He wrote in a rich style, using a variety of rhetorical devices from alliteration to irony. Irony was, in fact, his forte; and it served him well, particularly in his attacks on the British rule. He made skilful use of situations from mythology for inculcating political lessons in the minds of his readers—for rousing their patriotism and for annihilating their letharagy and intertia. Some of his essays, like the magnificent one on time, the poetic one on the lost plays of the Sanskrit dramatist Bhasa, the fearless ones on political revolutionaries, are fine specimens of rhetorical prose. But Paranjpe could also write in a chaste, almost lyrical style when he was captivated by the rugged beauty of a landscape, especially on the ranges of the Sahyadri, its streams and forests.

The ten volumes of his essays, which lay proscribed for about twenty years—from 1910 to 1930—have given Paranjpe a place of pride in the form—particularly in the rhetorical-cum-poetic variety of it. He also wrote a long poem, some mythological plays, two novels—*Govindachi Goshta* and *Vindhyachal*—and some historical and economic treatises. His best contribution

lies, however, in the enriching of Marathi prose. The kind of rhetoric he used with distinction is not in vogue any longer but his rich diction, his piquant irony, and his poetic ardour added much to the strength and beauty of Marathi literature.

Other Prose Writers

The second half of the nineteenth century thus proved to be a great age of Marathi prose. Even apart from the works of Agarkar, Tilak and Paranjpe, it was enriched by the scholarly treatises of several writers. It also saw an abundance of journalistic writing of various types. Among the journalists, Achyut Balwant Kolhatkar won remarkable popularity. This was mostly because his style had the kind of ingredients that hold the common reader—directness and liveliness, for instance. These particular qualities were important, because with growth of education a new type of readership—ill-equipped to grasp subtleties of thought and style—had to be catered for. Kolhatkar served as a model for several journalists in the following period. Of the researchers, C.V. Vaidya wrote a great deal, some of it in English, on the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*.. His biographies of Rama, Krishna and Shivaji are as readable as they are authentic. His series of essays on the emancipation of women—*Abalonnati-Lekhmala*, his studies in grammar and philology, and his critical essays are an index to the wide range of his scholarship. But his most read book, and also perhaps the most enduring, is his historical novel *Durdaivi Rangu* (1915)—which is discussed in the section on the novel.

Eminent among the historical researchers was V. K. Rajwade. Born in 1863, he completed his varied and rather long-drawn academic career in 1890. Most of his time at the university was spent in reading Indian classics and western books on history, philosophy, sociology, and literature. Even as a student, he had made up his mind not to take up a job. He devoted his whole life to the study of history and sociology, and to writing. After the death of his wife within a few years of marriage, he led the life of almost an ascetic, cooking his own food and reducing his necessities to the minimum. He devoted his labours to the collection of historical data, and to the analysis and

reinterpretation of historical and sociological facts spread over the Puranas and the classics. He also believed that a renaissance in Indian thought was possible only by acquiring a scientific outlook and learning from the West. With this in view, he started a periodical *Bhashantar* (Translation) to publish translations of classics—western and Indian. The periodical was shortlived. Rajwade then devoted himself mainly to the highly onerous but vital task of collection and publication of the sources of Maratha history. The work, spread over twenty-eight years (from 1898 to 1926), filled twenty-two volumes. It threw new light on some of the fundamental problems of Maratha history.

A writer who wrote essays on a variety of topics in a reformist strain was K.A. Keluskar, whose well-documented biography of Shivaji reveals his painstaking scholarship. Far more of a reformist—a radical, in fact—was Rajaramshastri Bhagwat who used his scholarship which was both deep and varied, to plead for social reforms and to hold up orthodoxy to ridicule. Characteristically, he wanted Marathi to be liberated from the yoke of Sanskrit. His ideas were unpalatable to most people of his time, and he was therefore dismissed as an eccentric, and he has suffered much neglect all these years.

Growth of the Novel and Short Story

It has been seen how the Marathi novel came into being by the middle of the nineteenth century under the influence of English fiction, and how Sanskrit and Persian influences also came to bear upon it in its early stages. Soon, there arose three different types: the romantic novel or *Adbhut Kadambari*; the realistic 'social' novel; and the historical novel. The *Adbhut Kadambari* usually meant a fantastic story narrated in elaborate language. The denouement usually brought victory to the virtuous and disgrace to the wicked. The second type was that of the realistic novel which sought to portray social conditions. *Adbhut Kadambari*, or the romantic novel, exhausted itself by 1880, but the realistic 'social' novel progressed steadily until it rose to remarkable heights in the work of Hari Narayan Apte. There was also the third type: the historical novel. In some

instances, like *Kal-Purush* by Ramchandra Balwant Naik, there was a mingling of the element of fantasy and romance with social portrayal. In others, like *Susheel Yamuna* (or the Revolt of Wasudeo Balwant Phadke), the historical and the 'social' converge. A 'social' novel of this period which preceded the great age of Hari Narayan Apte, is *Narayanrao ani Godavari* by M. V. Rahalkar (1879). It is original in conception, realistic in portrayal and chaste in style. It expresses a new attitude towards social and individual life. It opens with an almost idyllic description of the simple but happy home life of an idealistic couple and proceeds to depict how it is wantonly ruined out of sheer malice by a vicious, rich man and his satellites. Rahalkar's novel can be said to be one of the first effective tragedies in the Marathi novel. It has been suggested by some that it seems to be based on a foreign story; but the suggestion has not been substantiated so far. Above all, the portrayal and characterisation are truly contemporary and indigenous.

The historical novel, with *Mochangad* (1870) by R.B. Gunjikar as its first noteworthy specimen, did not make much headway until the last decade of the nineteenth century. Interest in historical events and personalities continued to grow. But authentic material about the past was yet rare. N. V. Bapat wrote a number of biographies of heroic personalities like Peshwa Bajirao-I and Sambhaji. But these were neither authentic biographies nor good historical fiction. Another hybrid product was *Laxmi ani Saraswati* by B.M. Pandit. It seeks to depict the anarchic days after the murder of Narayanrao Peshwa, with the story of two characters, Laxmi and Saraswati, as its centerpiece. The novel, however, presents only a strange conglomeration of events and personalities, historical and imaginary. *Shikshak* by D.N. Ranadive is a more organic effort. It has shrewdly highlighted the teacher of the adopted son of a petty chief. But the events actually pertain to the notorious policy of 'lapse' adopted by Lord Dalhousie. One sees the first stirrings of the political novel in this story.

All this was tentative and experimental. Authors were only groping for the true nature of the form, and for adequate expression. That was achieved in rapid and confident strides by

Hari Narayan Apte, who began writing in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. In his young days, Apte (1864-1919) was a disciple and ardent admirer of Vishnushastri Chiplunkar. He absorbed Chiplunkar's nationalistic conservatism to a great extent, and also his deep love of literature. He read widely—from Shakespeare's plays to Sedgwick's Ethics, from the works of Mill and Spencer to the plays of Moliere. His earliest composition was an elegy on the death of Chiplunkar. He contributed two important critical articles to the *Nibandh-Chandrika,* during 1883-84, on the Marathi adaptations of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and *Hamlet*. These are comprehensive articles, showing not only a careful comparative study of the original and the adaptation, but also a grasp of the fundamental principles of translation and adaptation.

Apte's first novel. *Madhali Sthiti, made* an immediate impact on the readers. Its publication was begun serially in 1885 in a periodical called *Pune Vaibhava*. It was understandable that the author should seek the support of an English original for his first novel. *Madhali Sthiti* was based on Reynold's *Mysteries* of *Old London,* but it is not exactly an adaptation of it. There is a basic resemblance in some aspects of the plot and character-types; but the atmosphere and character-portrayal are distinctly original. The contemporary Poona society is vividly reflected in it. The veneer of modernism is torn asunder with frank contempt—characteristically for a disciple of Chiplunkar. On the other hand, the vulgar degeneracy of the old-fashioned characters is also exposed equally mercilessly. Several of the characters were acknowledged by contemporary readers to be vividly true to life. To the modern reader the portrayal may seem to be flat and unvaried, the narration unimpressive. But even within a few chapters, it becomes evident that the author has thrown away the crutches of the original story, and has fallen into his own stride. A new genius with a strongly realistic bent makes itself felt in the world of Marathi fiction.

Apte seems to have defined the function of the novel in a manner wholly different from the moralistic effusions of Halbe and Risbud in the preface to their novels. In an article, now unavailable, published anonymously in the *Pune Vaibhava,* before the appearance of his novel, he is said to have stated that a

novel should not only amuse, but also edify and uplift society. But Apte was greater as an artist than a social reformer. In *Madhali Sthiti,* he brought together the threads of several stories in a loose pattern. They are not exactly well-knit. But they present an unusually vivid and realistic picture of contemporary life. Whether it is the sentiments expressed by the author, or the sarcasm employed by him, between them they give us a clear idea of the values and attitudes of the age.

Madhali Sthiti—the title is variously explained as the state of the middle classes, or the transitional stage—was yet only the first fruit of a growing talent. Apte's mind was maturing rapidly. It was undergoing a great change under the stress of changing circumstances and new literary and philosophical influences. The revivalist spirit of Chiplunkar was being replaced by the spirit of reform of Agarkar as the major influence. Close association with cultured, widely-read friends like Govind Wasudeo Kanitkar, and his wife Kashibai, filled life with a new significance. A new monthly, called *Manoranjan,* was founded by the Kanitkars in 1886. A great deal of its editorial responsibility devolved on Apte. He wrote a number of stories and dramatic pieces to supply the demand of the periodical. Dramatic writing—skits and farces, original or in translation or adaptation—was considered an essential fare to keep the journal going. Apte tried his hand at all these types. Some of the stories like *Padvyala Bhet* (New Year's Gift) are marked by a sincerity in the handling of the theme. Some are like sketches for attempts on a larger scale, as in novels. Some are merely run of the mill. The adaptations of three plays by Moliere may be considered noteworthy, though the social satire of Moliere has dwindled into mere farcicality in them.

At the same time, the contradictions in his own life, the conflict between his progressivism and the orthodox pattern of his domestic life, gave an edge to his feelings. His failure to get a university degree, his economic dependence on his uncle, his failure to translate his ardour for a social reform like widow-remarriage into action at the time of his own second marriage, seem to have caused deep frustration. This is reflected in his second novel, *Ganpatrao.* It was in a spirit of idealism, and with sympathy for human suffering as symbolised in the

subjection of Hindu women, that Apte began this novel. Its serial publication started in 1883 in the *Manoranjan*. The novel has a strongly autobiographical strain. It springs from the depths of the author's spirit, seeking to assimilate new influences and afire with new ideals. But it remained incomplete, even after dragging through serialised publication for several years. It has been suggested that it remained incomplete not only on account of the author's editorial and other preoccupations. The conflict between the inner urge and the actual life of Apte was too great to allow him to complete a novel which was growing so autobiographical. He had sufficient integrity to realise the insincerity of weaving a story of complacent idealism when he had himself failed to translate the ideals into action. Idealism, like that of Ganpatrao, is one of the greatest life-giving forces in the world of Apte's creation. But, henceforth, the shadow of the tragic frustration broods over it.

In 1890 Apte started his own weekly, the *Karamanuk*. He defined his objective as achieving through entertainment what was achieved by the *Keṣari* and the *Sudharak* through exhortation The periodical continued publication until 1917. It became the vehicle for the serial publication of all the other novels of Apte. The period of experimention and the rennaissance of ideological terrain was over. He had made a clear choice: of 'Agarkarism' in thought, and of fiction—the story and the novel—in literary form. Objectively, he had learnt to observe and analyse the society. Subjectively, a spirit of melancholy, a poignant awareness of the tragedies of the human spirit battling against environment, filled his work.

The realism of *Madhali Sthiti* and the idealism of *Ganpatrao* (not without its tragic shadow) mingled together and came to full fruition in *Pan Lakshat Kon Gheto?* This novel is the first of its kind and still remains unsurpassed in many ways. It is cast in the form of the autobiography of a widow. It is written in a style which is appropriately womanly, and chaste, if also meandering. For the first time in Marathi fiction a character is portrayed dynamically and in all its dimensions. Yamuna, the heroine, lives before the reader's eye, with her girlish quarrels, with her young dreams and attachments, the restraints and privations incidental to her condition, then the agonies of the

daughter-in-law in a joint Hindu family, and finally the sufferings of a widow. But, the story is not merely a study of the condition of Hindu widowhood, like that of the first Yamuna in Marathi fiction—the creation of Baba Padmanji. Apte's heroine is a woman to her fingertips. She belongs to her milieu. Yet her story is the universal cry of the individual soul struggling to rise above its environment. It is a living testament of the struggle of the individual against society. The minor characters in the novel are worthy of the central figure. They too have been sketched with keen insight into types of contemporary persons, and with great skill of portrayal. Some of them, like Shanker Mamanji, the typically orthodox, hypocritical uncle-in-law, have become proverbial. The tangled web of life is depicted in a rich variety of characters: Yamuna's mother, who wielded such a great influence upon her unfortunate girlhood friend Durga; her sisters and cousins-in-law; her husband, patient and forbearing in his student days, gentle and generous, leading Yamuna towards freedom and enlightenment in the all-too-few days of happiness. Above all, the personality of Yamuna's brother—whose life also is a tragedy, though of a different kind—is like a light which leads the reader through the growing darkness of Yamuna's life. One feels that this character is only a thin veil for the author himself.

The years between 1890 and 1895 saw some of the best work of Apte in both kinds of novel—the 'social' and the historical *Yashwantrao Khare* and *Mee* followed *Pan Lakshat Kon Gheto?* within a couple of years. As a matter of fact, Apte seems to have worked upon two novels at a time, and published them serially in the *Karamanuk*. *Yashwantrao Khare* is a close psychological study of the influences that come to bear upon the mind of a boy with a poor, widowed mother. After the galling experiences as a cook's son in the house of a rich 'Rao Bahadur,' Yashwant becomes the disciple and potege of the self-satisfied ever-haranguing, conservative Shridharpant. This character is regarded as a caricature of the advocate of priority for political reform over social reform—in the context of the controversy that had been raging bitterly since the clash between Tilak and Agarkar. Shridharpant decries liberalism, emancipation of women, and social reform in general. He is depicted as a man of eccen-

tricities and idiosyncracies, of narrow views and narrower sympathies, given to ranting and pompous quotations. Yashwant soaks up these influences, until he is left with very little individuality. The novel covers the growth of Yashwant only from boyhood to youth. It moves hesitatingly, and often reveals a drying up of the author's sympathy. But it certainly has the virtue of a significant experiment. It is the first novel to set out consciously to trace the psychological development of a character.

In the next novel, *Mee*, Apte chose for delineation a type and a theme with which he had greater affinity. It is again the story of a luckless boy—with a vagrant father, an embittered mother, a well-meaning but sharp-tongued grandmother, and an inseparable sister. But the way of his life is determined for him chiefly by the benign influence of a neighbour: the kindly, gracious, liberal-minded Shivrampant, father of his playmate, Sundari. It is the story of the unfolding of a boyish mind which, though under the stress of bitter circumstances, was fortunate enough to be nourished by a wise and selfless influence until the boy grows into the remarkable personality of a pioneer in social reform. It affords a portrait of the middle-class Maharashtra of the last decades of the nineteenth century with its loyalties and conflicts. The novel is autobiographical in form; it gives full scope to the author's self-expression: his thoughts, his emotions and his social analysis. Indeed, the novel may be described as the least indirect record of Apte's own faith and viewpoint in life. From the depiction of an impatient idealist like Ganpatrao, and then a narrow-minded conservative like Yeshwantrao, Apte passed on to the portrayal of a full-fledged reformer in this story of Bhavanand. His thought and his art achieve their consummation in this novel.

The character-sketch of Tai, Bhavanand's sister, is also a very powerful one. She is possessed of a natural wisdom and dignity. She submits to her inevitable fate of being married to an old man, but is courageous enough to rise in revolt and leave his house when in his lecherousness he violates her sense of self-respect. She dedicates herself to the cause of the uplift of women, and proves a source of strength to Bhavananda. Sundari is made of softer stuff. Docile child of a progressive father, she is a gentle friend, totally self-effacing in her love.

This trio, created by Apte, makes a fair bid for immortality.

Apte continued writing 'social' novels till 1914, but the best of his work had been by 1900. *Jag He Ase Ahe* (1897-99), *Mayecha Bajaar* (1901-03) and *Bhayankar Divya* (1901-03) already show signs of decay. Their plots are intricate; the accent is on melodramatic events rather than on characterisation, on exaggerated sentimentalism rather than on idealistic emotion. Of the later novels dealing with contemporary life *Ajach* and *Karmayog* deserve mention. They are incomplete, but they reveal an effort to capture the contours of changing social and political thought.

Apte wrote ten 'social' novels in all. With his work, the Marathi novel attained maturity. Not only that. Some of the heights that Apte achieved have yet to be scaled by his successors. He is the first Marathi novelist to achieve a fine balance between realism and idealism, character-portrayal and social analysis. His novels leave a deep imprint of the sanctity of the individual, without preaching about it. His integrity as an artist and his keen humanity have endowed his work with an imperishable grace. He restricted his canvas to the life of the middle class in Maharashtra towards the end of the century. But he had watched life closely. In the best period of his life, he was in the intellectual vanguard of his generation. When a new generation came up, he did not give up the efforts to understand, nor did he begin to carp. That makes his characters varied and convincing; comes through and life in the period.

Apte's achievement as a historical novelist is equally great; quantitatively, it is even greater. It would be worth while considering some aspects of the political background of the age in which it was made. It has been seen how a spirit of historical enquiry and reverence for the past was created within a few decades of the introduction of the new system of education by the British. There arose a keen interest in Maharashtra in historical monuments, and other historical things. The source material of Maratha history began to be compiled. Justice Ranade's *Rise of the Maratha Power* recalled the proud history of the people. Several new books on the life of Shivaji—partly historical, partly imaginative—appeared. A movement was set afoot for raising a fund for the renovation of Shivaji's *samadhi* at Fort Rajgarh,

and for the construction of a memorial. Some British historians and officers also contributed to this wave of reverence for Shivaji. When Arthur Crawford, Revenue Commissioner for Bombay, accompanied Sir Richard Temple on his visit to Raigarh, he was touched by the dilapidated state of Shivaji's *samadhi*. He could visualise the scenes in the days of the splendour of Raigarh, as extracts from his diary published some years later tell us. William Douglas, in his book *Bombay and Western India* also wrote with deep feeling about the neglected state of the monument. P. B. Joshi had been trying in his own way to create interest in the repair and renovation of the *samadhi* over a number of years. The slow process suddenly developed into a popular movement when in 1895 Tilak took it up. Through the *Kesari*, and through numerous meeting and appeals, he instilled tremendous vigour into it and even gave it an all-India character at the time of the Congress session in Poona. The air was saturated with the feeling of the glory of Shivaji. In 1884 R. P. Karkeria read a paper in the Royal Asiatic Society on the controversial question of the history of Pratapgarh. In 1896, a great festival was organised at Raigarh in honour of Shiv Jayanti. Thousands trekked up the hill to Fort Raigarh. It was in such an atmosphere that Apte wrote the best of his historical novels, *Ushakkaal*. All these novels are indirectly, but unmistakably, expressive of the contemporary feeling, not only for Shivaji, but for Swarajya.

Apte's first historical novel, *Mysorecha Wagh*, was, however, a translation-cum-adaptation of an English novel on Tippu Sultan's times by Meadows Taylor. It was a slipshod effort. It seems to have been written long before it was published in 1890. With his second novel, *Ushakkaal*, Apte rose to a height worthy of his 'social' novels *Pan Lakshat Kon Gheto?* and *Mee*. The historical data behind the work is not substantial. It was hardly available in those days; nor is it plentiful today. It is obviously futile to compare the Indian historical novel with the Western, especially the English, and point out the poverty of the historical material that goes into its making. The Indian mind seems to be remarkably devoid of the historical sense. There has been very little attempt so far to preserve records and mementos of bygone days or even of our own times. But, with the help of the little

that was available, Apte succeeded in recreating the spirit of that age. He made use of folklore, of legend and gossip, of superstitions and contemporary emotional attitudes. By means of such non-factual, but sometimes more realistic, material, he succeeded in conveying a vivid image of the life of those days. He had imbibed the spirit of the age so deeply that some of the situations which he created imaginatively for some of his historical novels, were later proved by historical research to be factual. His novels bear a stamp of authenticity which is far clearer than that in any earlier novel, except probably in Gunjikar's *Mochangad*. Apte's approach to history and his use of historical material were similar to those of Gunjikar. Neither sought to portray outstanding historical characters directly. They created imaginary characters to convey the spirit of the times. Important historical personages entered the canvas of their stories only incidentally. But the glow of their personalities radiated over the whole episode. In this, both Gunjikar and Apte followed the pattern of Walter Scott's historical novels.

Ushakaal, however, far surpassed *Mochangad* in richness of structure and character-portrayal, in style and width of canvas. It paints a vivid picture of the two-fold life of the age: on the one hand, the decadent life of the elderly generations of Marathas, clinging to their age-old ideal of loyalty to their masters, whoever they be, at the cost of utter self-sacrifice; and on the other, the rise of the new conceptions of self-respect, of freedom and loyalty to religion. The conflict between the two within the bounds of a family is even more intense than the outward conflict between the Muslims and the Marathas. The tragedy of the decadent life, yet capable of noble-self-sacrifice, is poignantly depicted in this story of a Deshmukh family. Against this background comes the portrait of the young, impatient, idealistic stalwart of the same family. He is a symbol of the rising wave of self-assertion created by Shivaji.

Apte wrote five more novels on the Maratha period, but none of them reached the level of *Ushakkaal*. *Keval Swarajyasathi* suffers from looseness of structure. Superfluity of characters leads to confusion of impressions. Excessive love of suspense leads to obscurity and tires out the curiosity of the reader. With all that however, Apte succeeds in creating an image of the times. *Gad*

Ala Pan Sinha Gela, a novel on the episode of Tanaji's conquest of Fort Kondana (named Sinhagad in his honour) achieves a greater impact by its compactness of structure and emotional intensity. It is one of the most popular novels of Apte. It has some effective portraits: of old Shelarmama and Rayaba, of the heroic Tanaji and, above all, of the magnanimous and very human personality of Shivaji.

Apte also wrote three historical novels on other themes than from Maratha history. *Roopanagarchi Rajakanya* moves into the realm of the Rajputs: their valour and intrigues, and their beautiful women. *Chandragupta* is based on the well-known theme of the massacre of the Nandas by Chanakya, but a refreshing turn is given to the episode of Chanakya's winning over of Rakshasa to the service of Chandragupta, on the strength of his love for his own country and concern about the danger of invasion by a foreign power. Apte lifts the tale of intrigue and vengeance into one of humanity and patriotism. Apte's novels of the Maratha period create a panorama of life of the times and crystalise the spirit of the age in some chosen personalities. The two others are novels of incident. But his last historical novels, *Vajraghaat* is a study in human emotions against a historical background. It is a story about the medieval kingdom of Vijayanagar, based on a close study of book like Sewell's *A Forgotten Empire* and Suryanarayan Rao's *A Never-to-be-Forgotten Empire.* But even greater than its historical authenticity is its deep humanity, as also its charming style. It is a study of deep and trusting love turned into bitter vengeance through disloyalty and desertion. It also depicts the gnawing guilt of the betrayal of love for the sake of power and expediency. It portrays the effect of these on the offspring of such love too. Powerfully narrated, it is full of the aroma of ancient classics; and it is deeply dyed in the melancholy of the author's last days.

Apte's novels, social and historical, thus created a high-water mark of Marathi fiction. They have their own defect though. Some of these have become proverbial with his crities: longwindedness, verbosity, love of suspense to a degree that tires out the reader, and looseness of structure. But with all that the novels have stood the test of time. The best of his characters are unforgettable. They are living representatives of their age. They are

genuine as individuals, and they also embody the universal. In character portrayal and the creation of atmosphere, Apte achieved a happy synthesis of realism and idealism. His approach to his subject is broad based and objective. The emotional content of his novels arises out of his own experience, direct or vicarious, but deeply realised. One cannot miss the feeling that in the best of his novels Apte becomes one with his characters.

In a similar manner, Apte's work represents another kind of synthesis. It is imbued with the liberalism and zeal for social reform of Agarkar. It is also inspired by the ardour for political emancipation of the Tilak School. The finest specimen of this synthesis is to be found in the personality of Bhavanand, in *Mee,* who is as much a patriot as a social reformer. The two aspects are integrated into a rich unity by the spiritual solvent of *sanyas.* The spirit of Apte yearns as it were towards the ideal of an all-round development of the personality of man, based on a deep spirituality.

Apte had very clear notions about the nature and function of literature. In a lecture delivered at the tenth anniversary of the Thane Public Library he asserted that true literature is that which sharpens the moral consciousness of man, helps in the development of his various faculties and leads to pure joy. It keeps the mind away from the impure and the transitory; it lifts man from earthliness to godliness. He described the classical in literature, *vidagdha,* as the fruit of that skill which combines beauty with utility. Yet Apte did not envisage art as the handmaid of morality or anything else. He held that art creates its own discipline. The artist's creative freedom is, to him, the root of progress in art. The artist bows before Nature alone, and that too not to copy it, but to understand and interpret it, to select the significant in it and to depict the basic reality.

Apte's miscellaneous writing is also varied and fairly voluminous. It consists of short stories, a few poems, two original plays and some translations of Moliere and Shakespeare, a number of critical essays and lectures, including the Wilson Philological Lectures. some essays and lectures in English, essays, and letters for children and also a few biographies. And yet writing was not his only occupation. He was the head of Anandashram, an institution founded by his uncle Mahadeo Chimanaji Apte,

for the preservation and propagation of ancient texts and traditions. He took a leading part in the civic life of Poona, even at the cost of much maligning and financial loss. He was closely associated with some educational institutions and social service organizations. His was thus a full life devoted to bringing about a social and literary renaissance in Maharashtra.

After Apte

The first two decades of the twentieth century saw a rapid growth in the number and variety of Marathi periodicals. Some of them catered to special classes of readers like women or children; some strove to achieve and maintain a high literary standard. These latter sought to introduce to Marathi readers novels and stories from other languages too, especially from Bengali. Some periodicals served the interests of particular vocations or classes. Together they all contributed to give a fillip to the production and publication of literature. Foremost among them was *Manoranjan* (1895) edited by Kashinath Raghunath Mitra (1871-1920). He also founded a series of publications, mostly novels. This brought about an influx of novels, social and historical, original and translated. Most of them followed the Apte pattern though few reached the Apte standard. And yet these novels not only met the need of the gradually widening readership; they also contributed in some measure to the growth of the Marathi novel.

The foremost, and one of the most skilful, adapters of Bengali novels was K. R. Mitra himself. He gave a perfect Marathi garb to Bengali stories, wrote in a simple homely style, and created characters who seemed to belong to the typical Marathi household. He also succeeded in transferring the gentle emotionalism of his Bengali originals to Marathi. This was a new element in Marathi fiction, and it left a deep imprint upon its later course.

Vithal Sitaram Gurjar and Vasudeo Govind Apte added to the good work done by K. R. Mitra. Guriar adapted the novels of Frabhat Kumar Mukherjee, and also a number of Bengali short stories. These were all published in K.R. Mitra's *Manoranjan* series. Vasudeo Govind Apte preferred to translate, rather than adapt, some Bengali novels, and did it sucessfully.

He however chose the method of adaptation for English novels, and rightly so. His adaptations of Mrs Henry Wood's novels were a craze with generations of readers. Apte was also a scholar. He had given considerable thought to the problems of literature and the art of writing. He has some scholarly works to his credit like *Lekhan-kala ani Lekhan-vyawasaya* (a treatise the art, of writing) and profession *Marathi Shabda-Ratnakar* (a dictionary) and a couple of biographies: of Ashoka and Buddha.

A prolific novelist who began writing in the last years of Hari Narayan Apte was Narayan Hari Apte (1889-1971). He took up both the historical and the social genres, but was unable to maintain the level reached by the senior Apte in either. His historical novels have little authent city and are also marred by a crude romanticism. The first of his five historical novels, *Ajinkya-Tara,* is based on an episode in later Maratha history, while the other four move in the Rajput world. They all represent an attitude to the past which is very different from that of Hari Narayan Apte. A feeling for the past and a hold over the spirit of the age sought to be portrayed are substituted by the desire to entertain through mystery and high colouring. The plots are laboured, the characters mechanical. In the 'social' novel, Narayan Hari Apte was able to achieve better results. Here his main obsession is didacticism. In his early work, he vehemently attacked the moral values of the so-called modern people. Later, he adjusted his vein of writing to certain chosen sections of readers—like adolescents, educated girls, young housewives, and their elders. He wrote with the avowed object of pressing some attitudes upon them. It is not surprising, therefore, if most of his characters are somewhat wooden. But at least in two novels he has risen to a considerable height. *Na Patnari Goshta* (An Unconvincing Story) has for its theme the injustice of an old widower marrying a teenage girl. The girl rebels and leaves him. The story was a great success on the screen too. *Amhi Doghe* (We Two) has some sensitive psychological portrayal. Most of his other novels are however less than mediocre; but it must be admitted, that they have provided plentiful and not unhealthy reading material for several types of the common reader.

D. M. Pitale (1882-1928), who is known almost solely by

his pseudonym Nathmadhav, belongs to the same category as Narayan Hari Apte. He wrote some sixteen 'social' novels. Some of them are merely of the level of thrillers; others are apparently written with the object of upholding the orthodox values of life but are unreal in characterisation, exaggrated in description and often absurd in plot. The style too has hardly any redeeming qualities.

Nathmadhav's historical series is a huge formless edifice. His *Swarajya Mala* consists of seven long novels based on consecutive periods of Maratha history. One of the early novels, *Sawalya Tandel* shot into popularity partly because of its central character, an adventurous boy in Shivaji's navy, and partly because of the unusual theme, the building up of the navy. But all the historical fiction of Nathmadhav suffers from serious defects. It is replete with anachronisms in factual depiction, emotional attitudes and ideological discussion. It hardly ever rises above sensationalism and sentimentality. Even the portrayal of Shivaji is not free from these vitiating traits. But these historical novels were popular with the common reader of those days—for their themes and spirit were so dear to him.

Nathmadhav's social novels also won him considerable popularity. That was mainly because the 'social' in them was close to the 'historical' in its extravagances of plot and character. And also because of their denigration of social reform and glorification of conventional values, although with them sometimes went an incongruous lip service to reform. All this and the didactic strain so dear to reader and writer alike are exemplified by *Doctor*, a long novel in three parts.

In the same years as Nathmadhav's first novel *Savalya Tandel* (1915), was published a very different kind of historical novel, C. V. Vaidya's *Durdaivi Rangu*, Vaidya was a profound scholar of Indian history and Indian classics; and his other prose work has been treated in the appropriate section. His deep knowledge of, and deep feeling for, the history of Maharashtra are reflected in this historical novel, his only attempt at writing fiction. He recreates the last days of the Peshwa rule vividly, and with variety of characterisation. The tragic tale of the last battle of Panipat (1761) is woven around the central figures of Vishwasrao, the hero of Panipat, and the pining young widow,

Rangoobai. The sombre style of Vaidya and the authenticity of the atmosphere created by him lend grandeur to the story

This novel of Vaidya was however the last flicker of a dying species. Various writers like V. W. Hadap, Sahakari Krishna, S. K. Damle, C. G. Bhanu, V. V. Bhide, the poet Sadhudas and others wrote historical novels. These were widely read too. Most of them offered entertainment, but very few impress us either with the history in them, or their literary qualities.

Of these Vithal Waman Hadap (1899-1960) was the most prolific. Strictly, his work, dating from 1923, does not fall within this period; but it is truly of the school of Nathmadhav. Hadap followed the footsteps of Nathmadhav, in his historical novels, as well as in his early 'social' ones. The former consists of a series on the rise and the fall of the Peshwa rule, and another, done much later, on the British rule. Some of his socio-political novels, written in the thirties, like *Waadal* (Tempest) are inspired by radical thought, and attain a higher level of creative writing. But his last series, which sought to depict the struggle for freedom during the British days, failed to make a mark.

The tradition of historical research has been kept up in Maharashtra, by and large. But the historical novel flowered for a while, and then withered away. The attainment of independence has not so far stimulated imaginative recreation of the past.

During the period from 1885 to 1920, however, the Marathi novel took great strides. It cast away the sugary, simplified treatment of theme and character, and the pauranic style, of the *Adbhut Kadambari* of the early days; but, it developed the trend of hero worship and love of adventure found therein into the heroic vein of the historical novel. Realism in social portrayal and creation of vivid characters reached a high-water mark in the work of Hari Narayan Apte. Marathi prose grew into an instrument of power and delicacy capable of communicating subtle emotions and keen thought. Apte's successors, however, did not prove equal to the hopes raised by him. Their work degenerated into didacticism, prosaic realism or maudlin sentimentalism—into mediocrity in all its forms. That too served a need and expanded the scope of the novel in many ways. The need was of a widening reading public. But as one looks back, one notices a growing vacuum. It could be filled

only by a novel of a new type. That was provided by *Ragini* (1915-16) by Waman Malhar Joshi. It opened a new era in Marathi fiction, which could not be said to properly belong to this age. This is also true of some significant writers in the other forms of literature.

Keshavsut and the Poetry of His Age

Keshavsut achieved for Marathi poetry what Hari Narayan Apte did for the Marathi novel: he endowed it with a truly creative power. Keshavsut's was a voice in a world of echoes—echoes of distant voices, indigenous and foreign. His apprentice work was considerably inhibited by poetic conventions. But when he found his true mode, it created a new age in Marathi poetry. Keshavsut (Krishnaji Keshav Damle: 1866-1905), was the son of an ill-paid school-teacher with a very large family, He is known to have been of a very withdrawing nature, and also dreamy and whimsical. His schooling took him to several places, among which were Nagpur, where he met Narayan Waman Tilak, who was already making a mark as a poet; and Pune, where Tilak and Agarkar were on the staff of the New English School which he joined. Keshavsut was deeply impressed by Agarkar's way of thinking, especially his passion for social reform. During those years in Pune Keshavsut also become accuainted with Hari Narayan Apte. Many of his poems appeared in the weekly *Karamanuk,* edited by Apte. The first edition of his collected poems was published after his death by Apte.

As a school-teacher, Keshavsut moved from place to place in Maharashtra, before he joined the Government High School at Dharwad. But only two years later, when on a visit to nearby Hubli he and wife fell victims to plague. (1905). He was then thirty-nine.

The earliest poems of Keshavsut are not available. It is said that from an early age he used to write competently in the traditional metres, and in a descriptive or didactic vein. His first available poem, written in 1885, is a translation of a piece from *Raghuvamsa*. Like most high-school students of those days, he seems to have read the more important Sanskrit kavyas. He also did a translation of some portions from a canto of *Kiratarju-*

neeyam. His love poems of that period reveal the influence of Sanskrit erotic poetry. His style and imagery too were moulded by Sanskrit poetry, and also by the Marathi poetry of the pandits. Keshavsut continued to use a considerably Sanskritised diction and Sanskrit metres for some time. But then a great change came over him. That was in diction. He boldly went in for words of everyday usage which were, and still are, considered unpoetic and harsh by the orthodox. He gave a new power to the *shloka* structure by organising the poem into a well-knit, continuous whole on the pattern of the English ode. The greatest change which came over his work, however, was that it showed the upsurge of the subjective element. The poet sought to express his intense feelings as he experienced them—whether they were about separation from his wife, or of anger at being called 'glum-faced' by a teacher in the class. He began to look at the world from his own point of view, and even to draw his images from such a process. There was a new confidence in his reactions to what he saw around him, a new strength in his assertions of the role of poetry, and an unusual sincerity in his expression. In fact, a new kind of lyric had taken birth.

This total change was brought about to a great extent by the influence of English poetry. The work of Kunte, Mahajani and others had already opened up channels for that influence in Marathi poetry. But the influence mostly operated at the level of translation, or of imitation. Keshavsut himself translated from English: a few sonnets of Shakespeare and Elizabeth Browning and some poems by Dryden, Scott, Hood, Longfellow, Poe and Emerson. Some of these are adaptations rather than translations. Both these together do not add up to more than a dozen. But his study of English poetry, whatever of it he could lay his hands on, seems to have transformed his approach to poetry and to his style.

Different views have been expressed about the depth and extent of Keshavsut's acquaintance with English poetry—chiefly because his formal education did not go beyond matericulation. But his translations and adaptations, and his statements in the few letters to friends that are available, clearly suggest a sensitive, if not wide, reading of English poety. Keshavsut drank deep at this new fount. His work underwent a great

change. It started a new era in Marathi poetry.

The poems of Keshavsut have some distinct traits. Coming across a poem by him in an issue of a contemporary poetry periodical like *Kavya-Ratnavali* is like finding a rare flower in a wilderness. The poems spring out of personal experience: the sudden surge of memories of home, the sight of a friend's locked door, separation from loved ones; or they are musings about the nature of poetry. There is a new feeling for Nature. Descriptions of natural beauty were not unknown to Sanskrit or Marathi poetry. But Keshavsut breaks away from the traditional pattern: from the stylised image and the conventional detail. His poems are inspired by a feeling for nature clearly instilled by the study of English poetry. He does not dwell on the beauties of Nature; he feels the presence of Nature. The poetry of Nature, according to him, as expressed in the songs of birds, or the music of the rain, can never be equalled by the works of any poet. Its beauty is everlasting in its freshness. This consciousness and the capacity to lose himself in it enables Keshavsut to create a mood and an atmosphere in his poems in a few strokes even when they are not directly descriptive. Such a profound feeling for Nature informs the best poems of Keshavsut like *Pushpaprat, Satareeche Bol, Nairitye kadil Waryas* and *Ek Khede*. Many of these poems are Wordsworthian in their simplicity and contemplative vein.

Keshavsut had also imbibed, perhaps through the influence of Agarkar, a strong feeling of equality of men and the urgency of the need for social reform. He wrote poignantly of the untouchable boy and the starving labourer, unimaginable in those days as themes for poetry. *Tutari* (Trumpet) one of his most powerful poems is a clarion call for casting away all the lethargy of social obscurantism and hidebound traditionalism. Equally effective in its directness and sweep is his *Nava Shipai* (New Soldier).

The greatest poems of Keshavsut, however, are in a contemplative vein. They seek to probe into the mysteries of creative activity. They communicate a feeling of loneliness and a search for a spiritual haven. They are filled with a deep urge towards the unknown, the inexpressible. *Zapurza* is one such poem. The word is a syncopated expression devised by the poet to

imitate the fast-quickening rhythm of girls absorbed in playing the traditional game of *zimma*. The poet seeks to describe the creative state of the mind, the regions of experience it soars into, and its kinship with the universe beyond even the stars. *Harapale Shreya*—('The Lost Shreyas')—voices the feeling of being lost in a strange world and of an unquenchable yearning for the creative abode. It bears a deep impress of Wordsworth's *Ode on the Intimations of Immortality*, but it is anything but an adaptation of it. The philosophical poems of Keshavsut reveal a synthesis of Western poetic thought and Indian philosophical concepts.

Keshavsut was given to contemplating on the problems of poetic creation. He would watch the twists and turns of his own poetic moods; he would mourn over the loss of the power of expression of words, their fossilization through cheap and vulgar everyday use. He would contemplate over the role of poetry and the ways of pleasing the Muse. Out of his total output of 132 poems, as many as twenty are devoted to such topics. He was the first of the modern Marathi poets to cogitate over these problems and give poetic expression to his thoughts. He also experimented in versification and poetic structure. He adapted the mosaic metres by using lines of varying lengths; he gave up the tradition four-line stanza and created several new forms. His verse is moulded by the needs of the emotion and the content of the poem. His most persistent experiment was in the adaptation of the sonnet form. The experiment continued over a period of six years. He began by translating some English sonnets and in 1901 he wrote his famous sonnet on men of genius, *Amhi Kon?* (Who are We?). This poem is a consummate example of Keshavsut's attitude towards poetry and the role of poets, as well as a specimen of his austere style and penetrating, confident thought.

Keshavsut's output was slender: only one hundred and thirty-two poems. But its impact has been immense and diverse. It set off spirited controversy from time to time, and almost invariably the controversy was concerned with what the essentials of poetry are. The critical writing on Keshavsut is fairly large in quantity. He won the admiration of perceptive critics like Vaijnath K. Rajwade, S.N. Rahalkar and W.B. Patwar-

dhan in the pre-1920 period; and much of the 'New Poetry' of the post-1947 period has derived stimulation from him. Some of Keshavsut's detractors have harped on his debt to English poetry, others on his rugged diction and indifferent craftsmanship, and yet others on his being too self-centred and melancholy.

Keshavsut launched modern poetry. He was the most outstanding poet of the age; and his work had considerable influence on most of the important poets of the age and on several others of the years that followed. But it would be inapt to speak of the school of Keshavsut. Keshavsut's poetry had acted as a liberating force—in a variety of directions; and, appropriately enough, it did not impose the constraints of a school on those who were stimulated by it. That none of these major poets resembles Keshavsut closely, or that no two of them, owing direct or indirect allegiance to him, are like each other, is convincing evidence of the freedom that he brought to the domain of poetry.

Narayan Waman Tilak (1862-1919), was Keshavsut's senior in age by four years; and, strictly speaking, as a poet too, for he had started writing before Keshavsut was on the scene. But the poems he had written were in the older, conventional mode—and some of them were in Sanskrit. Tilak drew out the poet in Keshavsut, but Keshavsut induced him to accept the new mode. Tilak was a deeply religious Sanskrit scholar. He edited a monthly, *Rishi*, and translated some Sanskrit religious texts. But, the decadent orthodoxy he saw around him drove him into the Christian fold in quest of spiritual peace. But this did not alienate him from his language and his people and their aspirations. He wrote feelingly of the simple joys of home —and of children and flowers. The love he sings of is no romantic abstraction. It is the love for his simple, near-illiterate wife Laxmibai—who later, long after his death, was to immortalise him, as much as herself, with her autobiography *Smriti-chitre*. Tilak, like Keshavsut, wrote poems of protest against social injustice, and poems about the agitational role of poets; but in a lower kev, as was only to be expected of a gentle poet like him. The didactic is more in his line. His devotional poems—including his incomplete "Christayan"—have nothing

sectarian in them. They voice a universal yearning. In them, as in all his poems, shines a steady light of hope: not a facile hope, but one deeply rooted in his faith in God, and in man.

Matching such content is Tilak's homely diction. It shuns elaboration and frills. Traditional verse forms like the *ovee* and the *abhang*, and a few others, serve his needs. Not for him any experiments in prosody or poetic technique.

Vinayak (Vinayak Janardan Karandikar: 1872-1909) was one of the major poets of the age, the most unlike Keshavsut. Not only that he did not seek a new social order, he glorified the past—and all that it meant to him and his like: the past was beautiful, and its values were perfect. It was, of course, narrowed down to Maratha history, and for a change, to Rajput history. And, of course, it was over-coloured and romanticised. The women were paragons of virtue, goddesses almost; and the men were devoted to them—and to religion. Vinayak's historical narratives, and several other poems, are obsessed with this view: "Those who have a sublime past, have a glorious future. This alone has been the lesson of history,"—is a characteristic expression of this revivalist view. The view had a wide appeal, and the appeal grew even wider in the years to come with the nationalist movement taking on an obscuranist complexion.

But then, what was new about Vinayak? It was his breaking away from the older moulds of expression, and of verse. His diction was simple, and close to living speech. This was a significant aspect of the 'new' that was taking shape in poetry.

A far more intriguing blend of the new and the old is found in Ram Ganesh Gadkari (1885-1919), who wrote his poetry under the pseudonym 'Govindagraj'. His only collection of poems, *Vagvaijayanti* was published posthumously. His popularity, during his later years and for several years after his untimely death, was phenomenal—and that as much as a poet, as a dramatist. Romantic to the core, he was nothing if not intense, even extravagant, in his delineation of emotion and character, and in his expression. Hyperbole was a habit with him, whether he was writing of the past or of the present. In "Dasara", a poem which denounces the past, its follies and inequities, in the manner of Keshavsut, he is even more fiery than his master—

whose sachha chela' (true disciple) he calls himself. But he can also be nostalgic about the past. This is what makes him very different from Keshavsut.

An even more significant difference is that while Keshavsut had striven to rescue poetry from mere virtuosity in expression, Govindagraj was often extravagant in the use of his great gifts in language and versification and of his powers of fancy. Thrilled by these gifts, the reader of poetry persuaded himself that they were the main stuff of poetry. What Keshavsut had sought to achieve, and achieved in some measure, was at least partially undone.

Those excellences were however genuine. There was nothing forced about them. Govindagraj had captured the vein of the different varieties of mediaeval poetry: of the saint-poets, the pundits and the shahirs. He could work them into his own poems, without the slightest hint of mere imitation. As for language, he had an embarrassment of riches. In his best writings, whether in prose or verse, they are spell-binding. Even there, when the spell is weakened, the critical reader wishes the writer had reined in his verbal power a little. When he chose to do it, Govindagraj could write in a bare, sinewy style, spurning embellishment. As, for instance, in *Prem ani Maran*, an allegory. It is about a tree in love with lightning, doing penance for union with it which, when achieved, brings instantaneous death to it. The dramatic element is deftly handled. There is a faint touch of humour too reminding us that the poet was in his own right one of the finest humourists. He wrote a few satirical pieces too. A favourite charge against him, both as poet and dramatist, is that he wallows in sentiment. Is being a sharp humourist incongruous with it? If it is, we would say that Govindagraj had this and other incongruities, but he carried them all lightly.

Another poet of great splendour, whose premature death in a railway accident was widely grieved, was Balkavi (Tryambak Bapuji Thombre 1890-1918); but the grief was confined to readers of poetry. Balkavi had taken his *avatar* "to proclaim beauty", as Govindagraj says in a poem on him. And 'beauty' is a word ever associated with the poet. The beauty is, principally, of nature. But he hardly ever describes nature, for he does not look at it from

the outside. He identifies himself with it: with birds and flowers and wind and stream: "The poet has become Nature; all Nature has become the poet". Childlike, the poet sees the things in nature as living beings, as his playmates. He weaves stories around them; he creates his private myths about them. The pictures are vivid; but you cannot call them sensuous, for there is something ethereal about them. The poet enters the sanctum of Nature, but that as an innocent, wide-eyed child, and not as a mystic. Nature has no morals to teach him, or to transmit through him. It has only beauty for him, and joy—a pure, unsullied joy. And these he transmits to his reader—unconsciously.

A typical Balkavi poem is "Phulrani". On an evening, the little flower falls in love with the golden sun-ray, and dreams of it through the night. At dawn the ray arrives and their marriage is celebrated with ecstasy by everything in nature—and by the poet. There are many more lyrics of the kind. They have a gossamer quality about them, which defies analysis. The word-music and the word-pictures are all the more lovely for being so utterly unself-conscious. Repetitions, in imagery and phrasing, strike the careful reader. They probably never struck the poet. He wrote spontaneously—driven by some spirit, as it were—and did not pause to change or correct.

But somehow, in the later years of the poet's life, the joy began to dim. Reality seemed to encroach on the poet's fragile, dream-like world, which dissolved around him, leaving him lonely and distracted. The ideal beauty he had been searching for was now more elusive than ever; the gross, the earthy, chained him down. He was like a frightend child. He would dissolve himself in a dream to end it all.

Balkavi had been fostered by the poet Tilak. He had great admiration for Keshavsut. But as a poet he was like neither. And yet his poem "Dharmaveer", which protests against social evils, is a proof of what Keshavsut meant to the poets of his age.

A much stronger proof of it is supplied by Bee (Narayan Murlidhar Gupte, 1872-1947) whose slender output (of less than fifty poems), and the demand most of whose poems make on the reader's understanding, brought him limited recognition during his lifetime. Most of his poems had been written by

1923. In his style, Bee shows the influence of Govindagraj. Without being flamboyant, it is rich and carefully cultivated. It is often heavy with Sanskritisation. But, on the whole, it is more economical than Govindagraj's. The content of Bee's poetry however bears a distinct Keshavsut stamp. It calls for social reconstruction with vehemence; it extols the role of poets in such a task; and it has a mystic strain. Some parallelisms are fairly obvious. They do not imply just a master-disciple relationship; but a similarity in poetic temperament. It is also true that these ideas about the poet and his social mission were in the air in that period of partial renaissance.

To Bee, as to Balakavi, true poetry is an expression of the principle of beauty in things, and not merely of material beauty. In a poem which is a statement of his poetic faith he rejects the following elements popularly associated with poetry: playing with 'musical' words; acrobatics of meaning; mere descriptions of nature; didacticism; attractive form. Not that Bee himself rejected all these in his own work. But the new creed of poetry is clearly brought out by him.

Bee wrote little, but in it is a remarkable variety of form and content. He was a romantic who had no use for the kind of melancholy other romantics like Govindagraj had affected. It is his faith that this world will rise from the morass into which it has sunk to achieve perfection. The past has no fascination for him, but one of his truly beautiful poems, "Kamala" narrates a seventeenth-century episode and recreates the spirit of the age.

Of the other poets—and they were quite a few—who contributed, each in his particular way, and according to his mite, to the stabilisation of 'modern' poetry, a few deserve special mention. Eknath Pandurang Rendalkar (1887-1920), on whom the mantle of Keshavsut was said to have fallen, wrote much which in content as well as expression bears unmistakable affinity to his guru's work. His love poems are bolder, more self-revealing, than was customary in his day. In some the love is platonic. The wide gap between what actually was in the convention-ridden society of the day and what a romantic imagination conjured up caused much suffering, and its expression in poetry, usually heightened, had an odd kind of pathos

about it. This was true of several poets of the age, like Rendalkar, and even of the following one. In 'technical' newness, Rendalkar went beyond Keshavsut: in the use of blank verse. Rhyme had through the ages been regarded as a main essential of poetry, and continued to be so regarded for well over fifteen to twenty years into the next period. Hence the significance of Rendalkar's innovation.

Narhar Shankar Rahalkar (1882-1957) was a direct disciple of Keshavsut, and had come in contact with him in his younger days. He modelled his work—which is rather slight—on his guru's in several ways, without achieving much distinction Madhavanuj (Dr. Kashinath Hari Modak: 1872-1916) too had come in contact with Keshavsut, and his poems show how fruitful the contact was, though he showed more individuality than Rahalkar. Datta (Dattatreya Kondo Ghate: 1875-1899), wrote less than fifty poems of which the love lyrics have a personal note, and a directness of expression, which place him among the 'moderns'. So do, in a way, his verses for children in which he was a pioneer.

Understandably, the older mode, or modes, of poetry continued in several poets of the age; but even in some of these there was an occasional trace of the new. In Nagesh (N.G. Navare) it was a little more pronounced, and more consistent. Generally speaking, all these poets were less concerned with what they said than with how they said it; and their models were from the 'pundit poets' and from the Sanskrit poets. And their tone was usually didactic.

'The Age of Keshavsut', as it is appropriately described, was a distinct phase in the growth of Marathi poetry. It came to an end with the passing away of several major poets in the closing years of the second decade of the century. Bhaskar Ramchandra Tambe and the 'Ravikiran Mandal' took over the leadership about 1920. And there began a new phase.

Drama

During this period, drama achieved remarkable prosperity. It is customary, in fact, to speak of it as 'the golden age of Marathi drama;—a little more appropriately, as some people would say

making a distinction between the literary form and the performing art. The theatre drew more and more spectators—though it was limited to a few big towns. Playgoing gradually became respectable, in spite of the fact that it was mostly confined to the puritanical middle class. Not only that, drama was regarded, at least by some, as more than mere entertainment. It attracted writers of great calibre—and of serious purpose. There were magazines devoted to dramatic criticism.

By common consent the history of the Marathi stage begins with the performance of Vishnudas Bhave's *Seetaswayamwar* (unscripted) (1843) at Sangli. The antecedents of the art have been traced to Karnataka, to Goa, and to eighteenth century Tanjore where plays were staged at the court of Sarfoji Bhosle. Some of the more well-known Sanskrit plays were translated into Marathi between 1857 and 1974—for the reader, and not for production. So were some plays of Shakespeare; and they threw up a controversy on the relative merits of literal translation and free rendering. The largest number of adaptations was of Hamlet, one of them being by G.G. Agarkar (*Vikarvilasita*). Shakespeare was studied at the university (founded in 1857) and even at the schools with veneration, and also with zest. Translations (or renderings) from him apart—and these were large in number—his was a major influence on the craft of three of the five important dramatists of the age. The first full-fledged 'original' play in the language was *Thorale Madhavrao Peshve* (1861) by V. J. Kirtane, a university student. That it was on a historical character is interesting for later, drama, like fiction, was to draw a great deal on history.

The Parsi-Urdu theatre, which thrived in Bombay, taught a trick or two to its Marathi counterpart, but there was a fundamental difference which kept the two apart. The former was frankly commercial and the author (called 'kavi'), who was an employee of the company, fabricated the script as the producer wanted it. In the Marathi theatre, the dramatist was independent, and was treated with respect; and his work was accepted for production, on its merits. And several dramatists, probably wanting to wean the playgoer away from the Parsi-Urdu threatre, were not averse to using its garish colours. It must however be added that even the established dramatists were

usually willing to accommodate the needs and whims of the producer.

The first of the dramatists who brought maturity and lustre to the Marathi stage was Balwant Pandurang Kirloskar (1843-1885). His work has been written about elsewhere (in Part III)

The contribution of Govind Ballal Deval (1855-1916) to Marathi drama was as important as Kirloskar's, and certainly more varied. Before he reached the highest point of his achievement in *Sharada* (1899), Deval had, as it were, prepared himself for it through a series of adaptations from Sanskrit and English. Of the three from Sanskrit, easily the best is *Mrichhakatika*—which was a rewriting with much condensation, and with the addition of songs, of Godbole Shastri's translation of the play. Deval did the same to Mahadevshastri Kolhatkar's translation of Othello, for his *Zunzarrao*. With even greater-skill, he did an adaptation of Moliere's *Sganarelle*, via English, and called it *Sanshayakallol*. It has been a very popular play all these years, and with the exception of a few, among the play-goers and readers, none has known, or suspected that it is not an original play—so utterly natural it is in its action, characters and dialogues. *Sharada*, Deval's only original play, was truly contemporary in its theme. Agitated by the news of an old man, the chief of a small Indian State, marrying a very young girl, Deval wrote his play, about an attempt at a similar ill-sorted marriage, which was foiled at the last moment, the focus being on the pathos of the girl's situation. Eight years earlier, the age of Consent Bill had been passed by the Central Legislature. But the worth of the play goes far beyond its advocacy of a social reform. What makes it one of the finest plays in the language is its dialogue. It is economical, and it uses everyday speech. And as effective as the dialogue are the songs; they are a part of the dialogue—and they too use everyday speech Such perfect blend of prose and verse has not since been seen on the Marathi stage. Nor, with maybe a few exceptions, such native realism. Most of the characters in the play come alive, even in cold print. The names of some of them have passed into common language.

Shripad Krishna Kolhatkar (1871-1934) had several strings to his bow. Humourist, novelist, short-story writer, essayist,

critic, poet and playwright, he performed unequally in these forms. His best is in his humour; but he was best known in his day—when the stage was thriving—as a playwright; and humour, on the whole, is the most successful element in his plays!

Kolhatkar's twelve plays too are unequal in merit. One of them is 'historical'—and feeble. The others are ostensibly on 'social'—that is, contemporary—problems. But the problem is usually overwhelmed by plot complications, extravagances of fancy, and verbal acrobatics—and ceases to have any significance. This is rather a pity, for Kolhatkar was genuinely concerned about social reform, as his satirical writings show.

Mookanayak (1897) is regarded as Kolhatkar's best play, and it was rivalled in popularity in the first two decades of the century by *Mativikar* (1906). Widow remarriage is the theme of the latter, and the evils of drinking of the former. But their popularity had nothing to do with their theme, which might as well not have been there. It was solely due to the songs and the wit, and the suspense in the plot. But these and a few other plays of Kolhatkar held even the fastidious play-goer with the level of entertainment they provided. The music offered. Kolhatkar had been much struck by the more catchy was different from what the plays of Kirloskar and Weval tunes on the Parsi-Urdu stage, and skilfully adapted them for his plays; they went down well with the connoisseur. The play of language and the fancy were wasted so far as total dramatic effect went, but not on the playgoer and reader, who had a taste for such things. It is often said that the appeal of Kolhatkar's plays was far more to the mind than to the heart. They hardly touch your emotion. As for the mind, the truth of the statement is rather limited—to the capacity for relishing the jugglery of words and fancy.

Shakespeare and Moliere are usually regarded as having been Kolhatkar's models. This is true only in a superficial sense. The influence of Shakespeare is to be seen in such inessentials as the use of sub-plots, coincidences, disguises, puns, etc., the essentials, like the poetry and the characterization, being missed. From Moliere was picked a satric intent, but without its finesse.

Shakespeare imparted the wrong things to another leading

dramatist, Krishnaji Prabhakar Khadilkar (1872-1948)—the ones mentioned above, minus the puns, and plus the clowning of some minor characters—but clowning without dramatic relevance or ironic meaning. Neither humour, nor poetry, was Khadilkar's strong point. His distinction lay in forging a play to derive the best effect, investing it with a serious purpose, and in writing dramatic dialogue. These excellences brought great success to some of his plays. But some principally owed their success to a fortuitous circumstance: the music. Balgandharva, the renowned actor-singer (more accomplished as singer than actor) was the main vehicle for the plays in his heyday; and great composers like Bhaskarbuwa Bakhle provided the music. Thus to most playgoers they were a musical feast. The songs Khadilkar wrote for his plays lacked the song quality, and dramatic relevance; and most of them lacked meaning too. This could also be said of Kolhatkar's songs. The seeds of the decline of the Marathi stage, which set in at the end of the period, are to be found in this peculiar situation in which the dramatist, as it were, played second fiddle to the music!

Khadilkar actually began with 'prose' plays—six of them; three of these are the best of all his fifteen plays. His first play *Sawai Madhavravacha Mrityu* (1893) was historical, its special interest being in the shaping of its hero after Hamlet, and of its villain after Iago! *Kichak-vadh* (1907) used an episode from the Mahabharata for political allegory, with Kichak, the villain, bearing a resemblance to Lord Curzon that was too close for the Government's liking; and the play was proscribed. Apart from it, the play is powerful, and like *Bhaubandki* (1909), a historical play, shows the author's skill in endowing some hazy episode from the past with a contemporary political content. *Bhaubandki* is a dramatic projection of the historic split between the moderates and the extremists at the Surat session of the Indian National Congress. That Khadilkar should have politicized the stage in these two plays—and in a few more later, though with less success—was only to be expected from one who was a lieutenant of Lokmanya Tilak, and was on the editorial staff of *Kesari*. Writing for the stage was a part of his larger mission: to teach the people, and the teaching was moral as well as political. He was, in a sense, a journalist first,

and everything else afterwards. And the telling prose of his plays came from the journalist in him—as also, if a little, from the public speaker in him. The dramatic art, as such, had little interest for him—although he had a better instinct for it than Kolhatkar. The compromises he made with the 'musical' stage after he went over to it in 1911 set off the process which brought his downfall as a dramatist, although two of his 'musical' plays were enormously successful: *Manapman* and *Swayamwara*. The former play had an imaginary setting, in place and time; the latter like all his other musical plays, drew on mythology. His last four plays fall in the next period, and they were altogether undistinguished.

Ram Ganesh Gadkari (the poet 'Govindagraj" 1885-1919) put other dramatists in the shade for some years—particularly in the years following his death—with his plays. Actually, two of his four plays were produced after his death—*Ekach Pyala* and *Bhavbandhan*—and these were greater hits than the other two. And there were two unfinished plays. As a dramatist and poet Gadkari almost became a legend in the twenties. Reaction followed. It was hastened and strengthened by uncritical admirers and incompetent imitators. His faults were laid out, and they were glaring enough. But the essential Gadkari continues to sparkle across the years.

Those who see a touch of genius in Gadkari love to remember that he wrote a play at the age of six—in Gujarati! (He was born and spent his first few years in Gujarat). Others, less simple, see the marvellous in him in his use of language. That has probably been the main source of the fascination that is Gadkari—on the stage, and in the study. There are scenes in Gadkari's plays which have long speeches with rhetoric, but unless the actor's enunciation is poor, the audience are glued to their seats through such scenes. This is somewhat true even of the audience fed on the clipped, naturalistic dialogue in the more 'modern' plays.

The play on which Gadkari worked first, *Vedyancha Bajar* remained incomplete. It is a farce with crotechety characters, and all manner of exaggerations. *Premasanyas* (1913) has a widow for heroine and an earnest reformer (whose wife is living) for hero. It is said that the play was to have a happy end, with

the two uniting—but that Gadkari, afraid of audience-resistance, gave it a tragic ending, with the heroine taking poison. But at least three violent deaths precede this one. The action is loud, and melodramatic. The villain is matchingly dark. There are sub-plots that have only a tenuous connection with the main plot. There is a riot of humour: some of situation, but far more of that which comes from word-play; and little of it forms an integral part of the play. Most of these failings are shared by *Punyaprabhav* (1917) and some by the other plays.

Punyaprabhav has a vague feudal setting for the story of a woman, a model of purity, whose marriage to the hero drives one former lover to *sanyas,* and another to wickedness, culminating in the latter making an attempt on the woman's virtue, which ends with his throwing himself at her feet, dazzled by her purity —and calling her 'mother! This is, of course, a glorification of conventional morality, but there is also a character in the play whose engagingly cynical talk takes some of the edge off the glorification. This contradiction was as characteristic of Gadkari as his exaggerations.

Gadkari's greatest stage success was *Ekach Pyala* (1919), a tragedy. It is the tragedy of the hero who takes to drink, stung by humiliations, and it finally ruins him. Even more, it is the tragedy of his wife, Sindhu, whose utter devotion to him has made her a symbol of wifely loyalty. At one level it is a play against drinking; but it has other levels too. Most of its humour comes from the drunken scenes and, although not much of it is dramatically relevant, it is scintillating. But it is the pathos—wrung out of the heroine's suffering—that has proved to be the most effective element in the play.

Humour and pathos blend very well—though in a different proportion—in *Bhavbandhan* (1920), a comedy. It has a thorough villain (who undergoes a sudden melodramatic change of heart at the end); a lovable old chatterbox and un-Sindhu-like heroine, quite emancipated (in her talk) for those days. These characters, and the boisterous humour, help you blink at the plot structure.

Though incomplete, 'Rajsanyas' (1922) has been staged off and on—for the individual scenes, though they do not coalesce into a play, have exquisite beauties, of language and emotion. Interestingly enough, the author wrote the last scene of

the play first; then the other scenes in the act, before he came to the first act! It is a historical tragedy, with Sambhaji, Shivaji's errant son, for its hero; and romance is laid on thick. Its prose glows with poetry; and that is its highest excellence.

With all his faults—and one does not have to be very critical to see them—Gadkari remains one of the finest creative writers in the language. The range of his powers in language and humour was remarkable, and has been rivalled by few. Although his principal characters were drawn in black and white—some of his heroes improbably righteous and his villains improbably wicked; both, of course, being humourless—his other characters show that he could conceive composite, or even complex, characters Gadkari seems to have learnt his trick of pairing contrasted characters from Shakespeare—as he did a few others, particularly in plot-construction. On the whole, although the fastidious reader finds much that is theatrical in Gadkari, he was, and has been, good theatre.

There were a large number of dramatists in the period, besides these five; and not all of them were minor ones. Vasudeoshastri Khare (1858-1924), known much better for his historical researches, wrote six plays, all but one of which had a historical setting. Narsinha Chintaman Kelkar (1872-1947), who distinguished himself in politics and journalism mainly as Lokmanya Tilak's colleague and successor, built up a great literary reputation with his writings in various forms, drama being one of them. His first play *Totayache Bund* (1912) was a more genuinely historical play than most which carried that label—with no romanticizing in it. But none of his five plays that followed—three historical, and two mythological—was as good. Shivram Mahadeo Paranjpe's (1864-1929) stature as an essayist or journalist or public speaker is hardly reflected in his plays: one of them original, one based on a Sanskrit narrative, and three adaptations from the West, that of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (*Manajirao*) being one.

The stage was used by most of the playwrights to instruct as well as to entertain. The instruction was often political, and episodes from history and mythology were used as a cover for it. They had to be, for a frontal attack on the Government was out of the question. The problem of social reform was taken to the stage both by those for it and by those against it. The latter

found the educated woman and the anglicised man (conveniently equated with the social reformer) dependable butts of ridicule; the common playgoer, being conservative, enjoyed such stuff. The dramatist who set out to propagate a social reform had usually to give it a palatable wrapping. But even historical and mythological plays—with or without political overtones—were frankly, or by implication, for the old social order and conventional morality, Khadilar's, for example. That the stage was a vehicle for such controversies—however vaguely in some cases and crudely in some—was important. That made it, in a sense and upto a limit, a living stage.

Short Story

The short story became crystallised as a distinct literary form in Marathi in the second and third decade of this century. Its antecedents can be traced to the translations of tales of romance and mystery from the Persian and the English; and to the longer story which was more like a condensed novel, with a moral tag attached to it. Hari Narayan Apte's stories belong to the latter category. His periodical *Karamanuk* published such stories. It also carried stories around a comic situation or a character, 'historical' stories, thrillers and detective stories. But the short story was regarded as being no more than a poor relation of the novel. The monthly *Manoranjan* later took over from the *Karamanuk* as the leading publisher of short stories. Its most distinguished contributor in that form was Vithal Sitaram Gurjar (1885-1962), whose stories stood out with their well-organised plot and lively dialogue. The stories are longish and unduly elaborate in their narration—like H.N. Apte's—but without moralizing. The life they portray is of the middle class. The love they show is prim and proper married love. Gurjar's translations of a large number of Prabhat Kumar Mukherjee's Bengali stories have been referred to before. Apart from the translations, Gurjar learnt from Mukherjee one or two things, like complicating his plot with an element of mystery, and giving an unexpected twist to the end of the story.

The *Manoranjan* conscientiously encouraged women writers, and several of them wrote short stories. Interestingly enough, quite

a few of these preferred to conceal their identity behind a pseudonym. The more important of the women writers were: Kashibai Kanitkar, whose sprawling stories had complicated action and moral comments; Anandibai Shirke, who wrote didactic stories with intricate plots; and Girijabai Kelkar (1886-1980), whose stories cried up the old domestic virtues.

Some eminent writers in other forms, like S.K. Kolhatkar and N.C. Kelkar, tried their hand at the short story, but without conspicuous success. The form had to wait till the middle twenties for establishing its identity.

Other Literary Forms

Humour, as we have seen before, flourished on the stage. It was of different kinds and different levels. Fiction made limited use of it. But the journalists had much use for it—as sarcasm and irony, and also for sustained satire, particularly in their political writing. Two of the leading dramatists, Kolhatkar and Gadkari, made a great impact with their humour; but although they were both ardent believers in social reform, the humour in their plays is used in the cause of it rather guardedly. But they let it, especially their powers of satire, fulfil itself in the essays they wrote. Kolhatkar, the pioneer in this kind of writing, laid bare a number of follies and superstitions rampant in the Hindu society of the day. He did it through the creation of two simpletonish characters, which are remembered far more than any of the characters in his plays! Gadkari, who acknowledged Kolhatkar as his *guru* in drama, followed his lead in this form too. But the range of his subjects was wider; and his exposure of the orthodox was less abrasive than his *guru's,* but no less effective. With the two began a tradition of humorous and satirical prose which prospered remarkably in the next period. Humour, except of the broad type, as in the clowning on the stage, had been suspect for a long time, with the sombre middle class. It gradually came to be accepted as a respectable element in literature.

An earnest age like this one, which deified its past and sought models of greatness, was bound to produce plenty of biographies. And, understandably, they are of the older, uncritical kind, hold-

ing up the hero as a paragon. Yet, Vishnushastri Chiplunkar, whose biography of Samuel Johnson (published serially in 1876-77) was the first notable attempt in the form, stated unequivocally that a biography has to bring out the hero's weaknesses as much as his strong points. Chiplunkar himself did it in the case of his hero, an Englishman. But most of the heroes, in the biographical literature were Indians, and being critical about them, dwelling on their faults, was another matter.

With the newly awakened interest and research in Maratha history, writers of biographies enthusiastically went to it for subjects. Most of these writers were themselves historical researchers. Vasudeoshastri Khare's life of Nana Phadanvis (1892), Dattatreya Balwant Parasnis's life of Rani Laxmibai of Jhansi (1894) and Krishnaji Arjun Keluskar's life of Shivaji (1907) were the most distinguished works in that area. There were also quite a few biographies of eminent persons from Europe and America, as, for example, of Gladstone, Napoleon, Lincoln, Mazzini, Garibaldi, Cavour and Benjamin Franklin—singnificant names to the political-minded reader here.

A popular type of biography was that of a saint poet or a pandit poet. It did not merely narrate the life-story of the poet; it also gave an exposition of his poetry. Both were reverential in spirit. With the paucity of authentic material, the biographical part was often filled out with legends. Most readers read such books—the lives of the saints, particularly—as one reads the puranas not so much for their intrinsic worth, as for the spiritual good they did. And not merely spiritual, but moral too. Laxman Ramchandra Pangarkar (1872-1941) was the most popular of these biographers. He was well versed in old literature, and he wrote, as he spoke, in a style which touched the feelings. His *Bhaktimargapradip* an anthology of devotional poems, was an astounding success; it reached Marathi-speaking homes even in obscure places. Jagannath Raghunath Ajgaonkar (1875-1955) had the same approach to old poetry; but he was more of a researcher. His lives of the poets are more compact. Neither of these writers had a historical perspective, or a critical perspective. They popularised old poetry by glorifying it; and thus created, and stiffened, resistance to the new in poetry, and in literature generally—and even in life!

Special mention must be made of Kashitai Kanitkar's ably written biography of Dr. Anandibai Joshi (1912). Based on letters, and on details gathered from persons close to Dr. Joshi, the book tells the story of that brave woman's triumph over unimaginable odds to get education—first here, and later in the U.S.A. where she studied medicine—and of her premature death soon after her return home.

There were comparatively fewer autobiographies, much fewer. Dadoba Pandurang Tarkhadkar's (1814-1882), though written in the mainly seventies, had to await publication for over forty years. Dadoba has been known for his pioneering work in grammar. His autobiography goes far beyond this activity, and effectively recreates the Bombay of mid-nineteenth century. Baba Padamanji (1831-1906), the first to write an original novel, tells us in his autobiography, *Arunodaya,* of the spiritual struggle within him when he became a Christian. Justice M.G. Ranade's widow, Ramabai, published her reminiscences nine years after the death of her great husband. It is an utterly self-effacing book, with the husband in the focus all the time. Dhondo Keshav Karve's (1858-1962) *Atmavritta* (1915) recounts his brave efforts in the cause of women's education and the uplift of widows.

Periodicals

This age saw a remarkable growth in the number of periodicals, and in the variety in them as well. They reflect the attitudes and interests of the age, and bring home to us the earnestness with which men defended or disputed a viewpoint. A majority of them—particularly in the earlier part—tackled serious subjects in a serious vein. The lighter vein was not for them, nor the graces of writing, as such. They set out to teach, to improve. With most of them, the very name reveals the character of the periodical, 'jnan' being a component of the names of many of them. Easily the most outstanding was the *Vividh-jnan-vistar* (1867-1937) which, apart from bestriding the age chronologically, was its most prestigious magazine. Describing itself as 'A monthly magazine of Marathi Literature for Ladies and Gentlemen', it emphasized the inclusion of women in its readership.

whose literacy could cope with such heavy stuff—was a rarity! It was started by R.B. Gunjikar, a versatile scholar, who was also to make his mark as the first 'historical' novelist in the language. It carried learned articles on a wide range of subjects, literary criticism being one of them. But, later, it also did great service to the literature of humour in Marathi, by publishing, as an exception, a series of satirical sketches by S.K. Kolhatkar. Some of these gave great offence to the orthodox. The *Vividh-jnan-vistar* may be said to have taken over from the *Marathi Jnan-prasarak* (1850-1867), its most important precurs as a serious monthly magazine.

The newly awakened passion for the past encouraged historical research, and promoted periodicals for its publication. *Aitihasik Lekhasangraha, Itihas Sangraha* and *Maharashtra-Kokil* were some of them. True to the spirit of the age, the history was not over-critical; nor was the writing on religious or spiritual subjects in periodicals like *Dharma-Jagruti* or *Tattwadnyan-mandir*. V.G. Vijapurkar's *Granthamala and Vishwavritta*, which followed it, had for contributors distinguished scholars in several branches, history, of course, being one of them. The eminent historical researcher, Vishwanath Kashinath Rajwade, edited two magazines—*Bhashantar* and *Saraswati Mandir*. N.N. Phadnis's *Kavyaratnavali* (1887-1935), devoted to poetry, did yeoman services to that form; it brought to light many a poet who would otherwise have withered away.

A few magazines applied themselves to the translation and elucidation of ancient texts like the Vedas. They reflected the resurgent interest in the past. The new-grown interest in drama was reflected in a few magazines—notably in the *Natyakatharnav* (1878-94), which set out to acquaint the reader with the plots of plays from Europe—and of novels too—with a view to improving his taste; and in the *Natyakala* (1904-1909), which provided news of the theatre, here and elsewhere, and articles on drama.

Some let-up in the staidness in the world of periodicals came with fiction—and the common reader—finding a place and an important place at that, in H.N. Apte's weekly *Karamanuk* (1890-1917) and in K.R. Mitra's monthly *Manoranjan* (1895-1935). Apte published his stories and serialized some of his

novels in his weekly. *Manoranjan* enjoyed a high status, particularly till the death of Mitra (1871-1920), drawing to itself the best talent in poetry and fiction. It also published translations of fiction from Bengali and Hindi. The former exercised considerable influence on the writers, and less perceptibly on readers. Mitra himself translated a few Bengali novels. The spell of Bengali, in his case, extended even to names, for he changed his own surname from Ajgaonkar to Mitra ! And he and his magazine are generally credited with having popularised Bengali first-names in Maharashtra—in writing to begin with, and later in actual life! the *Manoranjan* was progressive in social matters, though its idea of progress was mostly confined to raising the status of women—in the middle class.

The *Chitramaya Jagat* (1910-1959), published by the Chitrashala, which was founded by V.K. Chiplunkar, provided a variety of material including pictures. It was, of course, staunchly nationlist, and as staunchly anti-reformist. Its literary standard was not exacting.

There were several more monthlies that mainly purveyed creative writing, like *Udyan, Madhukar* and *Navayug*. By and large, they took after the *Manoranjan,* without quite achieving its level or its popularity. A novelty for the age, and an expression of a significant feature of the changing scene, was the women's magazine: meant for women, if not always run by them! There were a few of the kind, and all of them were short-lived. The children's magazines fared better, the more well known ones being the *Balbodh* (1881-1915), *Khelgadi* (1908-1920) and *Anand* (1906-1950). The last of these was founded and edited by V.G. Apte, whose other work has been treated above in the section on the novel. The didactic predominated in them all; and understandably, for in such an age it was inevitable that writings for children should be didactic.

Needless to say, as the period advanced, there were more and more weeklies and dailies. The former, on the whole, had the greater impact. The *Kesari* (founded in 1881), which Lokmanya Tilak took over from Agarkar in 1887, grew into an institution—one might almost say into a legend, sharing the halo of its illutrious editor. Agarkar's *Sudharak* (founded in 1888), championing the unpopular cause of social reform, and of ratio-

nalism generally, had fewer readers, but to them—and looking back, to us—its importance in the making of a new Maharashtra, no less. G.A. Ogale's weekly *Maharashtra* (founded in 1914), described in those days as 'the Kesari of Vidarbha' had a large following in that region. S. M. Paranjpe's the *Kaal* (1898-1908) souffed out by the government with a long jail-term for Paranjpe—and the ten volumes of selected articles from it, later banned—supplemented his appeal as an effective political orator. Most of these periodicals were more or less radical in their politics and generally conservative in other matters. So were most of the twenty-odd periodicals—dailies and weeklies (the *Sandesh* being the longest lived and the longest remembered!)—with which Achyut Balwant Kolhatkar (1879-1931) was connected as the editor, or his principal aide. Kolhatkar was a controversial figure, what with his mercurial politics and what the extravagances of his style. The latter made him popular with the common reader who, it must be added, found Kolhatkar's language to be closer to the language he himself spoke than that of most periodicals. This resulted in widening the readership of periodicals by making them more lively in their presentation and language; but also in heralding the beginnings of a yellow tinge in them.

Literary Criticism

That a major part of the literary criticism in Marathi during this period should consist of expositions of Sanskrit poetics is not surprising considering that Sanskrit literature had been the model and inspiration for centuries to the educated class. The expositions were generally little better than a re-hash, and rarely critical. English literature was coming up as the new model and inspiration, but the literary criticism in it had meant little outside narrow academic precincts. But the stimulation for the best book in literary criticism came from English: W.B. Patwardhan's *Kavya ani Kavyodaya* (1909). The author emphasizes the relation between a literature and the environment from which it springs, lamenting the fact that Marathi literature had mostly turned its back on the realities of life, and the beauties of nature and that it had been fed solely on Sanskrit. The author used telling examples from English, as well as from Marathi. He singled out

the poetry of Tukaram for its clear-eyed consciousness of the social reality. The author's analysis of the creative process could be said to be still unrivalled. But the book has suffered complete neglect.

The first book of literary history was V.L. Bhave's *Maharashtra Saraswat* (1919) apart from M.G. Ranade's two surveys in English of the printed works in Marathi upto 1896. Bhave's book, which traces the history of the literature from the 13th to the end of the 18th century, is a scholarly work, embodying much research; and it is also critical in tone, though naturally not all its judgements are acceptable to all. And for a pioneering work it is excellent. A.V. Kulkarni's *Marathi Rangabhoomi* (1903) is an interesting history of the Marathi theatre, beginning with the earliest folk forms. The leading periodicals carried book reviews and articles on literary topics, and many of these were learned and probing.

Conclusion

The first phase of the history of modern Marathi literature ends in 1920. With death removing a few of its leading writers in the three or four preceding years, a sense of vacuum was suddenly created in the literary world, particularly in poetry. Three of the five poets who between them are regarded as having set modern poetry on its way with Keshavsut leading them, were among the writers who passed away in that short period. The novelist Hari Narayan Apte, the co-founder of the 'modern' movement with Keshavsut, was also among them. It was in these two forms that the 'modern' found its first expression, and also on the whole, a more purposeful expression than in any other form. The movement was not a purely literary one; the liberation it sought to bring applied as much to life as to literature. The literary revolt was a non-issue to the vast majority of people; but not so the social revolt, as was only to be expected in a society that had been hidebound for centuries. It provoked wide resistance, which went from strength to strength with the link-up between social obscurantism and political radicalism. This became a living issue, and it stimulated a great deal of literary activity in the various forms. Some of the writing bore directly

on the controversy, arguing for one side or the other. But there was much that was involved in it indirectly as, for instance, in the novel or drama.

But it would be an oversimplification to speak of two sides, of a straight division. The lines in the conflict were not clearly drawn. In fact, the conflict itself had many aspects to it. Those together in one sometimes found themselves ranged on opposite sides in another. There were the extremists and the moderates in both the camps. And the moderates in either camp were quite often close enough to be almost indistinguishable from each other. Moreover, there was in some cases a shift in loyalty. More interestingly, and more often too, the conflict was within the same person. A schism in the soul of the society—in the part of it, that is, which could think, and also feel, deeply.

All this whirl diversified, and also enlivened, the literary scene remarkably. The prose of argument flourished, with such earnest contention abroad. The argument sometimes appeared under a veil of humour, or satire—no less earnest, and certainly no less effective, for it. Poetry, being more personal and coming from deeper within, reflected the turmoil more candidly. The theatre primarily set out to entertain, but sometimes used the entertainment as a mask for instruction, even for incitement. The novel too lent itself to such double purpose. The historical novel was found to be particularly suitable as a vehicle for the nationalist sentiment—indirectly—and more directly for the glorification of the past, which became a common and more and more popular theme with the passage of time.

This fermentation called upon the language to respond to a far greater variety of needs and moods than it had in the past; and, in the event, enriched and strengthened it.

The 'renaissance' of which hope was held out at the beginning of this period started fading out before it had taken any shape, But, however strong the opposition that had undone it, it could not have put the clock back completely, even if it had wanted to. It did not quite want to. And thus life—and not just literature—registered a fair amount of progress during this period.

Part V

The Modern Period : 2
1920-1960

Introduction

Lokmanya Tilak died in 1920. Apart form his eminence in the Indian political scene, he had been for decades the 'master spirit' for Maharashtra, and that not just in politics. His death brought a blankness and a listlessness to the social and intellectual life of the region: and somehow, those on whom his mantle had fallen were hardly equal to the task of restoring its tone. The Lokmanya's memory cast a long shadow on the life. But it was not so much the shadow of the dynamic political leader as of the social unprogressive and, in a sense, the shadow was the longer and thicker for the widely mourned death. For some years at least, it seemed to strengthen and sanctify obscurantism. Anti-reformist and revivalist moralising became a common feature of most writing, including that for the stage and journalism. The fare provided at the Ganeshotsava and at similar festivals—like the songs-cum-dialogue entertainment put up by children's troups, the *harikirtans* and the lectures—had the moralising at an even higher pitch.

But it was not as if the moralizing habit was peculiar to the obscurantists. It had always been there. It was native to the middle—class and its English-educated section had largely—directly or indirectly, been nourished on Victorian life-life—which came to be accepted fairly widely, if also rather mature with its emphasis on the didactic. Even the reformist was prone to it, whether he was arguing his case or writing in a creative form of literature. The Gandhian way—in politics and life—which came to be accepted farily widely—if also rather vaguely, in Maharashtra by the next decade, also tended to be overtly preachy; and in some of its spokesmen, the preachings were subtly obscurantist, if not quite revivalist.

It was the Satyagraha movement at the beginning of the thirties that carried the impact of Mahatma Gandhi to large masses of people in Maharashtra. It also drew women into the freedom struggle, at least in some of the bigger towns. Their number

was small and their role mostly modest, but this was just the beginning of the tremendous change that economic conditions were to bring a decade later.

In the twenties, Gandhism had some following in Maharashtra; but it was mostly confined to the educated middle class—that is, to the upper castes. The khadi-clad, abstinent Gandhian with his homespun idealism was, to most people of the class, an unpractical faddist or a hypocrite—and to some, a figure of fun.

Then, and even later after the creed had come with a bang and settled down, swamping most others, its main detractors came from the backward-looking Hindu communalists to whom the Mahatma's concern for the religious minorities and the untouchables was offensive, and his faith in non-violence, ridiculous (and dangerous too) particularly in the communal context. From the diametrically opposite direction came the other major attack on Gandhism: from the leftists. There were, of course, not too many of them; but the attack had an intellectual edge to it. To them Gandhiji's economic programme was not only naive, but also pro-capitalist and anti-people. The trade—union movement, which gathered much strength in the twenties, was largely controlled by the communists. Significantly enough, the majority of the accused in the Kanpur (1924) and Meerut (1929) conspiracy cases launched by the Government were Maharashtrians. But, the few leaders apart, communism as a comprehensive creed had a rather limited following—even in the thirties when, as in England and several parts of Europe and America, leftist literature, creative as well as theoretical, was lapped up avidly by the young. Socialism however did better—and even better, as the years went by with its being diluted into a variety of shades: of pink. World War II brought about a sharp devaluation of communism, particularly with the Hitler-Stalin pact and the sudden *volte face* by the Indian communists in June 1941. The 1942 'Quit-India' movement drew into its vortex the socialists too—they were prominent in it, in fact—and when the Congress assimilated them, they added their colour to that multi-coloured political melange. It could be said that the socialists, past and present, formed the spearhead of resistance to communism in the later years. Jawaharlal Nehru

was their source of inspiration and strength for several years. Their activity was considerably strengthened, particularly after World War II, by the Royists, some of whom were distinguished intellectuals. Anti-communism imperceptibly—if not unintentionally for all of those involved in it—soon slid into anti-socialism, which continued to prosper in the fifties owing to a variety of causes.

The obscurantists too had a variegated appearance with a wide spectrum of revivalist colours. 'Tradition' was their catchword: it went back to the Vedic times for some, to the times of Shivaji for others, and to the comparatively recent times of the Peshwas for yet others. It had no historical context; in fact, history was sought to be tailored to its needs. They all agreed, of course, on condemning the 'modern' which, they insisted, had been borrowed from the West. Several of them cleverly drew on Western writers to prove how some of our own discredited customs and institutions—like the caste system, or cow worship, or the prohibition of widow remarriage—had a sound rational, and even scientific basis. As in the earlier period, this self-glorification and the disparagement of the new were regarded in many quarters as an aspect of patriotism.

But the modern keeps changing, and those who carry its banner one day often find it unpalatable or embarrassing the next day. Of those who had imbibed their modern attitudes at the turn of the century, only a few could bring themselves to accept the new ideas that made their impact in this age: psychoanalysis, the new sexual morality, and Marxism, for example. Ironically enough, they condemned the ideas on the good old ground that they had been imported from the West and were therefore alien to our way of life and thinking. And thus the moderns of one age found themselves branded as the obscurantists of the next!

Some of those who would advocate moderate reforms were men steeped in old learning in which they would seek sanction for the reforms. However earnest, this proved, on the whole, to be an ineffectual activity.

Nationalism had, for most people, taken on a Hindu tinge, though it was not always overt; by the mid-twenties, militant Hindu nationalism organised itself and flourished—and not merely

in politics—operating under different garbs. It was glaringly reflected in literature—and even more in journalism—and the movement to 'purify' the Marathi language by ridding it of words borrowed from, or even derived from Persian or English, was a piece of it.

The labels 'progressive' and 'reactionary', borrowed for the Left in the England of the thirties, were bandied about merrily by a large number writers, ignorantly by some and cleverly by others, reducing them to cliches. But such labels apart, the confrontation between the forward-looking rationalists and the backward-looking traditionalists made it a lively scene; and the interaction between them too should be very interesting to those who would look beneath the surface.

Western influence had in the past meant English influence—in thought, as well as literature. And there had usually been a respectful time-lag. But from the thirties onwards, for those who were intellectually alert the West was no more confined to England, but widened out to the Continent, and took in the USA too. The clash of political ideologies, and the dramatic changes resulting from them in some of the countries of Europe, were followed keenly by them. The international awareness this brought was mostly a new phenomenon. In the literary scene, this contemporaneity was even more remarkable. The Victorian celebrities came to be gradually displaced as models by 20th century writers, including several thrown up by the ferment after World War I: an Ibsen and a Shaw of the earlier years, an Eliot and a Huxley of the later years. The German writers who resisted the Nazis provided stimulation, and so did some of the American and Russian novelists. It is not as if all these and the others like them directly influenced writing; but they strirred in some of the writers a new consciousness of the role and potentiality of literature and of the need for shaking off what had, in the fast-changing world, become so much dead wood. And that, in the technique as well as in the content.

World War II had, of course, a tremendous impact, though not all of it was easily apparent. Fortunately the country escaped being actually in the theatre of of war—and therefore the physical destruction it would have brought; but it could not escape the many privations such a world-wide and long-drawn

disaster brings to even a country like ours that is technically, if indirectly, involved in the war. The shortages and the starvation, for instance. These were obvious enough. But the effects within were no less serious than the effects without. The puncturing of the fondly held dreams and hopes which had sustained us, the realisation of the monstrous ugliness of war, the sense of cynical waste, deeply affected all but the utterly insensitive the world over. For us here was, in addition, a feeling of pitiable helplessness and humiliation. But events moved fast; the pace was almost heady. Within two years, the country found itself free. Free to rebuild itself into the Utopia it had nursed in its bosom for a long, long time. We gloried in achieving our freedom, and ironically enough, its arrival was attended by bursts of demented violence. And the Utopia seemed as distant as ever. Other dreams too had started souring. The cynicism of the war years had come to stay. It sharpened the sensibility of the creative writer and also gave it an ironic twist.

But there was also a great deal else besides—although the first flush of post-war frustration clouded awareness of it—for many, and for some time at least. Some of the old fictions lingered. There were new urges, and these were less frothy and more adult than the ones that had had their field day. New and firmer strains of hope were visible. And even from the debris of the old, much could be salvaged as the air cleared, for renewal and reconstruction. The ferment of the 1930s had not been wasted. Several writers and thinkers continued to derive their particular strength from it. The lustre of Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud had not dimmed for such as were attracted to them. What had probably dimmed was the halo they wore. Chastened by what had happened, men tended to be more critical than enthusiastic. But neither was any less potent an influence for it.

The influence was diverse and touched life and literature at a variety of points. Psycho-analysis was not restricted to the Freudian, and socialism became comprehensive enough to entertain a variety of shades, and strengths too. And the political situation, international as well as national, threw up anti-socialism as if it was a positive creed. And the creed was to prosper in different ways. Till the assasination of Mahatma Gandhi

drove communalism under the surface, it too flourished in its particular pockets.

Poetry

1920-1947

No period in the history of poetry is altogether homogenous. If it was, one would have one's suspicions about the poetry. But what defines a 'period' in such history is the shaping of it by a strong poetic personality, his influence percolating to unlikely writers. There are, of course, deviations and modifications; but they do not perceptibly change the character of the period. It was Keshavsut who presided over the previous period—though he was not alive during its last fifteen years. This period 1920-1947—lacked such a personality, though it had several eminent poets. Most of these had their sphere of influence, large or small, deep or seeming; but there were more such spheres than could give the period an individuality. There were too many strains in the poetry. It was a poetic miscellany!

There were at least three important poets in this period—a little junior to Keshavsut and Tilak in age, and contemporaries of Vinayak, and considerably senior to Govindagraj and Balkavi. Of these three 'Bee' has been treated as of period for his poetry bears the stamp of Keshavsut, and also, if rather faintly, that of Govindagraj. But not the other two: Chandrashekhar (Chandrashekhar Shivram Gorhe: 1871-1937) and B.R. Tambe (1874-1941). The temper of their poetry is alien to Keshavsut's, and also utterly different from each other's. Chandrashekhar truly belonged to the pre-Keshavsut days; even the eighteenth century could claim him. He is a pundit poet, with his virtuosity in the technical side of poetry, and his distrust of the personal note. And also with his didacticism. If his diction is heavy, owing to Sanskritization, it has also precision. He had hardly any following.

Tambe has had as large a following as any poet could wish for, but it is mostly confined to the externals. Like, for instance, the structure of the poem: a sequence of stanzas, elaborating and illustrating the refrain. And its musicality, which to most of the followers means little more than fitting into a *jati* metre as many

jingling, obviously sweet-sounding words as possible. Such facile music suited poets who would 'sing' their compositions to audiences, or have them sung, with *kavyagayan* becoming a popular item of entertainment from the mid-twenties to the mid-forties (and even beyond). Films, radio and gramophone records were the right media to use this popularity. The appeal of such poems was not merely in their music, but was also partially in the fact that what little meaning they had was spread thinly on the surface, was calling for no mental effort on the part of the reader or listener. But the essential Tambe was missed by this horde of imitators. The song quality in Tambe's poems is not manipulated; it is intrinsic to them. The lilt, and the world-music, are unforced. And his poetry has more than music. At its best, it has great intensity, as in the poems in which he implores death to take him as a shy bride would her lover. His devotional poems too sometimes use the idiom of love in the Bhakti tradition. There is in many of his poems the flavour of a feudal Madhya Pradesh —the region to which he belonged. The range of Tambe's poetry is however limited in content, and even in expression. In a sense, his poetry has a certain universality; it shuts out the contemporary world. It has no time-frame. He therefore belongs as much to any other period, as this one. His influence, apart from the mere instators, has been extensive cutting across different types in poetry. His was the formative influence in the making of a distinguished poet like B.B. Borkar, and of some other good poets. 'New' poets like Mangesh Padgaonkar and Vasant Bapat too have been distinctly influenced by him.

The latter half—were the years during which the common least, their first half—were the years during which the common reader's taste in poetry was formed, or satisfied, by the 'Ravi-kiran Mandal'. This Pune-based group of eight writers, one of them a woman—and not all of them poets—had no well-defined, or even definable, creed. If they had had one, its manifesto would have sounded somewhat negative. They were convinced that Govindagraj, with his verbal and emotional extravagances, was an undesirable influence on poetry; and they had serious misgivings about Keshavsut: his forceful attacks on social evils, on the one hand; and on the other, the mystic yearnings in him. They would be more pragmatic. A mild reformism suited them,

and it was not altogether inconsistent with the romanticisation of the past then widely prevalent. The new ground they would break—and that not too boldly—was in the 'from'. They cultivated the sonnet assiduously, and they were genuinely interested in prosodic patterns. In fact, one of their early publications, *Kavyavichar* comprised essays on such topics. Vignettes of rural life were presented by some of them in romantically nostalgic colours, quite a vivid shade in them being the moral goodness inherent in the simplicity of that life. But for this divergence—and that too occasional—they kept within their middle-class fence.

Two of the poets—Yashwant (Yashwant Dinkar Pendharkar, 1899-1985) and Girish (Shankar Keshav Kanetkar: 1893-1973) numbers of people with their poetry recitations which were a novelty then. This was a good thing for poetry also in two ways: Those who felt that poetry had virtually died with Govindagraj, were now assured that it was not quite so; and those who were suspicious of poetry, mainly because of the excesses indulged in by Govindagraj, were now assured that it could be quite respectable. The poetry of Yashwant and Girish seemed to echo the feelings, and even the grievances of the readers and listeners it had; and also their modest dreams—of proper love, for instance. The setting for the love was sometimes urban, sometimes rural. The rural, generally, provided a smooth escape that was highly relished. Yashwant and Girish, though treated together here, were not identical poetical twins. They differ from each other in some ways. Yashwant has a greater depth of feeling —that is, a more convincing personal note—and a greater variety; and also better craftmanship. The two also wrote long narrative poems.

The best of the group is Madhav Julian (M.T. Patwardhan: 1894-1939), and he was also the most controversial during his lifetime. The controversy was mainly on two accounts: his love poems were regarded by many as being a little too personal, and his diction—particularly of the earlier poems—seemed quaint with its mixture of words from Arabic, Persian, Sanskrit, and everyday speech. In his later years he, as it were, tried to atone for the use of Arabic-Persian words by vigorously preaching that Marathi should be 'purified' by the expulsion from it of words

of foreign origin—lumping English with Arabic and Persian. And he tried to practise what he preached—with unhappy results for his poetry. The quaintness of his language provoked parodies; so did has use of the ghazal which also seemed quaint to many—being very different from the conventional forms, both in structure and the nature of its content. Not that the ghazal was altogether unknown to Marathi, but the difference—particularly in content—had not been rubbed in. Not only did Madhav Julian write a large number of ghazals—his first collection of lyrics, *Gajjalanjali* (1933) being made up of ghazals—he wrote about it in scholarly detail. The form came to stay. He wrote in several other forms of the lyric too, constantly experimenting in technique. (His doctoral thesis was on Prosody). And love was not an obsessive theme with him as the ghazal-baiters had tried to make out. Actually, his first publications were long poems. "Virahatarang" (1926) is a tale of the unfulfilled love between a young widow who nursed her sadness and an idealistic young man. It is a sequence of tender lyrics, rather than a narrative, and it appealed to the young readers immediately, and for good reason. "Sudharak" (1928) is a lively satire exposing some of the hypocrisies rampant in the well-to-do class. Its sharply drawn character-sketches are ever-fresh. Madhav Julian's last publication, "Nakulalankar", was also a satire but, like his later lyrics, it shows the ebbing away of his poetic strength. Yet his place among the leading poets is indisputable.

The only woman member of the 'Mandal', Manoramabai Ranade (1896-1926) died prematurely, leaving behind about ninety poems. Most of these are suffused with the warmth of home; and some of the poems are of her unaffected response to nature. Her husband Shridhar Balkrishna Ranade (1892-1984) was a scientist—and that not just by profession, but by temper; and he had remarkably varied interests. Restless in spirit, he was for ever in search of the unusual, the new. This was quite out of tune with the 'Mandal'—except perhaps for Madhav Julian. Ranade would seem to have suspended his poetic activity by the early nineteen-thirities. He channelised his creative energy into other activities. And strangely enough, he came back to writing poems after he was eighty! And this incredibly late bloom was fresh—with the freshness of the nineteen-seventies and nor of the forties or fifties.

But he had as incredibly anticipated the 'new' of the post-1947 era in a long poem ("Kalachya Dadhetun") he wrote as early as 1914, registering what passed through his sub-conscious mind when he was lying critically ill. But he has been a sadly neglected poet: maybe, because of his long abstention from poetry!

When Kusumawati Deshpande used the term "an era of mediocrities", she had in mind the poetry of the Ravikiran Mandal as well as the fiction of these years. Writers, generally speaking, would not pitch their aspirations high for not wanting to strain the reader's understanding or imagination unduly. To entertain him, not to agitate him, was what they set out to do. They conformed to the age, for which conformism was the prime virtue. What non-conformism was there among writers—and the middle class whose voice they were—was either exceptional, or apparent and trivial. This was probably truer of the poets, than of the prose writers. The poet would not lay claim to the freedom of imagination. A haze of minor emotions contented him—and his reader. The poet became a minor artist.

The 'Mandal' faded away gradually. But ironically, it has continued to live in the parodies of its mannerisms in "Jhenduchi Phule" (1925) by P.K. Atre (1898-1969). Most of the parodies of the bull's eye; some are wayward, some are caricatures of individuals. But, together, they give as fair an impression as parodies can of the work of the 'Mandal'. The success of the book made parody-writing an attraction for writers. Most of those who fell for it being mediocre, or worse, the form gradually acquired disrepture; and almost disappeared. Atre as a writer of lyrics (under the pen-name, Keshavkumar) is amost forgotten, though he does not deserve to be. Jayakrishna Keshav Upadhye (1883-1937) wrote a few parodies, about the same time as Atre's, or even earlier. And a few humorous poems too. But somehow he has missed the recognition due to him. Like parodies, humorous verse too flourished during these years. Most of it was juvenile, one of the exceptions being Pandit Sapre's utterly neglected collection, *Ardhachandra* (1938).

Irrespective of the ups and downs in the political temperature, patriotism had been a compulsive theme since the beginnings of 'modern' literature. Its expression varied from poet to poet. It was intense in Vinayak Damodar Savarkar (1883-1966), the

political revolutionary. His long narrative poem "Kamala" has a special appeal, even glamour, for his readers as it was written in the Andaman jail; the poet who there was serving a life term somehow scratching a bunch of lines on the walls before memorizing them—as he was not allowed the use of pen and paper. But this circumstance apart, the poem has passages of elevated writing. These justify the description of the writer as 'an epic poet who never wrote an epic'. Some of his lyrical poems too are of striking quality. A political co-worker of Savarkar in his early day, Govind (G.T. Darekar: 1874-1956) wrote fifty patriotic poems; and many of these were proscribed. He also wrote devotional poems. With patriotism taking a religious hue, this twin aspect of Govind's poetry is understandable. History provided the inspiration, the material and sometimes a cover for patriotic poetry: the history of the Rajputs, as well as of the Marathas. A great deal of such poetry—including ballads—was written. Its literary merit, however, was rarely good enough. Of the large number of poets who wrote patriotic verse, Durgaprasad Asaram Tiwari and Anandrao Krishnaji Tekade made a mark in the twenties; the former found his themes mainly in history.

By the beginning of the thirties the first stings of the urge to break away from the stale, mechanical and inane modes of the twenties were visible. In poetry, the cloying sweetness of the Tambe school and the prosy commonness of the Ravikiran Mandal were sought to be rejected. Anil and Anant Kanekar heralded this breaking away in their different ways. Anil (Atmaram Ravji Deshpande: 1901-1982) in his *phulwat* (1932) gave a new kind of love poem: sensitive, deeply personal and with an indwelling music. It was enthusiastically received. But Anil was never one to be imprisoned within his success. He kept moving on. Convinced that poetry had to be liberated from its confinement within the rigid, conventional metres, he devised Free Verse (*muktachhanda*) first using it for a long lyric, 'Prem ani Jeevan' (1935), and then for a long poem, "Bhagnamoorti" (1940). The latter poem is mainly a poem of statement, its theme being that a nation languishes if it neglects its cultural heritage. The controversy about Free Verse provoked by the book died out soon, and the form was widely accepted; a little too widely, for it also seemed to be of service to sloppy poets. In the hands of Anil and

several other genuine poets later, it brought greater terseness, and a firmer discipline to verse, particularly in poetry that would fuse thought and feeling. Such fusion marks Anil's later work even in the traditional metres, as illustrated by the poems in *Pertewha* (1947) and *Sangati* (1961). And, of course, in free verse too, as illustrated by "Nirvasita Chini Mulas" (1943)—a poem about a Chinese boy fleeing from the Japanese oppressors.

Anant Kanekar's (1905-80) lyrics, collected in a slender volume, *Chandarat* (1933) created a minor sensation among poetry lovers. The 'romantic' promised by the title was there in a few poems—not in its watered-down variety put by the Ravikiran Mandal. With the moonlight, there was the factory chimney, into which a despondent worker throws the idol he used to worship: this being ironically juxtaposed with the wealthy factory-owner worshipping his idol showily. There is more of such satire, and protest in the poems; and there is parody too. And also the use of common speech. The atheism and the socialism go pat with the label 'progressive' they stuck on Kanekar—appropriately, for once; but Kanekar' innate sense of humour kept him from striking exaggerated, and borrowed, poses in that line. And also from copying himself: he virtually gave up writing poetry.

N.G. Deshpande's (b. 1909) poems were heard much more than they were read, because a popular singer recorded them for the gramophone from 1933 onwards. Deshpande had started writing in 1930; but it was 1954 before his first collection *Sheel* was published. The sheer lyricism of his poetry has remained untainted by any non-poetic consideration. His pastoralism has nothing fake about it. He could say with an English poet, "my songs are rural". In that evergreen tranquil world, even time seems to have stopped. Sad memories sometimes flit across, but neither the sadness of unrequited love nor the joy of love fulfilled is garish. And the style too has a fine restraint; its beauties could easily have been dissipated. Gunavant Hanmant Deshpande (b. 1897) won serious attention with some of his poems; but he wrote little—and that little did not have much variety. It is his use of traditional imagery and diction and the metaphysical paradox, without making them look hackneyed, that distinguishes him most.

B.B. Borkar (1910-1984) may have been formed in his early

years as a poet by B.R. Tambe, but he soon achieved an identity of his own and continued to mature. Into his making went the influence of the poetry in several languages including some European ones. And Goa also made him. Its old-world Indianness and the gaiety of its Portuguese culture co-exist in him, as in few others, most amicably. The sensuous imagery that is one of the glories of his poetry probably comes more from the latter than from any other source. One must not try to disentangle the influences that have enriched such a keenly receptive poetic personality as Borkar's. And there are the native urges too. His sensitivity to the varied beauties of nature and woman's graces is very much his own. So is the music of his verse. Its lilt has a suggestion of dance in it. This element could have come from Portuguese culture, or from the folk-culture of Goa. Borkar has these and many such riches, and sometimes he is prodigal in using them. But in a large proportion of his poems, he shows the true artists's restraint. A curious component of Borkar's personality is the Gandhian ideal of life and the spiritual teachings of the saint poets. Curious but not counterfeit. It is genuine—as genuine as the romatic in him. Of his five collections (till 1960), all of them very good, the outstanding ones are *Dudhsagar* (1947) and *Chitraveena* (1960).

The Quit-India Movement, in a sense, established Kusumagraj (V.V. Shirwadkar: b. 1912). His *Vishakha,* published in 1942, with some of the poems in it giving eloquent utterance to the nation's spirit of revolt against slavery, and to its dreams of the future, achieved instant fame. These poems were soon on the lips of thousands, most of whom had probably avoided poetry till then. But the spell cast by such poems apart, the Kusumagraj projected by some of the other poems is closer to the poet's real self. These are poems of young love and of nostalgia: romantic poems, in short. The romantic note was perfectly in tune with the nationalist upsurge: a happy concord between an aspect of the poet and the theme—and the hour. The 'nationalist' poems have genuine passion, but their expression is not merely passionate. They do not splutter with anger, or mouth battle-cries; and they do not trade on the cliches of patriotism. They are good poetry first—good modern poetry. There are apt allegories, and vivid images, and irony. His five collections (till 1960) have fair

variety. His poetic sincerity, as they show, is unflagging.

Kusumagraj was soon built up as a cult by admirers who had more enthusiasm than understanding. The name they gave it was 'Agnisampradaya' (the creed of fire). Not very subtle images of fire and light were bandied about by minor poets. Fortunately not all the poets regarded by themselves or others as belonging to the creed were minor poets. At least two were not. Kant (V.R. Kant: b. 1913) who had first-hand experience of the repression in the Nizam's State, put deep feeling into his early poetry of protest, collected in *Phatatkara* and *Rudraveena*. But, as he matured, he wrote other kinds of poetry; even more striking as poetry than the earlier kind. *Agniparag*, the title of the first of Shrikrishna Powale's (1921-1974) two collections of lyrics, emotive like those of Kant's mentioned above, obviously places him in that 'creed'. He did not fulfil the promise held out by his early poems, being unable to observe restraint in the use of his poetic powers, which were many.

K.B. Nikumb (b. 1920) started most promisingly with his first collection *Ujjwala* (1945), which bears obvious signs of his pupilage to the Ravikiran Mandal. He grew out of the Mandal's ways, and showed a greater seriousness of poetic purpose; but he had not quite fully accomplished by 1960 what he had promised, although he had the skills for it. Raja Badhe (1912-1977) started off with an even greater promise, having written charming lyrics even in his teens. But his growth was hampered by his confining himself mainly to song-writing. Of the song-quality, however he had an abundance. Like Badhe, Sopandev Chaudhari (1907-1982) had the gift of song-making and also of writing humorous verse. But he too did not grow. His mother Bahinabai (1880-1951), however, was a phenomenon. An illiterate peasant woman, as a diversion she composed *ovis* (a traditional verse form), expressing in artless images the wisdom acquired from a hard life; and it is a wisdom with an edge of humour to it. The only collection of her poems, *Bahinaichi Gani* was published after her death. Till then nobody had heard of her.

1947-1960

The impatience with the prevailing ways in poetry had been

gathering strength, as we have noted above. It was manifested in the deviations and innovations in the work of some poets, and in the growing reception to them from poetry enthusiasts. The time was ripe for a revolution in poetry. World War II and its aftermath furnished an apt setting for it. A new attitude to literature emerged from it, and its impact was seen most in poetry, and next to it in the short story. The two together launched the 'modernist' movement, then commonly described as 'Nava sahitya', the two themselves being called 'Navakavya (New-Poetry') and 'Nav-katha' (the New Short Story).

While the 'new story', appeared, unobstrusively as it were, in periodicals, the 'new' poetry took the literary world by storm with its maiden appearance in a collection: *Kahi Kavita* (1947) by B.S. Mardhekar (1909-1956). It must be added that a few poems of P.S. Rege's (1910-1978) had appeared earlier in literary periodicals with a limited readership, but their 'newness' was generally dismissed as crankiness, being more a matter of style than of content—and therefore more amusing than shocking. Some of the poems in *Kahi Kavita* shocked the common reader—and even more the critic who professed to speak for him (and was, mostly, no less 'common' than the reader in his lack of sensibility). Such critics mounted a noisy attack on Mardhekar. Flaunting bits from a poem, sometimes a mere phrase—all torn out of the context—they accused him of obscenity. Going by them, the Government prosecuted the poet on that charge, but failed to prove it.

Mardhekar had published a collection of poems earlier: *Shishiragama* (1939). It carried no perceptible hint of *Kahi Kavita*. The Mardhekar of *shishiragama* was largely the product of two influences that were a little disparate: of Balkavi, and of the 'Ravikiran Mandal'. The 'new' Mardhekar had completely shaken off the latter; the former had become a part of him. To the casual eye it seems to be incongruous with the rest of his personality; but it complemented and enriched the personality, making it more complex. The joyous and childlike, inherited from Balkavi, sets off the disillusioned and ironic that had laid hold of Mardhekar. This rupture within is reflected in *Kahi Kavita*.

The poems in *Kahi Kavita* express the predicament of the

sensitive modern man. The old certainties have crumbled away, with no new ones to replace them and sustain his inner life. Much-vaunted reason and science have flattered to deceive—the former by betraying its limitations, the latter by its prostitution to selfish or destructive ends. Men are dehumanized, degraded into "mice lying dead in a wet drum"; dying is a compulsion for them, and so is living. But there is no misanthropy in such portraiture of degenerated man. Mardhekar has profound sympathy for him; only he does not bleat his sympathy in the sentimental or melodramatic manner beloved of the insensitive writer and reader.

In *Anakhi Kahi Kavita* (1951) Mardhekar has mellowed into a more serene poet. He can now, at least fitfully, look beyond human misery and hypocrisy to the intimations of spiritual peace. A longing for such peace had always been dormant in him. He had been emotionally nourished on the poetry of two saints, Tukaram and Ramdas. This 'modernist' poet had used their verse forms, and even some of the mannerisms of their diction. The spiritual strain that had been dormant now came alive, and some of the poems in the book throb with it. But the spiritual in him is not raised on the rejection of the rational. The two live together in him without friction. Some of Mardhekar's imagery springs from contemporary science, and some from the changeless rural life. His diction holds apparently incompatible elements together: English words dialect words, obsolete words, Sanskritized words. To the perceptive, their togetherness is not an eccentricity, but a search for precision. And such precision—"the precision of the laboratory scales"—was what the artist in Mardhekar had ever set his heart on achieving. For him the hard concrete statement, and not the clutter of hazy abstractions.

P.S. Rege's, 'newness' in poetry was very different from Mardhekar's, as said above, and his search for it had started much earlier than Mardhekar's—as seen in a very slender collection, *Sadhana ani Itar Kavita,* published in 1931, which shows a propensity to play with verse-structure and with words. His first major collection, *Himaseka,* preceded Mardhekar's *Kahi Kavita* by four years, and three more collections followed (till 1960) at regular intervals. Their impact was slower, and nar-

rower than Mardhekar's. It may even be said that it became stronger after Mardhekar had achieved a breakthrough for modernity.

Once the initial resistance to Mardhekar-to his attitudes and their frank expression, as distorted by the crusaders against him-had died down, the reader could establish contact with him at various points, for the poet's concerns were mainly contemporary. Rege's poetry shuns contemporaneity. Its world is utterly, almost forbiddingly, private; time has no relevance there. And the language of the poems, the key to that world, is mostly so different looking and so condensed as to be like a code language.

Rege's poetry has one unchanging theme: woman—woman in love. But not on the usual, personal, egoistical plane on which man writes of his heady happiness or tragic heart-break according as his love is accepted or rejected (mostly, the latter). But the love poems of Rege are 'impersonal'; the woman's love is not hemmed in by the emotional needs of an individual; therefore it is free and, as it were, exists for itself. It glows for ever, undiminished by time and circumstance. Love liberates her, and liberates her lover. Radha is Rege's paragon of such a beloved. She is not just woman: she is the distilled essence of womanhood. She haunts his imagination.

As an artist Rege is at his finest when he captures the fugitive graces of woman in the fewest of words. The sensuousness of his imagery of love is different from that of, say, a Borkar. Not just that it is more compressed; it dispenses with the kind of pretty words—pretty in colour and sound—which have ready-made erotic associations. Rege's greatest strength probably lies in his use of words. A word is a living thing to him. It yields its intimate mystery to him. He loves it—as one would, or should, a woman.

With the freedoms won for the poet by Mardhekar and Rege, the poetic landscape began to change rapidly. A wealth of young talent appeared, eager to explore their particular path, unhampered by leaden conventions. The one who was to achieve the most eminence of these poets was Vinda (G.V.) Karandikar (b. 1918). Before he found himself, as borne out by the poems in *Mridgandha* (1954), he had had a medley of models:

Keshavsut and Madhav Julian and the 'nationalist' poets like Savarkar. The socialist eloquence of *Mridgandha* was genuine, but the growing poet would not restrict himself to it. To no one strain, or school, in fact. He has continued to grow. And a chart of his growth should be remarkable for its variety of directions. The variety is in the content and in the forms and diction. 'Dhripada' (1959) has two noteworthy experiments in form: the *mukta suneet* (the free sonnet) and the *taal chitra* (word-picture of a *taal*). His ghazal is close-knit, and is all the more dramatic for its avoidance of the mechanical in movement and words. And in the feel for words, Karandikar has not many equals. Towards the end of the fifties Karandikar revealed an astonishing talent for children's verse, and he has since established himself as the finest in that species. The comic imagination from which these poems have sprung is very much a child's; and it is not a matter of baby language. It is excitingly different from the half-didactic, half-infantile writing that made up much of the 'poetry' children had to read.

Mangesh Padgaonkar (b. 1929) was still in his teens when his poems started drawing admiration. His first collection, *Dharanritya* (1950), placed him as a disciple of Borkar—in his romanticism shot through with an idealistic fibre of Gandhian colour—and also, to an extent, in his word-intoxication. Till 1960, the texture of Padgaonkar's poetry largely remained the same. As he matured, he developed his individuality. His images, especially of the beauty of nature, came to have a firmer contour. In the sixties his poetry put new shoots, and impressive ones—the satirical being one of them. But at the core, he is an unblushing romantic; his description of his alter ego as a gypsy is appropriate.

Another stubborn romantic—though he may make occasional forays into the critical, the exhortatory, the satirical—is Vasant Bapat (b. 1922). The first flush of his poetry was inspired by the 1942 movement and inescapably coloured by Kusumagraj, and understandably adolescent. Most of those poems were designed for the programmes put up by the Rashtra Seva Dal, with the poet himself a versatile performer in them. Versatile as a poetic craftsman too, Bapat has handled a variety of forms, including folk ones—like the *powada* (ballad) and the *lavani*—

with skill: metrical skill and verbal skill, the two blending perfectly, making for musically attractive verse. His love poems too have profited from such skills; they have also a genuine personal quality. *Bijli* (1952) and *Setu* (1957), the collections of his poems too fall this period, have been popular with a variety of readers.

A very different kind of poet is Sadanand Rege (1923-82). And that mainly in the nature of his imagination. It spins fancies, but they are whimsical, not romantic, The fancy sometimes yokes together discordant elements—rather like the 'conceit' or 'wit' in Elizabethan English poetry. Rege spurns 'poetic' language to the extent of making his poetry appear like prose arbitrarily chopped up into uneven lines. The appearance is deceptive for his diction, terse and precise, is an efficient vehicle for his kind of poetic content. He occasionally enriched the effect with an apt, if recondite, allusion (to the Bible or some Greek myth, for instance). With all these eccentric-looking traits Sadanand Rege's poetry has been 'caviar to the general'.

The controversial phrase, 'a poet of commitment', sits well on Sharatchandra Muktibodh (1921-1984); and his commitment, as the obvious association of the phrase goes, is to Marxism. His poems of protest are intense, but never shrill, and they have behind them the steady vision of a just and full life for all people. Not a misty, rainbow-like vision, but one that is firmly and meaningfully mapped. His *Navi Malavat* (1949) is "a song of the new age, of the workers"; so is the next collection "Yatrik" (1957). The literary fashion of the fifties was hostile to, or at least suspicious of, such poetry; but this did not deter Muktibodh. But he has also written a fair number of utterly apolitical lyrics of 'private' content, and as poetry they are authentic. Another 'committed' poet of the age is Amar Shaikh (1917-1969), whose fiery recitation of his fiery poems had its field day during the agitation for Samyukta Maharashtra; but he often sounds shrill, which makes him different from Muktibodh. His language however, is 'of the workers', whereas Muktibodh's is sometimes incongruously Sanskritized.

A poet, bursting with originality and endowed with several talents, is Manmohan (Manmohan Natu, b. 1913). But the

erratic and impetuous in him has held back the best he is capable of from his readers. A poet who uses his gifts wisely is G.D. Madgulkar (1919-1978), and these gifts which lie in the region of the lyric were gradually restricted by him to the writing of songs for films. But in all this writing he has shown a true instinct for form, and for restraint in expression which is particularly remarkable considering that he has an enviable facility there. His assimilation of the best in the poetry of the medieval saints, of the pundits and in the folk forms like the 'lavani', has enriched his powers of expression, but he does not squander these riches; he uses them discriminatingly, and therefore most profitably.

Indisputably one of the foremost poets of today, Indira Sant (b. 1914) is historically most interesting as she spans this period and the previous one, responding to both without even a hint of maladjustment, or of a cleavage, during the transition from one to the other. Her early work has 'Ravikiran' touches; they were gradually effaced with the poetic modes of different complexions in the air till 'Navakavya' suddenly, and virtually, sent them all out of fashion. Mardhekar, 'awakened' her as she gratefully says. But even this 'awakening' to 'new' poetic values was smooth, for she had already had, latent in her, a calibre for succinct, controlled writing: a discipline with which Mardhekar's creed sought to revitalize poetry. Indira Sant's love poems, for instance, had all the vitality in their very delicacy and mutedness. Her husband, also a poet, had died young; and the memories of their brief life together were the motif of most of these love poems. But they have not the faintest trace of the maudline, or of self-pity. From *Sahawas* (1940)—the first collection of her poems jointly with her husband's—to *Mrigjala* (1957) and (beyond our period), her work shows a quiet growth—free from the jerks that striving to adapt to the changing taste bring. The thin-looking feeling covers deeper and stronger thought as she matures, and the diction, if that was possible, becomes even simpler and more direct.

Several other women poets have contributed in their several ways—to the growth of poetry, and to the variety in it. Sanjivani Marathe (b. 1916) won early recognition with her recitation of her poems which bore marks of the Ravikiran Mandal

(in the content) and the Tambe school (in the diction). Padma Gole's (b. 1913) poems are uncomplicated in their content and unassuming in expression—and all the more appealing for it. Shanta Shelke (b. 1921) has been prolific in her output, but without being unjust to her talents, which are many. Her most prominent talent is for the musical, and this has brought her wide response with media like the cinema finding the talent to be of great use.

This brief survey of the poetry written between 1947 and 1960 should give some idea of the new directions which it sought to explore. Some of these directions had been anticipated in the previous period—tentatively or purposefully—but their impact was limited. Similarly, however 'revolutionary' the change that came over the scene after 1947, it is not as if all the 'old' directions were sealed off or fell into disuse. Quite a few of them were worked and, generally, worked more rewardingly for the awareness of the change that was taking place. *Navakavya*, the 'new' poetry, was not a creed in the narrow sense. What it set out to do was to secure freedom for the poet from the poetical conventions that had hemmed him in. But it did not intend to instal its own conventions—of any kind. One of its basic principles was that there should be a plurality of approaches to poetry. Hence the extraordinary variety in it. One cannot speak of the 'School of Mardhekar', or 'the school of Rege'. That would be wrong. And wrong to Mardhekar or Rege, it being against the spirit of their poetry.

The 'new' poetry was contemporary, not in the superficial sense of being written on the themes of the day, or of using the common speech of the day, but in having a contemporary sensibility. Such a sensibility makes for complexity in experience, and the precision in expression it demands occasionally makes some obscurity inevitable in the imagery and the language. Such obscurity put out the reader whose understanding of poetry had been nourished on oversimplified verse that put no strain on him. Such a reader was also put out by the boldness of the experience, and the frankness in its expression, that sometimes confronted him in the 'new' poetry.

The sense of disillusionment and frustration that is so prominent in Mardhekar as to make it for many a hall-mark of the

'new' poetry, is not found in most of the other leading poets of the period. Some of these poets see ground for hope in their ideology; some others in the essential moral sense in man; yet others in something else. But irony, a significant feature of Mardhekar's poetry, resulting from his perception of the discord between what seems and what is, pervades the work of many of these poets. Also his realization of the contradictions within man, of the grotesque that lurks in the dark corners of his mind and of the hollowness of the simplistic formulae about him. Briefly, he rid poetry of a large number of cliches; cliches of emotion as well as of language. His experimentation, as well as that of the other 'new poets' did not mean a rejection of the tradition of poetry, but of what had become warped or lifeless in it. What was vital in the tradition was maintained or retrieved from neglect, as a source of invigoration, and also of a sense of continuity. Mardhekar was invigorated by Balkavi, and by Tukaram and Ramdas of the distant past; Rege by Dnyaneshwar and, like several others, by the folk poetry.

There was no 'School of Mardhekar,' as said above, but 'the Age of Mardhekar' should be an appropriate description of the period, 'the Age of Keshavsut' is of the previous one. They both brought about a great renewal of poetry. They called forth the poetry that lay passive in many and which but for them, would have been smothered, or deformed, under the weight of inert conventions.

The Age of Mardhekar has continued beyond 1960. Like all the lines one draws in mapping literary history, the one drawn here at 1960 is a convenience. Around that year there appeared on the scene a bunch of highly gifted poets with their particular splendours. They have stimulated another efflorescence in poetry, of different hues and odours. But it could be said that they have themselves been stimulated by Mardhekar or Rege—and by some others like Karandikar or Borkar—and that in various ways, not all of them showing on the surface.

The Novel

Aptly described by S.K. Kolhatkar as the 'Father of the Novel of Ideas' Vaman Malhar Joshi (1883-1943) represents a signifi-

cant advance in the novel over the school of Hari Narayan Apte with its twin concerns: social reform and the recreation of history—with a patriotic slant. A teacher of philosophy, Joshi had, scientiously consider 'the other side' too. This made a discussion with his seriousness of purpose, a mental cast that would con- of ideas the very focus of most of his novels. It could be said that he tried to work out certain theoretical problems that seemed important to him through his novels. V.M. Joshi's first novel *Ragini* (1915) has an appropriate sub-title *Kavya-shastra-vinod* in that it is full of discussions about a variety of subjects, the most important of them being the rights of women. Uttara is the new woman; aggressive in her advocacy of such rights, she is described as a suffragette, a 'contemporary' word in British life. Ragini, her antithesis, is also an educated woman, but she would rather be moderate in her demands. Between them, the two women reflect the changing scene in the middle-class life of the period. Curiously enough, this novel with serious discussion and hardly any action makes up for it, as it were, in the last part where strange adventures (like falling into the hands of cannibals!) befall the characters in some Himalayan region! The novel, which has no sense of form and would be forbidding to the common reader, has however been something of a classic because it was the first attempt to endow a novel with intellectual content.

Joshi is apologetic about his novel *Nalini* 1920). It too has discussions, and these relate to political controversies; but they are not as consistent with the characters and the social scene as those in *Ragini*. *Ashram Harini* (1916), a novelette, is placed in ancient times, the charming little fiction about it being that its manuscript was discovered by the author. It does create the atmosphere of an ashram of those days with deft touches, but the setting is not used for phantasy of any kind; in fact, the novel projects realistic personal relationships.

Yet another novel of discussion is *Sushilecha Dev* (1930), the author's best by critical consensus. The theme here is one's conception of god and the story unfolds the evolution of the conception in the heroine, Sushila. The rationalist in her finally comes to realize that god is not in an idol, but in some ideal of service to fellowmen. A problem that was then seriously dis-

turbing the minds of those who had imbibed Western thought; but Joshi would not be Joshi if he offered a simple solution. The characters and their ideas integrate better here than in Joshi's other novels.

The last of Joshi's novels *Indu Kale Sarla Bhole* (1925) is in the form of letters; and also because it was written for serial publication, it is formless in structure and repetitive. Once again it is two women with sharply contrasted attitudes to domestic life. None of the chains for the radical Indu, but Sarla is content with the housewife's limited role. Her husband is a practising Gandhian. But somehow, a change overcomes the two women. Indu appreciates the virtues of domesticity, and Sarla of social work. But a little irrelevantly, the current controversy, 'Art vs. Morality', enters the novel and the discussion soon gets out of hand. And that without achieving much either for the novel, or the subject!

Form was never Joshi's strong point. His main interest was ideas, and he used characters as vehicles for ideas, and as little more. Interestingly enough, his central characters are women—women with minds; and not passive creatures at the receiving end of either love or pity! But to make ideas and discussions the staple of a novel was a bold new direction given to the novel, and this was V.M. Joshi's most significant contribution.

Most controversial as writer and man, Dr. S. V. Ketkar (1884-1937) seemed to follow V. M. Joshi's path as a novelist of ideas, but his novel branched off soon into its own uneven eccentric path. Of his vast learning—he edited an encyclopaedia—sociology was his special area, and his novels are pegs on which to hang his sociological theories and investigations. As novels, they almost wilfully neglect such an elementary requirement as credibility of plot and character; and their sociological content is not always objective; it is often opinionated. They were mostly received with derision. And yet Ketkar's insistence on imparting an intellectual quality to the novel, even if it meant cocking a snook at public taste, gives him an important position in the history of the form.

Of Ketkar's seven novels, one of them incomplete, easily the best is *Brahmakanya* (1930). Among the several problems it takes up the most striking is the status of the offspring—like

Kalindi, the heroine—of the union of a Brahmin and a prostitute. An earlier novel, *Parangada* (1926), too touches upon the problem. Two more newnesses are: a trade-union leader as a character, and a discussion regarding birth control—altogether taboo as a subject then. Ketkar's first novel *Gondvanatil Priyamvada* (1926), has for the heroine, a rebel who denounced the *Dharmashtra* as being an instrument of man's domination over woman. The choice of 'Gondavan'—an old name for the Nagpur region—as the locale was a reaction against the virtual monopoly enjoyed by the Bombay-Pune tract. But for two other novels, the locale was a foreign country: England for *Gavsasu* (1930) and the USA for *Paraganda* (1926). These two novels consider certain problems in the life of the Indian emigrants in those countries, particularly that of marriage in *Gavsasu*. There are the inevitable discussions but the main interest of the novels resides in the novelty of their background. *Ashavadi* (1927) too has Nagpur for its scene of action, and its politics as the incitement for much of the discussion (which in a Ketkar novel is almost equivalent to action). *Vichakshana* (1937) has some typically unusual material but as typically it does not coalesce into a good novel. The incomplete 'Bhatkya' (1933) would seem to be autobiographical; some of its assorted comments on men and manners provide its only interest.

Such a novelist as Ketkar could of course never be popular, and that with most levels of readership. His obvious failings have been bruited about widely. His plots are muddled; his ideas are often shocking, and his characters are unconvincing; there are inconsistencies and improprieties, and his writing is clumsy—sometimes to the extent of sounding un-Marathi. But there is a great deal more in Ketkar. He set out, not to entertain, but to stimulate and educate; and he had a mind well equipped to educate and a spirit bold enough to stimulate: bold enough to shock his readers into an awareness of the social reality that lay beyond their limited mental horizon. The sweep of his social observation and comment was incomparably wide. His caustic attacks on the decaying social organisations were matched by a positive, if somewhat incomplete and jumbled, design for a new social order, which be called Vaijanath Smriti (the Code of Vaijanath) after one of his characters. At the centre of the

design was a religion more universal and nobler than the existing ones. Another interesting idea is of the adoption—may be optionally—of the matriarchal system of (what was then) the Malabar region. He had a vision, but it was unsteady, and blurred in patches, and some mental blocks seemed to impair it in parts. The radical jostled in it with the obscurantist. An instance of the latter was his faith that the model society would be Brahmin-led.

Dr. Ketkar annd V. M. Joshi as novelists, were contemporaries of Phadke and Khandekar. The Phadke-Khandekar wave of those years consigned them to minority readership. And yet, slowly and imperceptibly, their kind of novel, serious of purpose and probing life's complexities, had its effect; it showed up the hollowness of Phadke's conception of the novelist's art, and also of Khandekar's understanding of life.

B. V. (Mama) Warerkar (1883-1964) has twenty-eight novels to his name (besides forty translations); and these are of different kinds, and of different levels of performance. A writer by profession, a rarity in Marathi, he had to churn out potboilers like translations from the English of detective fiction to make a living, after the decline of the theatre. But his translations from the Bengali, mainly of the novels of Saratchandra Chatterji—although these too were done for the pittance they brought—earned him the gratitude of readers for making available to them some of the best work of Saratchandra, who has had considerable influence on Marathi fiction —although most of it is below the surface. The accuracy of the translation has raised doubts; but there should be none about Warerkar—having transmitted the spirit of Saratchandra to the Marathi reader.

It was with his *Vidhavakumari* (1928) that Warerkar created a stir. Written under the pseudonym 'A Widow from Pune', it is the story of a child-widow; but with a difference. It has none of the sentimental, pity-begging stuff that usually went with the theme. Mathu, the heroine, is steeled by her misfortune and sufferings into a rebel: she is blunt in speech and defiant in action. And she is the first of a long line of angry young women created by Warerkar in his novels and plays. Godu Gokhale, heroine of the novel with the same title, is another. She is an

even stronger rebel than Mathu; there are more social inequities she rebels against—like the caste-system, and woman's inferior role in marriage. These women were, perhaps with an exception or two, the earliest projections of the 'New Woman'. Warerkar was far ahead of his times in his championship of women's rights, and these at the level of ordinary life. As was only to be expected, this brought him constant derision; but he stuck to his guns. However, these rebel women tended to overdo their bluntness; they were cantankerous; and saw everything as either black or white. As characters they were not rounded; they were not fully women.

Two more of Warerkar's novels need special mention. *Dhavta Dhota*' (1933), breaking new ground in theme, presents the picture of the life of Bombay's textile labour under the shadow of an impending strike. The author knew the life well enough to make it a realistic picture—although it is marred by a few rather obvious faults. Warerkar's play *Sonyacha Kalas* has the same plot, though with a different ending. Which was written first, the novel or the play, is still a problem! The novel *Saat Lakhatil Eka* (1940) convincingly recreates the life in a village in the Konkan region: a life oppressed by poverty and superstition. This too was breaking new ground. And that was almost second nature with Warerkar as a writer. A notable feature of Warerkar's novels—of all his writings, in fact—is use of living speech: notable because it was then generally regarded as not being good enough for literature.

Narayan Sitaram Phadke (1894-1978) and Vishnu Sakharam Khandekar (1898-1976) towered above the other writers of fiction from the late 20's to the late 40's in popularity. And the popularity was not confined, as a pejorative shade of the word goes, to the undiscerning readers who lap up anything. Their popularity later began receding—partly because the features of their novels that had charmed their readers started losing their lustre, and partly because the literary climate was changing. This similarity apart, the dissimilarities between them were far more prominent. Phadke was identified with the 'Art for Art's sake' cult; and Khandekar with the 'Art for Life's sake' cult; and each kept propagating his cult enthusiastically. This bond of opposition as much as the rivalry in popularity, has made twin-names

of them.

Phadke was the more prolific of the two. By 1960 he had published about fifty novels, and continued to write with unflagging zeal. To what was his amazing popularity with readers and large following among writers due? He was an accomplished craftsman in plot construction, leaving no loose ends or rough edges And he had cultivated a matching prose style: spruce and lucid. It was so different from the stodgy, shapeless prose that was about. Nothing if not methodical, he employed these skills in construction and style self-consciously; and spelt them out for the instruction of would-be writers. His 'art' largely consisted of the practice of such skills.

Phadke's novels are stories of young love and the love has a uniform urban middle-class background. The stories end happily; the impediments in the way of love are only moderately menacing. The love is hardly ever rebellious; it does not even have to defy the caste system. The other components of the 'romantic' novel (in the narrow sense) are there: the young lady is smart and pretty; her young man is smart and handsome, and no want of any kind (except for love in the early chapters) worries him In consonance with this, Phadke provides them with such embellishments as accomplishments in painting or music, or sports, or for a change, moderate political activity. For securing special effects in nature's beauty, as a background to love, he sometimes shifts the scene to Kashmir or Goa.

In the twenties, when the general tone of life, as expressed in journalism and other writing, tended to be solemn and constricting, Phadke's novels opened up an elegant, fragrant world of happy love—for young readers; and for many who were young in spirit, if not in age. The hard realities of life were barred from this world. His characters are a little too normal, and fit into simple formulae. No conflicts within or without. To Phadke, it was the duty of fiction to provide an escape from them and to lull the reader into the feeling that everything is right with the world.

Phadke had started with an undistinguished historical novel as early as 1917; and it was eight years before he came back to the novel; and started feeling for his true vein which he found a few years later in *Jadugar* (1928) or *Daulat* (1929). He had struck

a rich vein, and he kept to it till the end. These two novels catapulated him into fame. Although he was very self-assured about his 'technique', he was not altogether self-complacent; and he continued to try out little variations in theme, structure; and background. Into *Atkepar* (1931) he brought a note of mystery. The nationalist movement of the thirties supplied a political flavour to the love in some of his novels. In one of these, for a change, the heroine is a political worker. *Akherche Bund* (1944) tries out a different structure, and that with fair success. Between its four parts it narrates the story of two generations of a family; the second stands out by the account of a stage-artiste whom Phadke portrayed from a great artiste of the Marathi stage with slight changes in the make-up. For variety, some of the novels have a different locale—for instance Kashmir, Hyderabad or Goa. Phadke is careful to work in realistic details of the locale.

The reaction against the earlier over-estimation of Phadke has been a little stronger than it need be. His faults have been harped upon. He lacked the higher virtues of the novelist. But if he held sway over readers and writers alike for a fairly long period it must have been for good reason. Most of all for his craft, which he kept trying to perfect. And he must be considered in the context of the times. That should enable us to appreciate his significant role in the development of the novel.

In the over-worked contrast between Phadke and Khandekar, the latter is generally described as an 'idealist'; and this description hangs well with his creed of 'Art for Life's sake'. He has himself told us. "My stories and novels come from faith in the idea that one can serve life through art". And serving life meant for him using his talent to make it a better world for the common man: with equality, and without injustice and oppression. Gandhiji's programme appealed to him; and, more vaguely, the socialist doctrine. Like so many others, he sensed no contradiction between the two; and they somehow managed to co-exist within him. His socialism was primarily humanitarian in character; this helped in making the co-existence smoother than it might have been. He transmitted this urge for service to many of his heroes and heroines. Like himself, some of them gave up the comforts of urban life for the trials of village life. There was a

great deal of the 'romantic' to it—an escape from the hard, bleak realities of life—but it was geared to a creditable ideal, however hazily perceived. The romantic in Phadke was honestly hedonistic.

Khandekar's output was less prolific than Phadke's, but more varied; and it showed, unlike Phadke's, a fairly continuous growth. The growth reflected his response to the changing scene around him: the literary scene too, for his reading kept abreast with contemporary writing. And the reading was not confined to Marathi, or even to the literature in English; he read with zest what he could get of contemporary European literature through English translation: especially the 'progressive' writings, and these in some measure went into his shaping. It also shows that he took his calling seriously.

Khandekar's first two novels, *Hridayachi Haak* (1930) and *Kanchanmriga* (1931) were received enthusiastically—particularly by the adolescent readers and mainly because the stuff they were made of was quite adolescent itself: artificial and complicated plots, sugary and fine-sounding sentiments, uncomplicated characters, the writing laden with lavish fancy, and the right touch of moral ardour. His next two novels, *Ulka* and *Don Dhruva* (both 1934) show that the process of growth had begun; the though content is little better organised, and so is the form. *Ulka* touches three themes: woman's life today; selfless social service; and a protest against economic inequalities. But they get into each other's way! *Don Dhruva* too is diffused. The author's style aggravates the diffusion in both the novels: Khandekar's popularity went up in spurts with these two novels, and the next two, *Hirwa Chapha* and *Don Mane* (both 1938)—and it had now widened far beyond the youthful readers. The 'two minds' in the title of the latter novel are the conscious and the sub-conscious. It is obvious Freud—an over-simplified Freud. (Khandekar was the first novelist, anyway, to consciously use him!) Khandekar entered the loud, stagey world of films of those days—in 1938—and he could not keep his novels from being infected. But a happy exception was *Kraunchavadh* (1942), probably his best novel. It has a large canvas; and a time-span of thirty years, to depict the life, in Maharashtra, with some emphasis on the political trends. The novel has a message—several,

in fact; and for the readers they had an immediate meaning in those crucial years. His characters embody ideas, however imperfectly.

Khandekar's style won him countless admirers and imitators—before its critics weaned them away. It is wordy; it carries too many frills; it is anything but natural. The occasional touches of poetry are smothered by over-writing. The one item of his style which made him immensely popular was his epigrams. They were very quotable, not too subtle; and therefore very imitable: usually, dressed-up platitudes. In the later days, his excesses of this kind, put his better features in the shade.

But Khandekar has had a greater all-India appeal than any other Marathi novelist, specially in Gujarat and Tamil Nadu. The appeal, of course, is of the ideas of equality, social justice, compassion and selfless service; ideas elevated into ideals which strike a chord in the Indian mind anywhere. The Jnanpith Award to Khandekar's *Yayati* was a fitting recognition: as much a recognition of what his novels had done to achieve such a concord, as of the novel.

One can imagine the shock P. Y. Deshpande's (1899-1986) novel *Bandhananchya Palikade* (1927) must have given to all but a few readers, with a prostitute's daughter (who was herself the victim of rape) for the heroine, and for the hero, a young man from a respectable Brahmin family. This was way beyond what passed for social reform then—which, even to most of those who flaunted the label 'romantic', meant little more than intersubcaste mariage. Phadke's novels for instance were socially conformist. P.Y. Deshpande's was a romanticism of full strength. It was the inflexible individualist in him who expressed himself in his novels, and who later steered his politics farther and farther away from socialism into mysticism. Exploring the dynamics of life become a major urge with him, and a novel like *Kaali Raani* (1941) is obsessed by it. His obsessions, his intensity—both of feeling and thought—and his restless probing into the minds of his characters were not conducive to the poise and detachment of the artist in him. And hence such obvious defects in his writing as patchiness and even incoherence. *Sukalele Phool* (1931) and *Sadaphuli* (1933) have some memorable writing. The poet in him shines through its imagery—and the images are

no embellishment; they are integral to the writing. A writer of his intellectual equipment, poetic sensibility, and agility in language should have achieved far more than he did but, somehow, literature was never his prime interest.

G.T. Madkholkar's (1899-1976) first novel *Muktatma* (1933) was boosted as the first 'political novel', which was not quite correct, because some earlier novels had characters or discussions or activities which were about as political as the ones in this novel—maybe; in kind, if not in degree. A large part of *Muktatma* is devoted to discussions relating to the politics of the day and kindred subjects. Some of the characters bear a suspiciously close resemblance to actual persons, and what little there is of plot, has not much to do with the characters. The spotlight is on the communists and their movement, but less, as one would think, to bring out their activities than to suggest the author's closeness to them. A minor part of the plot concerns a young boy and a girl, cousins who are irritatingly precocious; and her early death easily aggravates the sentimental element cultivated in the part.

In some of his other novels, like *Kanta, Mukhavate, Duheri Jivan,* or *Pramadvara,* for example, Madkholkar has laid the political colour on thick. *Kanta* specially uses Nagpur for its background. A journalist by profession, Madkholkar had access to politicians, and he knew the political currents and cross-currents well enough. But none of the novels gives us a coherent and meaningful picture of the political scene. What knowledge he had dissipated on irrelevant characters and situations, and as mere spice. Spicing politics with love, and love with politics, was his favourite method. As for love, some of his descriptions of it have been accused of bad taste.

His *Bhanglele Deul* (1934) is untouched by politics and by many of the author's characteristic weaknesses. Its theme is marriage: what it can mean to a woman with education and self-respect. *Chandanwadi* (1943) recreates fairly convincingly the life in Nagpur in various spheres, not just the political one. Its characters act and talk realistically, and are no mere puppets in the hands of the author who would use them for purposes that do not strictly belong to the story. Novels like these show that Madkholkar had the capacity to write novels of some stature. But he squandered his powers on the inessential and the phoney. A

his best, he could write a fine prose, enriched by his proficiency in Sanskrit; but he often lapsed into artificial writing. Some times even in the way his characters talk like the boy and the girl in *Muktatma*.

S.K. Kolhatkar (1871-1934) and N.C. Kelkar (1872-1947) came to the novel rather late in their literary career, with a great reputation in other forms behind them. The expectations they had raised were not realized—particularly by Kelkar. Kolhatkar's two novels however have some merit on that, like V.M. Joshi's novels, they are concerned with some vital problems of the day: one with untouchability, and the other with the relative urgency of social reform and political reform. A glad surprise was D.A. Tulzapurkar's novel, *Maaze Ramayana* (1927)—his only book—which, under the garb of being the autobiography of an educated woman, sketches some prominent facets of the socio-political life of Maharashtra between 1857 and 1919. Though too loose in form even for a novel, it holds the reader with its lively discussions and interesting characters in several of which fiction blends with fact.

The 'New Woman' awakened to the consciousness of her rights, and challenging the old order keeping her in chains, had appeared in fiction written by men: for example, Uttara in V.M. Joshi's *Ragini*. Now the challenge came from two women novelists; and it was bolder, and the problems they voiced were not just theoretical, or superficial but tackled the emotional life of woman in its recesses, without undue reserve. *Kalyanche Nishwas* (1933) by Vibhawari Shirurkar (pen name of Malatibai Bedekar: b. 1905), the first of such books (a collection of stories) raised a storm with its frank statement of the frustrations and mental sufferings of educated women who had passed the usual age for marriage without being able to find a husband. The storm became fiercer with her first novel, *Hindolyavar* (1934), which spoke out defiantly in favour of woman's liberation; an important aspect of it was to refuse to submit her love for her man to the fetters of marriage, and to be given the right to have a child outside marriage. This creed, which comprised several similar revolutionary ideas besides, came to be known as 'Navamatavaad'; and in it was seen the influence of the radical theories of Bertrand Russell. The novel that followed was

about a man with such ideas. After a gap of sixteen years came her next novel, and her best, *Bali* (1950). It investigates the conditions in a Criminal Tribes Settlement with deep sympathy but without sentimental glossing. The other woman novelist to shock the conservatives was Geeta Sane (b. 1907), whose seven novels dealt with some problems of women in a forthright manner. Of the several other women novelists,. Prema Kantak (b. 1906), a member of Gandhiji's ashram, was committed to a different kind of freedom. Women's education had made considerable progress. But the majority of women were mostly content with the existing order and at the most asked for some trivial concessions, which only tickled the educated man's chivalry. In some cases, like Girijabai Kelkar's, the line taken was even more diehard than in the male writers of that persuasion- But the two women radicals mentioned above blazed a trail which was to expand later in the writings of men as well as of women, and prepare the ground for the 'New Literature' of the post-1947 period.

Altogether unique as person and writer, Pandurang Sadashiv Sane (1899-1950), much better known as Sane Guruji, cannot be fitted into any simple category. He provoked the whole gamut of reactions: reverence to mockery. He wrote a large number of novels, besides translations from the English. Somehow all these, and most of his other writings, give us the impression that they were beamed to children. Not just by their extremely simple style, nor again by their tone of instruction, but by their childlike spirit. Their influence which was enormous at one time was not confined to children and to the young, but extended to grown-ups in whom the innocence had not dried up. He remained a child all his life—with a child's angelic innocence and day-dreaming, untouched by reality. And it was in some ways a wholesome influence, for in a world darkening with scepticism and disillusionment, he provided through his books a steady light of faith. But the naivete and sentimentalism inherent in this method of writing have been regarded by many as not being too healthy.

Sane Guruji's most famous novel is *Shyamchi* Aai (1935), the story of a boy from a poor Brahmin family and his devotion to his mother. This novel, like several others of his have

an autobiographical strain. But it is an almost un-selfconscious strain. In fact, all his writing is utterly unselfconscious. And therefore it reveals him transparently. The plots of his novels are so simple that they seem to have formed themselves. His characters are born good: "I can't even conceive a villain", he says. Thus the characters, like the stories, lack depth and complexity—and yet never give the impression of being shallow or trivial. This comes from their moral fibre. Such stale, leaden phrases as 'moral values,' 'didactic purpose', take on a fresh life, as it were, when applied to his writings. And the values are truly universal. Sane Guruji was a political worker and spent several terms in jail—some of his novels being written there—but there is hardly anything 'political' in his writings. A novel of his, *Astik* (1940), dealing with the blending of the Arya and the Naga people, is an allegory of Hindu-Muslim unity; but it transcends the immediate theme to create a tale of harmony. Most of the mockery directed against Sane Guruji's works comes from mistaking the childlike for the childish, and over-sensitivity for mushy sentiment. Apparently, being over-sensitive, he took his life when he found his dreams crumbling round him; they were not his private dreams, but the dreams—the fantasies of virtue—of all idealists.

With the flux of time and taste, a major writer may slip into a minor position; and this probably happens most in fiction. V.V. Bokil (1903-1973) fascinated his readers with the novelette *Baby* (first published in a monthly) and the novel, *Phol Asha* (1931). But as he continued to write—and he was prolific—the fascination started wearing out. His fictional world was very limited, and after a while could not yield as much as it had done earlier. Bokil wrote of the lower middle-class, and upper-caste, family of those years of slow transition from the hide-bound old ways to the new stirrings of freedom. At its best, his writing gripped you with its playful, half-sceptical humour, and its touching pathos—neither overdone. The growing boy in a family with friction between the parents—which made them even harsher to him—is Bokil's favourite character. This supplied a much needed corrective to the fiction sentimentalizing family life. The unfolding of young love—with its diffidence, and bewilderment, and mild heartquakes—brought out some of

the best in Bokil, with the narration blending humour and sympathy in controlled proportion. Bokil stepped out of his narrow world later into the rural world and the world of the urban poor. It makes you wish that he had tried it much earlier.

Yashwant Gopal Joshi (1901-1963) turned to the novel after creating for himself a fond readership in the short story with his twin specialities: painting sentimental, almost idyllic, pictures of family life; and lampooning the new in life and literature. The novels tried to exploit the same strains, but had much less success. The theme of family life was rather shallow at the level he used it, and his ridicule of social reform too was unsubtle. The novels are rescued from insignificance by some character portraits, like a few in his best novel *Padsad* (1938).

D R. Kavathekar (1900-1979), like Y.G. Joshi, seemed to have set out to malign the 'modern' way of life. The freedoms allowed to women provoked him most. That of acting in a film was, of course, a violent provocation. But lacking the satirical talent of Joshi, he exaggerates his characters and their actions to the undoing of his novels. But he is rescued from an otherwise well-deserved omission from an account of the novel, by his *Reshmachya Gathi* (1942) a well-knit story, with life-like characters, effective narration—and a rural background which comes alive, although even here he sometimes succumbs to his weakness for the lurid.

Between 1947, when he started writing, and 1960, G.N. Dandekar (1916) published more than a dozen novels, and he has continued to be a prolific writer. His popularity has cut through the usual classification of readers; he entertains the common reader, and he has won the admiration of large numbers of serious and discriminating readers too. He found his authentic strain in *Shitu* (1953), the tragic story of a young widow. Into her life comes, after a gap of years, a young man whom she had known in the old days; and their calf-love is revived into intense ardour. But death snatches her as she desperately tries to cross the ebbing waters of the creek. The sense of fate is linked with the life of the village, its humanity seared by poverty and orthodoxy, and ironically with nature's beauty. In his novels, Dandekar vividly recreates nature in its countless forms—not as a passive background, but as a felt

presence. In *Padghavli* (1955), the Konkan village, from which it takes its name, is virtually the heroine. Dandekar similarly endows a variety of rural areas with convincing life, with the use of picturesque detail and touches of the local dialect—like Vidarbha and Maval in Maharashtra, the Bhakra region in Punjab (in *Aamhi Bhagirathache Putra* 1959, a novel on the construction of the Bhakra canal), the environs of the river Narmada (in *Kuna Ekachi Bhramangatha,* 1957). The last of these is a fascinating account—fictionalized personal experience—of a sadhu's *parikrama* (circumambulation) of the river. In the best part of it the fascination centres in the delicate relationship that grows between the Sadhu and a young woman, Yashoda, who reminds one of Saratchandra Chatterji.

Dandekar is a lover of the traditional ways of life, and the action and characters in his novels derive much of their popular appeal from it; and the appeal is heightened by sentimental expression. However, the sentimental sometimes slips into the mawkish. His diction is attractively individual. It is so simple, that the simplicity strikes some as being affected. It has a blend of several flavours: of common speech, including dialect, of the archaic, and of old poetry, including folk poetry. And it is a smooth, charming blend.

The novel and the short story of the twenties and the thirties had, exceptions apart, raised doubts, and even derision, about its fidelity to life. Much of it was vague and could well apply to any society, or to none, and it was confined to the urban middle class. One of the correctives that was attempted was to give the fiction a 'local habitation': limit it to the life in a specific region. But limiting it thus was by itself no bar to falsifying the picture by romanticising it, by investing it with a natural, or even moral, beauty, drawn from imagination. The lesser writers did it with an eye on the reader jaded with the stereotypes of urban middle-class life, So did some poets too. But idealijation of rural life had been too long a part of the society's ethos to be dislodged easily.

G.N. Dandekar, as mentioned above, suffused his pictures of the rural with all their physical truth, with soft sentiment. R.V. Dighe (1896-1980) had a most unusual setting for his novels, begining with *Panakala* (1939); the fastnesses of a hilly

area inhabited by the Katkaris, and aboriginal tribe. His intimate knowledge of their life, and love for them, and his skill in narration and description, gave the novels a rare quality; but even these do not seem to have escaped a romantic colouring. B.S. Mardhekar's epoch-making achievement in poetry has relegated his three novels to relative obscurity: particularly, *Tambdi Mati* (1943) and *Pani* (1948), which recreate the life of the rural areas where he spent his early years. And yet, one senses the author's nostalgic feeling diluting his detachment.

Mardhekar's *Ratricha Divas* (1942) was the first sustained attempt to employ the stream-of-consciousness technique. It was not just derived from James Joyce or Virginia Woolfe. It was, as the new poetry he was about to launch proved, integral to his creative process. The novel is a record of a few hours in the life of a journalist. The experiment had a limited success, but the interest it aroused in the working of the sub-conscious mind has had an impact on creative, as well as critical writing.

Vasant Kanetkar (b. 1923), who was later to make a reputation in drama, tried the technique in *Ghar* (1950); but does not allow it to make the novel as unintelligible as Mardhekar's. That is probably because it has a well constructed story firmly linked with the world outside.

It would be convenient to consider here two other novelists, who, their principal work being in some other form —poetry in the case of both are regarded as minor novelists. And not unfairly, because their work in the form is slight and in quality not to be compared to that in poetry. V.V. Shirwadkar (the poet Kusumagraj) in his *Vaishnav* (1946) traces the transformation in the life of a teacher during the '1942' struggle. His *Janhavi* treats the conflict between the physical and the moral at a serious level. B.B. Borkar, in whose poetry the natural beauty of Goa has found its finest expression, brings to his novels the beauty, and the poetry too, to idealize the life of the region—as of the *devadasi* in *Bhavin* (1950).

Vishram Bedekar's (b. 1906) first novel, *Ranangan* (1939) has been regarded as one of the finest achievements in the form. He has not since written another; nor did it, for all its fame—though it was tardy—set a trend. The slender story, set in the weeks darkened by the clouds of the impending World War II,

is about Chakradhar, a young man returning to India by ship, getting involved during the voyage with Harta, a German-Jew girl fleeing her homeland. The love is all the deeper and finer for being without the usual 'poetic' froth. Chakradhar gets off at Bombay, and the ship proceeds to Shanghai. Somewhere on the way, as he learns later, she kills herself. There are no details, no melodrama.

The international situation assumes the role of an inexorable fate, and its victim—Harta, lonely and adrift—symbolizes the tragedy that, in a way, goes beyond an individual and encompasses mankind. Yet, for all this vastness, the expression of the tragedy is muted. The prose is bare, disjointed; it is scrupulously kept from heightening. This makes for an ironic effect.

Another 'first' novel which made a deep impression was S.R. Biwalkar's (1919-1972) *Suneeta* (1947). At its centre is the tragedy of Noakhali, with communal politics brutalizing men. But the author is not contaminated by the communal. It is the characters and their relationships, and their wider significance that engage him; and also the charm of Bengal, which he recreates. *Suneeta*, however, was not Biwalkar's only novel. *Shubha* (1951) records sixteen hours in the life of a girl; and through that short span, using the stream-of-conciousness technique, it gives us glimpses of the tragic destruction of a promising life

Two more first novels of note were *Bari* (1959) by Ranjit Desai (b. 1928), and *Kshipra* (1954) by Sharatchandra Mukti both. The characters is *Bari* belong to the 'Berad, tribe inhabiting a forest area in North Karnataka (and branded as a criminal tribe). Conscientious work went into the writing of the novel—the kind of work which, with his narrative skill, was to bring the author great success later as a historical novelist.

Muktibodh had made his reputation as a poet when he wrote *Kshipra,* the only one of a trilogy of novels to fall in this period. The characters in this truly political novel are involved in the 'Quit India' movement of 1942. A committed political worker himself at one time, Muktibodh brings to the novel a deep understanding of the political scene.

One of the architects of the 'New Short Story', Vyankatesh

Madgulkar (b. 1927) made his stories out of his experiences in the rural area where he had grown up, and of the men he had met there. His *Banagarwadi* (1955) is one of the finest novels about rural life; a novelette, in fact, built round the experiences of a young man who goes to an obscure village as a primary-school teacher. It would be more appropriate to say that the novel grows round his experiences: so natural is the growth, so un-selfconscious the writing; and the writing is in the first person. It is a dreary, depressing village mainly inhabited by poor shepherds, and the young man feels utterly alien; but soon,without his quite realizing how it happened, he gets involved in it. And then he has to leave it on transfer. The novel has a few sharply drawn character sketches, but the most compelling character is the village; and the story is about the interplay between it and the young man—one might say, of the affair between the two. And it is all narrated with remarkable objectivity. The narrator distances himself from the village he is involved in, from his own experiences—from himself, one might say. And that is what makes the otherwise deceptively simple-looking and slender novel one of the great novels in the language.

The inveterate experimenter, Gangadhar Gadgil, tried his hand at novel-writing in *Liliche Phool* (1956). He chose a bold, out-of-the-way theme for it: an intrinsically pure woman slipping into sexual abnormality owing to her circumstances. In keeping with the theme, the action in the novel is garish—with a rape and a suicide.

The novelist who firmly established the regional novel was S. N. Pendse (b. 1913), his 'region' being a coastal strip in North Konkon. He knows its various segments—separated by religion and caste, also by profession and economic condition; and he is also aware of the threads that bind them together. He understands them all, loves them, and is yet detached enough not to get involved with any of them. His first novel, *Elgar* (1949), describes how the distorted echoes of the Noakhali tragedy created communal discord in the village; a difficult theme to handle in those days but handled with poise. *Haddapar* (1950), the second novel, is the portrait of a school-teacher in whom lives the best in the village, and the best in the pro-

fession. It was, however, with his third novel, *Garambicha Bapu* (1951), that Pendse took a great stride-and so did the Marathi novel. The 'wild' Bapu, its hero, defies the village-fortified by its age-old customs-to take his beloved Radha to wife; she shares the centre of the stage with him, with her almost antithetical character: gentle and resolute. But she calls forth the unsuspected genfloness within her, and he, the unsuspected reserves of strength within her. A 'romantic' story that deftly avoids the pitfalls of romance, and a 'regional' (or rural) story that does not dwell on 'the beauty of nature'. The nature—and it is not beautiful all the time—is in the texture of the novel, and not an embroidery to secure local effect.

Pendse's *Hatya* (1954) (shortened from 'Hanumanta', the name of the hero) is the unhappy account of his growth from childhood to the late teens. Life at home, in his village, getting unbearable, he leaves, does mean jobs, and finally runs away to Bombay. His friendship with Bhutya sustains him through difficult days. This and certain other relationships have been delineated skilfully. *Kalandar* (1959) is the sequel to *Hatya*. The sufferings of Hatya—now getting more and more of an introvert—come mainly from the frustratious in his emotional life, and from the conflicts within him. These relate to two young women, and though upright and innocent himself, he is tormented by a sense of guilt. The author's probe into this complexity, and his keen perception of the variety of relationship in the story hold out a promise of psychological depth, which his later novels have fulfilled, placing him among the most distinguished novelists. Pendse's reputation as a 'regional' novelist, happily, did not imprison him within the setting, and he tried different settings, and different areas of experience with the same confidence and skill.

Short Story

The short story is virtually a creation of this period. Hari Narayan Apte who had written 'short stories' in the previous period was hardly aware of their being an independent 'form', V.S. Gurjar (1885-1962), a little later, wrote 'short stories' which became popular; but he had only the vague feeling that

what he was writing was different from the novel. The 'story' was the thing to them; they were unsure about its shortness. The border lines were not marked. It was thought that anyone with some imagination could write it. Writers who had done well in other forms of literature—like S.K. Kolhatkar, N.C. Kelkar and V. M. Joshi—tried their hand at it without quite realizing that it had an identity of its own: that it had its little 'mystery', as it were. It was Divakar Krishna (Divakar Krishna Kelkar: 1902-1973) who was the first to realize it. His first collection of short stories *Samadhi ani Itar Saha Goshti* (1926) established the identity of the form, not merely with the shortness of the stories but with the inner unity they had and with their economy of structure. But the claim of G.G. Limaye (1891-1971), writing about the same time, to being the pioneer in the form is now also pressed. Without entering into the controversy one could say that both Divakar Krishna and Limaye discerned that the form had an individual character, and they set about exploring it in their separate ways. Two of Limaye's short stories need special mention: 'Kismet' and 'Mechano'. They have a serious content. But Limaye was particularly known as a humourist; and one cannot help feeling that the short story was not his special field!

Not so with Divakar Krishna. Though he tackled other forms like the novel and drama, it was in the short story that he was truly involved. He was breaking new ground in Marathi, an initiator. But he was stimulated by the Bengali short story: especially that of Rabindranath Tagore and Prabhat Kumar Mukherjee. His stories bear it out: in their emotional content and poetic expression. The emotional, in his weaker moments, declines into the sentimental. But his concern with what happened within was genuine. His *Mrinaliniche Lavanya* is a deft attempt to probe the mind of the teenaged girl, Mrinalini. Though the term 'psycho-analysis' came to be flaunted widely later, here it was in operation for the first time, Like most writers of the age, Divakar Krishna sets his fiction in the middle-class home; but he has occasionally tried new, bold themes. Dandakaranyatil Pranayini, like a few other stories of his, is a fantasy. The romantic spirit finds authentic expression in him.

N.S. Phadke and V.S. Khandekar, who were to become twin idols of the fiction-reading public, came to the short story almost on the heels of Divakar Krishna. With these idols came their respective creeds: 'Art for Art's Sake' with Phadke, and 'Art for Life's Sake' with Khandekar. But their short stories are not as widely different from each other's as the creeds would suggest. Neither the 'art' in Phadke nor the 'life' in Khandekar is particularly exacting. Each is, in its own way, a make believe. Phadke has been conventionally described as a 'romantic and so can be Khandekar. They both are that in a superficial and watered-down sense—or senses—of the word. Phadke would seem to be more 'realistic'—at least closer to the life he presents: the life of the well-to-do middle class, whose cares, if any, are trivial. Khandekar's social canvas is broader. It includes the poor and the oppressed although they often seem to be there for the purpose of pity and moralizing. There is a marked difference in their styles. Phadke's is trim and lucid; Khandekar's is ornate, and gushing. Phadke spelt out his simplistic conception of the art of the short story (as of the novel or the essay) into 'technique', and prescribed its do's and dont's with assurance. His own short stories seemed to demonstrate the technique. So he had a host of imitators. Khandekar had his too, but not as many. Khandekar did not lay down a technique; and his stories were not as uncomplicated as Phadke's. At his best, he had a poetic vein. The allegorical stories ("Roopak Katha") he wrote later—inspired by Kahlil Gibran—remind us of it.

The reaction against the Phadke canon in the short story was not long in coming. It was led by Y.G. Joshi, whose satirical story, "Gyanba Tukaram Ani Technique" exposes the hollowness of the 'technique' Phadke had made popular. The misguided young writer in it comes to realize that a short story with its emotion finding spontaneous expression, however foot-loose, is better than one that is fettered. This story, like some of Joshi's other work, was a harbinger, however faint, of the 'new' short story. But Josni, who sought to rescue writers from the Phadke-made trap, fell into a self-made one. He wrote sentimental stories about the relationships in old-fashioned families—and soon wrote himself out. Such mushy content lured him in a

direction that was almost antithetical to the one leading to the new short story'.

By the late nineteen-twenties the short story had started prospering, attracting more and more readers—and more and more writers. The monthly *Yeshwant* carried only short stories, winning prestige as well as popularity. For some other important monthlies like *Ratnakar* and *Kirloskar* short stories were a major fare. Several weeklies and even dailies started accepting them, which indicated that it had become a respectable form. Of the younger writers who kindled some hope, most flickered out after a few stories. But some fulfilled the hope. V.V. Bokil started off with a bang. His stories of diffident young lovers—and of young people, in general—running into trouble with stuffy, pettyminded elders, found enthusiastic response. Their humour was a little boisterous, but unaffected; and the occasional, but subdued, pathos was moving. They touched a chord in the younger generation, both men and women, feeling impatient with the constraints of domestic life. D.R. Kavthekar's stories too are of the middle class, but he is not, like Bokil, sceptical of its ways. He is, rather like Y.G. Joshi, an admirer of its conventional virtues, and outdoes Joshi in being maudlin about them. Some writers sought an escape from this obsession with the middle class—for their readers too! R.V. Dighe went in for the 'romantic' in action and setting: for the latter the rural supplied his need in several stories. It was also the background to most of the stories of G.L. Thokal (1909-1948): but more as a picturesque background to over-coloured action and characters (including the lovers). Thus was the rural mostly a 'background' and an 'escape'; and being that, it was vague and generalised. It could be 'anywhere'—and therefore 'nowhere'!

V.E. Sukhthankar's (1903-1977) *Sahyadrichya Payathyashi* (1931) particularized the 'rural' in his stories; he gave it its physical identity, as it were. They are stories of Goa: essentially of that region which, owing to long isolation from Maharashtra, had a way of life that was different in several respects. The famed natural beauty of Goa came in incidentally. Sukhthankar wrote no more stories. Laxmanrao Sardesai (b. 1904), also a Goan, was fairly prolific, but less faithful to the truth

of Goa's life than Sukhthankar. His love stories—bolder than the ones written till then—found a convenient setting in Goa, with some features of its life. The very isolation of Goa had invested it with a romantic glamour, for the non-Goan. And Sardesai used it. So did some non-Goan writers of fiction later. One of the Goan writers who, faithful to his land, would not let his stories be seduced by such tawdry 'romance' is Mahadevshastri Joshi (b. 1906). Mostly about the tradition-bound life in the villages, the stories are uncomplicated, and they often have a moral slant, however indirect it may be. Several of them stand out with their straight characterisation and their flowing narration.

The Konkan region is close to Goa—but only geographically. Centuries of political alienation apart (on account of Goa's being a Portuguese colony), Goa has had a more generous share of nature's plenty and Konkan of poverty. With the poverty come miseries and meannesses. Konkan was also on the whole not quite fortunate—in the period before 1947—in drawing writers to depict it—except Mama Warerkar and V.L. Barve, to some extent.

B. Raghunath (B.R. Kulkarni: 1913-1953) was from the Marathwada region, then a part of the Hyderabad State. His stories recreate the unhappy life of the region under the feudal yoke; with its religious and other oppression, its decadence, and its people with their spirit broken. And yet B. Raghunath has had little recognition.

In the mid-thirties came up four women writers who contributed significantly to the growth of the short story. Women had been at the centre, or very near it, of most fiction. But that was as man saw her. These four women—Kamlabai Tilak, Vibhavari Shirurkar, Krishnabai and Kusumavati Deshpande—knew what women thought and felt about their problems. These problems were of different kinds, and these writers wrote each in her own way. The boldest of them, Vibhavari Shirurkar (pen-name of Malatibai Bedekar) wrote of the educated woman thwarted in her personal life by outdated social customs. Krishnabai (pen name of Muktabai Deekshit: 1901-1977) deals mainly with the problem of marriage in the changing social situation. Kamlabai Tilak's themes are more varied, but woman's frustrations is the

thread that links them. The short story in Kusumawati Deshpande's (1904-1961) hands becomes flexible: it incorporates the personal essay and the character sketch and a gentle lyrical strain runs through it all. And she has not limited herself, like the others, to middle-class women. With their rejection of some of well-entrenched conventions about the nature and the problems of women, their attempt to delve into Woman's mind, bringing a woman's sensibility to bear on it, and with their liberation of the form, these women writers brought the short story further maturity and took it closer to the freedom it was to achieve under the banner of the New Short Story.

The humorous short story made its appearance in the late twenties, and it has continued to engage writers—among them some of the best. Earlier, humour had been mostly used in essay-like writing that had a satirical purpose. And usually the characters were its vehicles. Their oddities so exaggerated that they almost became caricatures. The story element was little more than a prop to them.

The finest writer of humorous short stories in this period was Chintaman Vinayak Joshi (1892-1963). His main characters have, of course, a measure of exaggeration, but they are no caricatures. And the other characters are realistic, and so are most of the situations. All these merge smoothly into a convincing picture of a typical lower middle-class Brahmin family in a city like Pune of the twenties and the thirties. There are none of the usual devices of language for a humorous effect: like pun, antithesis, or even irony. To have fashioned humorous writing of quality out of such lean material, and with such restraint, shows that he had a deep sense of the comic. The noisy shallows were not for him. They were for those who would splash about in them to entertain the simple-minded.

Joshi's humour is confined to his stories. Not so with the other famous humourists of the period, like P.K. Atre and P.L. Deshpande (b. 1919) whose humour sought other outlets besides story-writing. Shamrao Ok (1907-1982), however, may be considered here. Some of his finest stories are adaptations from the English, but they are so immaculately done that one would not suspect they were not original. Most of his original stories are based, it would seem, on actual incidents and persons; but

the writing does not betray it—except to those in the know. Ok has an uncanny sense of the incongruous, a keen eye for the eccentric, and a nimbleness in the use of language that enables him to give the commonest words a humorous twist. No exaggerations for him, or puns and similar tricks of the trade. Dr. A.V. Warty and Dr. V.M.D. Patwardhan have written in several forms; but it is their humorous stories that have brought them the most popularity.

True humour is by its very nature, critical and non-conformist. It kept the short story from toeing the set line: set by Phadke or Khandekar or any one else. This was one of the freedoms that helped create the atmosphere, however indirectly, for the great change that was to come over the form.

Besides the ones mentioned above, there were other precursors of the New Short Story in their different ways. Waman Chorghade's (b. 1914) stories, many of them character sketches, are more concerned with what happens within the individuals than with the physical action they are involved in. He relates them to their social set-up—which is quite often rural. And with his reflective, somewhat didatic, element there is a poetic element too. The social context is even more pronounced in the stories of S.M. Mate (1886-1957) and N.G. Goray (b. 1907), who write of men and women from the less fortunate social orders. Mate's two collections, *Upekshitanche Antarang* (1941) and *Manuskicha Gahivar* (1949), record experiences from areas of life outside the orbit of most writers; and the narration is refreshingly different from that in the accepted mode of the short story. Anant Kanekar, who had launched out in a new direction in poetry, and then in the essay, did it in the short story too. His stories seek to be realistic, shun the usual frills of emotion and language, expose well-settled beliefs and attitudes—and all this generally from a socialist angle. Mama Warerkar made his reputation in the drama and the novel; but his short stories too are noteworthy, for their championship of the socially and economically backward, as also for their use of living speech. R.B. Joshi (b. 1903) and Prabhakar Padhye (1909-1984), who later made their mark in other kinds of writing, wrote short stories with a vague consciousness of the need to break away from the current fashions in the form.

All these writers, discontented in their several ways with the short story of the day—in its content and expression, and also its objective—tried to break, or at least loosen, the chains it had imposed. Such discontent and urge for freedom culminated in the creation of the New Short Story by the mid-forties.

The New Short Story (*Navakatha*) and the New Poetry (*Navakavya*) are always linked together—and that for good reasons. Their 'newness'—their modernity—was similar in several ways; and having emerged about the same time they were in the vanguard of the movement which was to revitalize literature within a few years. The link was emphasized by the fact that Gangadhar Gadgil, the unchallenged leader of the *Navakatha* fought the battle for the *Navakavya*—particularly for the poetry of B.S. Mardhekar, its virtually unchallenged leader. He did it with as much zest as the one for the *Navakatha*: on his own front that is. And Mardhekar too wrote a highly perceptive appreciation of Gadgil's stories. This was in the early years of resistance to the matching movements and the contention provoked by them.

Critical convention associates three writers with Gadgil in the founding of the *Navakatha*: P.B. Bhave, Arvind Gokhale and Vyankatesh Madgulkar. But the four pursued their independent tracks. If they had not, it would have been incongruous with the spirit of a movement that sought to liberate writing from the kind of conformity that had devitalized it.

Gadgil's (b. 1923) first short stories were pleasant surprise for the reader wearied with the set fashions in the form, and a severe jolt for the reader still enamoured of them. The men and women they were about were of the common sort, and so were their experiences which formed the stuff of the stories. But the author probed the outer crust of commonness for what lay beneath it. And he came out with oddities and complexities which belied the smooth and rational-looking formulae about human behaviour and relationships with which most fiction had lulled the readers. The oddities were sometimes comic, sometimes unsavoury, and sometimes even near-tragic. More significant than the particular instances of these, was the awareness they created of the enigmatic, unfathomable region of the sub-conscious. The absurd always seemed to be round the cor-

ner. What was held dear suddenly showed an undesirable side. From it came a sense of disillusionment, but not of cynicism. Gadgil has a fine sensibility; and, not being warped, it can respond to the gentle and the beautiful, however unpromising its exterior. Several of his stories have an implied social comment, but the comment widens out beyond the society into the universally human. Gadgil's style, deceptively simple-looking, is capable of measuring up to the complexity of his content. Off-beat imagery is one of its striking features, but it is used temperately.

Of the other three founders of the *Navakatha,* only Bhave (1910-1980) took up cudgels on behalf of it; but he had second thoughts after some years and disowned his allegiance to it. His stories have a strong personal element in them, and his rhetoric, which had earlier brought him fame as a journalist, makes the personal element almost aggressive. So do his strong-flavoured views and prejudices. And it is all of a piece with his expansive style. But Bhave has much more: a searching eye for character: its flitting shades, its contradictions; and a boisterous intensity which mocks, as it were, at the prim and spruce in vogue in short-story writing in those days.

Arvind Gokhale (b. 1919) had been writing short stories for some time before he glided into the new mode, and ever since he has been unobstrusively new. In fact, his craft has derived much from the better features of the Phadke manner. Gokhale's growth as a writer of short-stories has been continuous. Refusing to be lured by any other literary form, when versatility was the badge of almost every writer of fiction, he has been tapping the latent capabilities of the short story, eclectically going for guidance, as it were, to the best work in it from all over the world. There is a lot of variety in the human material he uses. He has keen interest in the behaviour of men and women. He disentangles knots in character with a light hand—with a casual-sounding turn of description or dialogue—and without making the faintest fetish of psycho-analysis.

The most un-selfconscious of these architects of the New Short Story is Vyankatesh Madgulkar. 'Form', 'Craft', 'Style' seem to be idle words as applied to his story-writing. It is story-telling, rather. In fact, he prefers to call his short-story not *laghu-*

katha (the current name, a translation of the English term) but *goshta,* the age-old word meaning a 'tale', meant to be told on a relaxed evening to a bunch of villagers. Not the naive creatures of 'rural' fiction, but men with a native shrewdness. Most of Madgulkar's characters are villagers. He grew up in a village, and even after he left it to make a living, his roots are there, and they have gone very deep. They have provided not just the characters for his stories, but the nourishment for his writing. Let alone cities, even towns seem out of place in his stories. Most of his stories are character sketches: of the men he had known; and not just men, but non-human creatures too—like birds and animals. His short stories seem like snatches of autobiography. The narration is artless—and it is exquisite art.

But the convention limiting the credit for initiating the *Navakatha* to these four writers—like most such conventions in literary history—must not be taken too closely. There were a few other writers who have a fair claim to some share in the credit. The mature Shantaram (K.J. Purohit: b. 1923) has the right balance of restraint and freedom in his narration. Sensitive to nature's beauties, he not only brings them to the reader in living detail but, at his best, weaves them into the moods of his characters, and situations. The creative process and the child's mind are two more themes that engage him. Premature death arrested the development of Shashikant Punarvasu (M.S. Bhadbhade: 1913-1955) as a writer of short stories. His grasp of the changing tone of middle-class life, his feeling for character and his instinct for form, and the quiet intensity behind his writing, had held out a rich promise. D.B. Mokashi (1914-1981), perhaps the earliest of this group to start writing short stories, shows a truly impressive growth. Several of the short stories of his maturity have a place among the best in the language. In them he recreates complexities of experience in a casual-seeming manner. The strange, freakish, in action and character appealed to him more and more as he matured. His story takes it in its stride, and does not flaunt its novelty.

P.S. Rege brings to his short stories (which he wrote under the pen-name 'Roopkatthaka') some of the distinctive features of his poetry: delicate etching of the woman in love; isolation from the world around; and evocative and economic use of

language. In several of the stories he invests the woman with a little mystery by giving her a 'different' background—and even a different-sounding name. Another poet to write short stories in consonance with his poetry is Sadanand Rege. His themes and characters are unusual; he is whimsical, he is ironic; and, like the other Rege, he is thrifty in the use of words—but, unlike him, he is not too fastidious about the individual word.

With the new directions opened up by writers like these—after 1947 and hinted at earlier by the work of some others, as mentioned above—the short story attracted more talent than it had ever done before. It flourished in both quantity and quality, and, as in poetry again, it showed remarkable variety. The break with the pre-1947 short story was sharp, but not so sharp as to blot it out. What was valuable in it was not only preserved, but it was reinforced with compatible elements from the 'new' short story —as in several writers, like Achyut Barve, S.J. Joshi and Vasundhara Patwardhan. Barve absorbed the essentials of the Phadke mode while rejecting its mechanical devices, Joshi's stories were some of the earliest to depict the reality of urban middle-class life in an unsentimental way. The 'old' and the 'new' co-exist in such writers cordially, making the labels a mere convenience.

Another such writer is 'Manus' (A.S. Agnihotri: 1913-1976). His weekly short story in the *Mouj* used to be keenly awaited for the range of his characters and for his unassuming style of narration.

The work of the new generation of women story-writers reflected the change in the times. Apart from the newness in form and expression that were being tried out. their themes and the way they treated them were essentially different. Till now, the women writers' innovative ability in fiction was expected to modestly operate within the four walls—that is, to treat domestic problems, and embroider their writing with becoming femininity in emotion and expression. Expected as much by the women readers as the men. Hence the furore caused by the four women writers of the mid-thirties (mentioned above) when they wrote boldly about the inner problems of educated women. Their work continues in some of the women writing in this period, and these go further inward, and do not have to look very bold—and cer-

tainly not bashful—as the intervening fifteen or twenty years have brought about a great change in the outlook of women, as well as of men. And yet the change is not abrupt; there are links with the old; and there is, at one level, a sense of continuity. Vasundhara Patwardhan (b. 1917), recognised as a leading short-story writer, has domesticity for her content. It is hardly ruffled by the winds of change—nor is her style of narration. But she shows a firm grip on the little problems of women. The fifties, however, brought several women writing short stories of the 'new' kind like, to mention a few names, Sarita Padki, Kamal Desai, Tara Vanarase and Vijaya Rajadhyaksha. They have given the woman writer her special identity, their woman character her distinct ego, and they have a significant share in the development of the form.

Aspiring short-story writers sought to place their work with the monthly *Satyakatha,* not just because of its prestige, but also because it fostered them diligently, nursing each one's individuality. Dynaneshwar Nadkarni, Vidyadhar Pundalik, Jayawant Dalvi, Hamid Dalwai, Mangesh Padki, Vijay Tendulkar, Sharatchandra Chirmule, and S.D. Panwalkar were some of the story-writers the magazine promoted in the fifties. Their later work justified the promotion. Most of all of G.A. Kulkarni (b. 1923), who achieved such eminence that he has been rightly regarded as the most distinguished writer in the form in the post-1960 era, and one of the topmost in its history.

The 'rural' story too underwent a renewal after 1947. Broadly, it has ceased to romanticise the setting and the life. Instead, more often than not, it presents drabness and misery—and the misery serves no moral purpose. The simple, god-fearing villager has made room for the crafty, roguish one; and the laughs the latter type raises invariably has made him popular with the readers—and therefore with the writers. D.M. Mirasdar's gossipy siories thrive on such characters, and on idiosyncratic ones. So do Shankar Patil's (b. 1926), but Patil has greater variety. He can see beyond simplifications—including simplified incongruities. He can see the conflict within characters, their relation to the environment, as also the pathos in their life. His story has stomach for the raw and the fearsome too, but it uses them occasionally, and that with restraint. Ranjit Desai of this

period seems to be feeling his way to the success he earned later. He has intimate knowledge of rural life, but there is the incorrigible romantic strain about him. The strain goes better with his historical fiction—both short and long. G.D. Madgulkar, known mainly as a poet, has written some short stories which like those of his brother, Vyankatesh, depict the life of their region ('the Maandesh') convincingly.

In the previous period, the 'rural' generally tended to be a little vague and too generalised. This, of course, suited such writers as would prettify it with a romantic make-up. But with such make-up going out of fashion, and with the growing inclination to have a closer look at reality, the 'rural' is pegged down to a place, or a region. It gets an identity. The short-story writers mentioned in the previous paragraph have, broadly, the southern part of the 'Desh' (that is, the non-coastal part of Western Maharashtra) as their region. There are the other regions—with their short-story writers. For instance, south Konkan (the coastal strip) has Madhu Mangesh Karnik (b. 1933). Its many moods have been captured by Karnik: as coloured by its humour and warmth and natural beauty—as also by its poverty. Jayawant Dalvi (b. 1925) has his roots in the same region, and they impart their special relish to his writings, though most of them have Bombay for their setting. But he has given us a bunch of typical Konkani 'characters', and they are both types and individuals. Uddhav Shelke's (b. 1930) short stories, and novels too, bring to us the sufferings of the oppressed, poverty-ridden classes in the Vidarbha region, the persons who suffer coming through as helpless victims of a socio-economic pattern. Some of the other region too bid fair to have competent delineators in the short story.

'Dalit literature' as a movement created its impact after 1960. Its forerunners in the short story, Annabhau Sathe (1920-1969) and Shankarrao Kharat (b. 1921), stand apart from the other writers in this period with the expression they have given to the almost sub-human life inflicted on the 'dalits'. Segregating the 'dalits' from the rural poor in fiction—as they are, in fact, in life—has itself been a service in the cause of realism. Sathe and Kharat are however, different from each other in their tone and method. Sathe is aggressive, his voice is high-pitched; and

his plots are often packed with violent action. Kharat is more restrained; and his voice, for being in a lower key, is no less effective. He is aware of the socio-economic forces behind the injustice and the oppression. Some two decades earlier, S.M. Mate had written stories and sketches of such outcastes, with a depth of feeling that went far beyond the humanitarian sympathy then in fashion; and he too could be regarded as a forerunner of 'Dalit' literature.

Such widening of the range of experience, now available to literature has been a liberating influence in some obvious ways. Certain themes, and areas of experience, are no more out of bounds for writers. Barriers are breaking down, one of them being of what is called 'standard' language. Living speech using 'regional' or dialect expressions, or even slang, is gradually taking its legitimate place—and, in the process, revitalizing the language, besides enlarging its vocabulary.

Drama

'The golden age of Marathi drama'—as the previous period is often described—began to lose its glitter soon after this period began. Much of the glitter had come from the commercial prosperity of the theatre; and some from the work of its leading playwrights (with a certain inter-relation between the two). Once the decline started, it was realized by the discerning that much of what had glittered was less, much less, than gold. A process of reappraisal started—among the serious-minded, of course. But it failed to arrest the decline. The efforts to do it were few, if earnest, and they were not co-ordinated. And by the mid-thirties the theatre was in a tumble-down condition. And it was more than twenty years before its renovation began.

The economic depression that set in after World War I, and continued, getting worse through the two decades that followed, was an important cause of the decline of the theatre. Drama 'companies', mostly based in Bombay and Pune, used to converge on the Vidarbha region during the 'cotton season' which replenished the coffers of the farmer to overflowing; and he would play a liberal patron to the stage—expecting little more than good music and rhetoric and lofty sentiments. The affluence of

this class started subsiding. So did urban patronage, with the growing unemployment. Historical and mythological plays which had been, on the whole, a better source of revenue than the so-called 'social' ones, were pampered with lavish decor and fancy costumes. So was, in a sense, the audience—at least the undiscerning part of it. The 'companies' (with their actors) were 'professional', but were not quite professionally managed. They maintained a large establishment, and lumbered along from place to place. All this in the pinchy late twenties and thirties made the economics of the theatre go altogether awry.

The arrival of 'talkies' in the thirties posed a much more serious threat to the theatre. The film in those days 'talked' (and talked) like the play. This made the switch from the play to the film, as entertainment, altogether smooth; and the film, with its exciting visual advantages, pushed the theatre out-of-deteress and made it poor relation.

How was the theatre to be retrieved? Most of the theatre men —playwrights, actors, and all—were too bemused with its once-upon-a-time glory to make a determined, purposeful effort. The veteran dramatists of the earlier period, like K.P. Khadilkar and S.K. Kolhatkar, were past their best; and their new plays had hardly any of their old qualities, but had all their old defects. Of the younger dramatists few felt any urge to break through. Most of the old actors were too self-complacent to have any doubts. And, except for a minority, the playgoers were happy with the fare served—with the relish nostalgia added to it. The minority was drawn from those who had received higher education—of whom, however, they formed a small percentage.

Three plays of **B.V.** (Mama) Warerkar had been staged in the previous period; but he belongs to this period (which brought almost fifty plays from him); and not just by the simple arithmetic of it. In fact, Warerkar was born before his time; and this applies to at least the first half of this period. We must hasten to add that these auguries of the future in him are restricted to some aspects: drama as a vehicle for contemporary problems; awareness of the injustice in a variety of areas; realism in the production of plays; and the use of living speech. His first play, *Kunjavihari* (1908), was mythological, in the conventional manner. Towards the end, he wrote two in which the myth was invested

with a modern meaning. He wrote only one 'historical' play. The rest of his plays are on contemporary themes—not just 'social', as that mostly meaningless and misused term went. For a dramatist who lived by his pen not to pander to the public taste for the historical and the mythological called for self-denying commitment to a principle, and Warerkar had it in a good measure. The second play which he wrote, *Hach Mulacha Bap* (1916) was prompted by the account of Snehlata, a Bengali girl, burning herself for her parents could not find the dowry for her marriage. Some of the other contemporary themes were: the liberal Hinduism propounded by Swami Vivekanand; Gandhiji's non-cooperation movement; the unrest in Bombay's textile labour; the threat of Japanese aggression in the early forties; the Noakhali tragedy. That some of these themes were a little too topical for them to be fully assimilated before transmuting them into material for drama has some truth in it. It is also true that for lack of rigour in structure and characterization, the potential of the themes is dissipated. But that such themes should have been attempted at all—particularly in those days—was a service to drama; a new awareness and a new direction were promoted. And some of Warerkar's other themes had nothing topical about them; like the subjection of women, and a Konkan village exposed to oppression and superstitions. One of his last plays *Bhoomikanya Seeta* (1955), exposes the so-called 'Ramarajya' which wronged woman (Urmila) and the low-born (Shambuka). Another service Warerkar rendered to the theatre was drastically reducing the number of songs in the plays and cutting out soliloquies.

Using drama for satire was done with great success—to judge by the audience response—by M.N. Joshi (1885-1948) in his *Municipality* (1925). The play presents a caricature of local self-Government, and in spite of the farcical treatment and the exaggerations, the message comes through. Joshi came to satire having seen through the unreality of mythological and similar plays—types which he had himself attempted. *Khadashtak* (1927) a farcial play by S.P. Joshi (1880-1949) won immerse popularity, but it had no direct satiric intent. Some of his other plays had it. The popularity of Veer Vamanrao Joshi's (1881-1956) three plays—with plots from an imaginary past—came from the

political message read into the plays, and also for a certain kind of audience—from their loud rhetoric. The brief popularity of V.D. Savarkar's *Sanyasta Khadga* came from his political glamour and the music in the play.

Impatience with the decadent conditions in most of the theatre and with its irrelevance to the social reality, brought some young men together in the early thirties to form 'Natyamanvantar', an organisation that would strive to produce new kind of plays, and produce them in a different way. The group had the blessings and guidance of two veteran actors, Keshavrao Date and T.S. Karkhanis, which, in a way, ensured continuity with the best in the theatre tradition. It was a short-lived venture though. Three plays were produced, all of them within five months in 1933, and all of them by S.V. Vartak (1885-1950). The first of these, *Andhalyanchi Shala* had a fairly good response in two or three cities. It is based on a play by the Norwegian dramatist, Bjornstjerne Bjornson. *Lapandav*, the second play, is a farcical comedy. *Taxasheela*, the third, was adapted from a play by Henrik Ibsen. These two plays flopped; and this had nothing to do with any 'new' element in them. They were mediocre plays. *Andhalyanchi Shala* was saved from going the way of the other two, not only because it was the best written of the three, but also because of Keshavrao Date's masterly adaptation of his histrionic powers to a role of a 'new' kind, and to Jyotsna Bhole's rendering of two lyrics—both so utterly differet from the 'songs' then popular: with the semi-classical elaborations in their rendering smothering what meaning they had. That educated women appeared on the professional stage for the first time in it imparted a little glamour to the play. But all this could not sustain the play for long. The failure of the 'Natyamanvantar', the first experiment of the kind, was sad. But it kindled in many lovers of drama the hope that it could be liberated from much that had become stale and outdated.

For such liberation Ibsen was thought to be the model. The terms 'social realism' and 'the problem play' summed up Ibsen for these enthusiasts. That Ibsen had a great deal more to him than these terms was not realised: the poetic element, for example, or the ironic-tragic, and the movement from the outer social reality to within the individual. Ibsen was simplified into a formula: a

well-made play treating a 'social' (or domestic) problem to provide a smooth solution. Well-meaning dramatists tried out the formula, and it satisfied those who had had enough of the obvious unrealities of historical and mythological plays. Thus was Ibsen inadequately understood, as Shakespeare had been in the early years of the century.

P.K. Atre, who came to the theatre with a great reputation as a humourist behind him, propped it up through its lean years with a series of plays, and these were of different kinds though their themes were 'social' in the loose and popular sense of the term. His first play, *Sashtang Namaskar* (1933) was an instant success, and it has continued to delight with its boisterous humour—issuing mainly from a bunch of caricatures with the old Rao Bahadur at its centre, his particular crochet being the 'surya namaskara', a physical exercise. Atre's prose has the suppleness for expressing various shades of humour. He says he wrote it only to entertain, and entertain it does. This is also true of several other plays of his, though some of them occasionally stoop to entertain. *Gharabaher* (1934) and *Udyancha Sansar* (1936) have an ostensible social purpose, but little realism. Woman's place in the home is the theme of both the plays, and their heronies half-heartedly take after Ibsen's Nora for a while, and they fail to convince. From his *guru,* Ram Ganesh Gadkari, Atre had imbibed melodrama, and a stagey eloquence—and also exaggerations for the sake of humour, and these sometimes in incongruous places. A few more of Atre's plays, are on themes bearing on some aspect of contemporary life, but they seem to play with the themes. Yet, even in the weaker plays, the essential Atre comes through—with his humour, his eye for comic character, and his dialogues.

M.G. Rangnekar (b. 1907), who came to the stage eight years after Atre, having made a reputation in the lighter kind of journalism, took over from him as the main prop of the stage through the difficult forties and uncertain fifties. By the end of the thirties, Atre had virtually gone over to the cinema, and soon afterwards journalism took up more and more of his energies. Rangnekar's second play, *Kulavadhu* (1942), brought him fame, and his troupe, the 'Natyaniketan', financial stability. His first play, *Ashirwad* had held out the promise. Rangnekar

was thoroughly professional and set out to write and produce plays that would rival the cinema as entertainment by, among other things, using one or two of its features. His target-audience was, unlike that of the films, the urban middle class. *Kulavadhu* clicked very well with the audience with its crisp dialogue spiced with a humour that scrupulously avoided exaggeration and verbal subtlety, its plausible realism in the action and characters, and its nimble movement : 'streamlining' in one word. That is the 'Rangnekar formula'. The 'realism' is in the 'theme' too; the 'problem' taken up has to be such as to tickle that kind of an audience into feeling that it could be their own, that it is not too complicated or its solution too radical. There was considerable variety though, in the themes of Rangnekar's plays.

The 'problem' in *Kulavadhu* is apparently Ibsenian. It is, in fact, *Doll's House,* simplified and softened. The heroine leaves home and husband for his male ego was hurt when she became a film actress. The 'new' woman in her is roused suddenly, she bangs the door shut after her—and goes to live with her parents-in-law who had spent some time in her home, and were won by her home-lovingness! The plot and some of the characters will not bear a close look. But most of the plays and films that had been doing well will not bear even a cursory look. And it was good, clean entertainment.

Anant Kanekar was among the founders of the 'Natya-manvantar'. What he wrote for theatre however was, except for a few one-act plays, adaptations from English. One of these, *Gharkul,* was yet another adaptation of Ibsen's *Doll's House,* and a faithful one. He could tune himself to Ibsen better than most of the others who swore by him, and he did not have to water down the play to make it palatable to the professional theatre, for the theatre—or what there was of it—had no use for straight Ibsen. The other dramatists Kanekar adapted from were Oliver Goldsmith, W.O. Somin. James Barrie, and John Galsworthy.

In drama, there was considerable adaptation activity at this time. Those who had a love of drama in their bones, and also had enough English, avidly read Western dramatists, including Russian ones; and some of them wrote about these; and some rendered them into Marathi, for the sheer pleasure of it—knowing that these plays had hardly a chance of getting on the

boards. Most of these were one-act plays for they were less taxing (as a labour of love), and they had a better chance of not only being published (in some periodical), but also of being produced, as an item in a miscellaneous 'variety' programme, or even in a bunch. One of Rangnekar's professional productions was a bunch of three one-act plays of his. (Much later P. L. Deshpande did it too, although the theatre situation had changed by then.) The 'Little Theatre' (or Experimental Theatre) movement in England had brought forth innumerable one-act plays. And although we had no movement of the kind, it stimulated great interest, and an awareness of new trends. And all this prepared the ground for the regeneration of the theatre after some years. In the forties Shamrao Ok did some excellent adaptations of one-act plays. Madhav Manohar (b. 1911) adapted full-length plays, as well as one-act plays. Vijay Tendulkar, who was to achieve eminence in the theatre later, started with some one-act plays.

V.V. Shirwadkar (the poet Kusumagraja) did three adaptetions from Western drama during his apprentice years as a dramatist: Oscar Wilde's *Ideal Husband,* Maeterlinck's *Mona Vanna,* and Shakespeare's *Macbeth.* They are largely faithful as adaptations, but his florid diction is quite incongruous with that of the original plays. Of his two other plays of the early years *Dusra Peshwa* is historical, and *Kaunteya* is mythological. Bajirao the First, the hero of the former, invites a 'romantic' style, and the author falls for it. The latter is on Karna, of the *Mahabharata.* His character has attracted several writers during the last few decades, with its inner conflict and with the unmerited tragic suffering he had to undergo. Shirwadkar brings out the conflict and the tragedy; only, once again, the excessive eloquence diverts attention from them a little.

P.L. Deshpande's *Tuze Ahe Tuzpashi* (1957) has made theatre history with its tremendous popularity; and the popularity covers all levels of audience. The play is a satire against the joyless, nuritanical attitude to life that is mistaken for idealism—particularly, Gandhian idealism. The attitude is represented by the 'Acharya' in the play, and he is the main butt of the satire. He is confronted by old 'Kakaji', ever-youthful, amoral and unblushingly receptive to every beauty and pleasure life has to offer: a

hedonist of true refinement, and with genuine warmth for everyone. In the end, the Acharya, without being converted to Kaka-ji's way, realizes the fatuity and the self-deception in his own way. Even those who remain unconvinced by the rather sudden change in him, are so overwhelmed by the sheer riches of humour in the play that they suspend judgment. Deshpande's maiden venture as a dramatist *Tuka Mhane Aata* (1948), a play on Saint Tukaram, failed to get off the ground; as also his *Bhagya-wan* (1953), which is adapted from a Somerset Maugham's play, But his other adaptation of the early years *Amaldar* (1952) (from Gogol's *Inspector General*) has been immensely popular. That it is an adaptation is not even dimly suspected by most people, so perfectly does the Indian garb sit on it. No other dramatist has set the stage alight with so much healthy laughter—and the laughter carries within it, though not too obviously, an earnest concern for social good.

There were several dramatists who wrote little, but that little was of good quality. One of them was Vyankatesh Vakil (1904-1976), one of his two plays being an adaptation. A.V. Warty's only play *Ranicha Baag* has done well on the stage. Of S.G. Sathe's (b. 1912) three plays, *Sasa Ani Kasav* works on the age-old triangle of two young men wanting the same girl in a refreshingly realistic manner. Nana Jog (1899-1958) wrote two plays in which the relationships between the individual and the society are treated from a communist viewpoint. His third play *Bharati* is about a young woman virtually bought by a rich, old man in the name of marriage, and her sufferings: an old theme again, but treated with a new depth, the focus being on her mental breakdown, as a result of which she loses her speech. Jog's rendering of *Hamlet,* in an abridged form, and in free verse, held out a promise which was undone by his premature death.

The fifties had a few, women dramatists whose work was slight, in quantity. Muktabai Deekshit wrote three plays of which *Jugar* (1950) was the most successful. It is Ibsenian in technique, and its 'problem' is the iniquitous position of woman in marriage. Malatibai Bedekar's only play *Paradh*—which has no male character—also has woman's disabilities for its theme. Tara Vanarase's *Kaksha* was another play which impressed. A

strong reaction organised the emergence of the 'new' woman, and the rights she claimed, particularly in the context of marriage, is to be had in the two plays of the ultra-conservative P.B. Bhave (one of the makers of the 'new' short story): *Vishakanya* (1944) and *Swamini* (1956). The ideal woman, to Bhave, is one who does not question the existing moral code, and submits herself to her lord and master. The glitter of Bhave's style blinds the simpler reader and playgoer to the defects in the plays: in plot and characterisation. Thought-wise, the plays came thirty or forty years too late to have any impact. Woman has been getting more and more significance in plays—not in the silly romantic sense, nor in her common version as a prey to social injustice, but one who, by nature, is more complex than man, and is sometimes very vulnerable when she is apparently very strong. The early work of Vijay Tendulkar (b. 1928) held evident promise of some features which were to secure him a high place among dramatists: his restless search for new themes and techniques, his rejection of rational and emotional simplifications in his bold probing into the tangle of human relationships, and his disturbing consciousness of the tragic that is constantly lurking in the human condition. *Shrimant* (1955) registers at one level, the old conflict between the dehumanized rich and the deeply human poor; but it has a deeper level in its study of the interplay among the charcters. *Manus Navache Bet* (1956) projects the loneliness of man, a captive of circumstances; but the gloom inherent in the theme is lightened by glimpses of tenderness and warmth, and by its teasing humour. The first play of Tendulkar's to be staged was *Grihastha* (1953), but it underwent considerable revision before it appeared in print some years later, under the title *Kavlyanchi Shala*.

Yet another distinguished dramatist of the post-1960 period to show his latent powers in the late fifties was Vasant Kanetkar. His *Vedyache Ghar Unhat* (1957) has an unusual theme: the shadow of the past darkening a person's life, and a sense of guilt obsessing him. The psychological complexity in the theme is well handled. *Devanche Manorajya* (1958) has a cloak of fantasy, behind which it presents certain oddities of the human mind.

The theatre was debilitated by the thirties, and somehow hobb-

led along for some twenty or thirty years before it was rejuvenated. Yet, curiously enough, the general quality of the plays written during these drooping years was better than those of the earlier 'golden' years. Since there was only a slender chance of a new play being professionally produced, it was mainly meant for the serious reader; and the writer was not forced to make the kind of concessions to 'popular taste' even some of the better writers had to do in the earlier period. Moreover, a new generation of writers aware of the new trends in drama had come up. Hence the paradox of better plays being written with no theatre to speak of for their production.

Another interesting fact: When we speak of the near-breakdown of the theatre we mean by it the theatre for the middle and upper classes! In the 'Parel area' in Bombay—a workers' locality—plays continued to be performed throughout those lean years and also at festivals in the Konkan villages, from which most of these workers come. This kind of an audience had been fed on historical and mythological plays—plays with simplistic plots and a lot of ranting—and had, for a change, 'social' plays, no more realistic than the other ones. Literary quality and all that apart, that this theatre catering to the working class should have gone on unhampered by the depression (which hit the class the hardest!) and by the threat of films, is truly noteworthy.

The celebration of the centenary of the Marathi theatre in 1943, and the drama festivals organized in the following few years by an enterprising institution like the Mumbai Marathi Sahitya Sangh, roused considerable enthusiasm to fortify the urges stirred by the fitful work done in the previous ten years by those who would reform the theatre. Its results have been slow in coming, but they have come nevertheless. There is on the whole a more serious attitude to drama, a better recognition of its potential as a medium, a far wider range of theme and character. And, most important, the theatre people—writers, actors, producers—are sensitive to new directions.

Biography

We are resigned to the quantity having little relation to the quality in 'popular' forms like the novel and the short story;

but it is rather odd if it happens in an ostensibly 'serious' form like biography—as it did during our period. And yet not so odd, since most of those who attempted the form had a naive approach to it. To them, writing a biography was an exercise in hagiology: one defied one's subject, outdoing the romantic novelist in loading him with virtues. The more distant in time your hero was, the greater load. And if he happened to be a saint, he was elevated into a minor deity, and he caused to be human. There were, of course, exceptions to this, but not too many.

Of the mediaeval saint poets, Jnaneshwar, Tukaram and Ramdas attracted the most biographers in this age. This was partly because of the hold they had had on the Maharashtrian mind for long, and partly because the admiration for them was linked with the admiration for the past that had been cultivated assiduously for decades. The latter was particularly true of Ramdas whose association with Shivaji imparted a special halo to him. How far did the association go? Most of the writers installed Ramdas as Shivaji's preceptor (*guru*) in his campaign for freedom. A historical researcher like N.R. Phatak dismissed this as fiction and made himself thoroughly unpopular. The controversy continues to smoulder till this day.

The books on these saint poets were not just biographies! they were more of expositions of their works and had a didactic-cum-religious slant. The moral degeneration of the present times and the relevance of the saints' teachings to them, was the favourite theme. The writing was not too critical and, but for minor differences, all the saintpoets looked rather alike. Tukaram had, in fact, been a blunt critic of the existing social order but this was played down.

The authentic biographical material on these poets was slender, but these writers were only too willing to fill it out with legends. Tukaram was the subject of some fifteen biographies, only one of them attempting to treat him as a human being. The biographies of Jnaneshwar and Ramdas were fewer. N.R. Phatak's (1893-1979) biography of Eknath stands out with its historical perspective and its critical temper. It underlines the Sufi influence on the poet. But it is more of an assessment of the poet's work than a biography; and the assessment is con-

cerned more with the thought-content than with the poetry as such.

For the worshipful biographer, of course, nothing like a religious personality for his subject. Hence quite a few books on the founders of religions and religious sects—including schools of philosophy, as of the Adya Shankaracharya, which acquired a religious complexion. A happy exception is the life of Gautam Buddha (1940) by Dharmanand Kosambi (1876-1947), which has behind it original research and an unerring sense of history. The 'modern' saints like Ramkrishna Paramhansa, Swami Vivekananda and Shri Aurobindo had also an obvious appeal to biographers, and so had Swami Dayananda, founder of the Arya Samaj. There were also some god-men of the age; tall claims were made for them in most cases, and these went down well with the kind of readers the books were meant for. Sri Aurobindo's brief role as a political revolutionary and Swami Vivekananda's triumph as an eloquent voice of neo-Hinduism were the particular strength of their appeal.

That the political personalities should have put the religious ones in the shade was only to be expected. As expected was that Lokmanya Tilak should have a large number of books on him. Some of these cover his whole life; others a particular stretch or aspect of it. N.C. Kelkar's three-volume biography *Lokmanya Tilak Yanche Charitra* (1923-28) is the most impressive of them, and that not just because of its size. It is more than an account of the life of Tilak. It is a history of the times as well. Kelkar succeeds in recreating them. To this task he brought great labour, and a sense of duty to the Lokmanya, whose principal lieutenant he had been. It was the latter—the commitment to defending his leader—that set off the controversy the book created, raising much dust. N.R. Phatak raised the most of it, challenging not merely the analyses and verdicts, but also several of the factual details. The other biographies of Tilak were, with two or three exceptions, flimsy. The sheer bulk of the three volumes of anecdotes and memorabilia relating to Tilak edited by S.V. Bapat places them at the head of the 'Tilakiana' that kept appearing in the 1920's. The number of books on the life of Mahatma Gandhi was even larger. Among the biographers were S.K. Damle, D.N. Shikhare, Veer Vamanrao

Joshi and N.S. Phadke. But the books were largely adulatory, Shikhare's being much less than the others. Some, like the ones S.D. Javdekar and G.D. Parikh, were more concerned with an assessment of Gandhiji's work than with his life. M.G. Ranade had six biographers, one of them being N.R. Phatak; G.K. Gokhale had only two or three. Of the more recent political personalities, V.D. Savarkar had six, Jawaharlal Nehru seven, and Subhash Chandra Bose eight. One must not of course read too much into these figures as an indication of the relative appeal of these leaders.

Our nationalist movement had looked up to certain European patriots for inspiration. De Valera, Garibaldi, Mazzini, and Cavour, for instance. There were several books on their life and thought. The more prominent among the writers were N.C. Kelkar, V.D. Savarkar and N.S. Phadke. Savarkar's translation of Mazzini's autobiography was proscribed. The leaders of the Russian Revolution attracted some writers; so did Stalin later. Hitler attracted far more. Napolean Bonaparte had a few biographers, the best of them being V.L. Bhave whose book is comprehensive and well-written.

Shivaji has been an unfailing fount of inspiration—and not merely to writers. The reverential writing on him apart, some of his recent biographies are the product of industrious research; as, for example, those by V.K. Bhave, G.S. Sardesai, D.V. Kale and L.M. Purandare.

Most of the makers of the nineteenth-century 'renaissance' in Maharashtra had remained in relative obscurity till the 1940's, although the books on some of them—like Jotirao Phule, G.G. Jambhekar, Dr. R.G. Bhandarkar, Dr. Bhau Daji and K.T. Telang—had brought some awareness of their worth to a minority of readers. G.B. Sardar's (b. 1908) *Maharashtrache Upekshita Mankari* (1941), though it has only brief sketches, unfolded the nature of the 'renaissance' clearly with the historical perspective the author brought to its writing. Of the makers of Bombay in that period, two have had competent biographers: Dadoba Pandurang and Jagannath Shankarshet, the biographers being A.K. Priolkar (1895-1973), and P.B. Kulkarni. Priyola social history of the city. It continues the life story of Dadoba kar's book, into which went a lot of research, broadens out into

Pandurang Tarkhadkar from the point where his autobiography stops.

Of the few biographies of writers three are important enough to be mentioned: G.D. Khanolkar's biographies of the poet Madhav Julian and the historical researcher Vishwanath Kashinath Rajwade, and D.N. Gokhale's of the novelist Dr. S.V. Ketkar. Durga Bhagwat's life of Rajaramshastri Bhagwat, scholar and social reformer, and N.K. Behere's life of Peshwa Bajirao I, also call for mention.

It must be said, however, that the new spirit in literature which brought about a remarkable transformation in most forms, left biography largely untouched. Even of the better biographies one could say that they either focus upon the achievement of the hero, or give an elaborate account of his times. In neither case is there much attempt to explore his personality with detachment—and to reveal contradictions and aberrations, if they are detected: in other words, to paint him, not as a hero, but as a man, warts and all.

Autobiography

By common consent, the high-water mark in autobiography is Laxmibai Tilak's (1969-1936) *Smritichitre* (Parts I to IV: 1934-36). The lady could hardly write. She was ill at ease with some letters of the alphabet. But there was the irresistible urge to recall her mixed fortunes in life: life with her poet-husband, N.V. Tilak, who was highly gifted and equally eccentric, that bestowed on her both deep love and painful irritations; his conversion to Christianity, followed by hers; troubles with the orthodox Hindus, as well with the bigots in the Church. She had lived through all this with poise, and the narration is utterly unselfconscious and it keeps bubbling with a mischievous humour that is no respecter of persons: her husband, of course, gets a liberal share of it; but she does not spare herself either! The book is an undisguised portrait of the Tilaks, and also a slice of social history.

More of the social history of the same period is to be had in the autobiographies of two other women, both connected with the work of the eminent social reformer, Dr. D.K. Karve: Anandibai Karve (1864-1950), his wife, who was a widow

when he married her; and Parvatibai Athavale (1870-1955) who worked for his institutions. Anandibai Karve's *Maze Puran* (1944) is full of interesting details, and is also frank in a naive way. Parvatibai Athavale's *Mazi Kahani* (1928) is the story of a remarkable woman. A poor widow, innocent of English, she went to the USA at the age of forty; learnt English, did menial jobs, and worked hard to collect funds for Dr. Karve's institutions. Both the books reveal what the social reform movement did to bring strength and dignity to woman.

Yet another autobiography came from the same quarter. Its author was Kamalabai Deshpande (1898-1965), who taught at the Women's University founded by Dr. Karve. However in its latter part the book gets bogged down in the squabbles in the management of the university. The earlier part presents an interesting account at a personal, and also at a slightly wider social, level. The fourth and last woman autobiographer to be considered here was also connected with Dr. Karve's University—but only as a student. She is Leela Patwardhan (1905-1949), wife of the famous poet Madhav Julian. Her book, which is mainly about the eleven years of their married life, tells us little of significance besides the difficulties of that life.

The commonest pitfall for the writer of an autobiography is indulging in self-defence, open or concealed; and the best of them have not been able to avoid it. N.C. Kelkar, for exampie, in his *Gatagoshti* (1939). Another temptation he could not resist was to spread it out, as he does in his biography of Tilak, to pack it with material that is not directly relevant. L.R. Pangarkar's *Charitrachandra* (1938) has vivid writing, but the most vivid impression it leaves is that he was greatly in love with himself. S.M. Mate's *Chitrapat* (1957) has the virtues of narration one associates with that accomplished writer—and his very active life supplied much to narrate—but his lack of detachment and self-complacence jar on the reader occasionally. For detachment and self-effacement it would be difficult to find an equal for Dharmanand Kosambi's *Nivedan* (1924). The hardships he suffered in order to get his early education, and later to specialize in Pali and Buddhism, could easily have been written up and dramatized, but he gives an uncoloured, matter-of-fact account.

V.D. Savarkar's account of his thirteen years in the dreaded

Andaman prison on a life-sentence for sedition needed no colouring; the experiences were grim and lurid enough. The popularity of the book, *Mazi Janmathep* (1927) owes as much to its vigorous expression as to its content. The autobiography of V.R. Shinde (1873-1944), an earnest, if neglected, social reformer avoids self-praise, though his work has since won high praise. Social historians will always find the book to be of great interest. Pundalikji Katagade was a minor figure in politics. His autobiography *Pundalik* (1950), relates anecdotes and titbits which between them present a slightly unusual, and therefore very interesting, picture of that imposing world. Special mention must be made here of an autobiography, the very honesty and frankness of which shocked the conservatives—as represented by the *Kesari*, for instance—into angry protest, which was probably responsible for virtually hushing the book out of circulation. Written by Balasaheb Pant Pratinidhi, Chief of Aundh (a tiny State), it gives an unabashed picture of the depravities in the palace. The book *Atmacharitra* (in two parts) appeared in 1946: a little too early for a fair response!

Two leading novelists of the age brought some of their craft to their autobiographical writing. G.T. Madkholkar's *Don Tape* is restricted to twenty-four years of his life, N.S. Phadke's *Mazya Sahityasevetil Kahi Smriti* to his literary career. Both are accomplished stylists, and they know it; and neither suffers from humility, or wavers in his self-assurance. Phadke holds the centre of the stage all the time; Madkholkar sometimes uses important persons to share it with him. Both the books are very readable. Curiously, *Atmavritta* (1935) the autobiography of the eminent writer S.K. Kolhatkar is not even readable—and sadly, because it loses itself in trivialities. But K.S. Thackeray (1885-1973), by no means a literary figure, has put such punch and sparkle into his reminiscences, 'Mazi Jeevangatha' (1973), that the reader is held by them. Besides, they bring to life several half-forgotten controversies in the social life of Maharashtra.

Of special interest as a group are the autobiographical writings of men from the world of the theatre, and of music. Easily the finest among them is Chintamanrao Kolhatkar's (1891-1959) *Bahuroopi* (1957). The talent of this renowned actor-

director was obviously not restricted to the histrionic. He had an eye for the light and shade of character, as shown by the pen-portraits in the book, and he had a feeling for language—imbibed, it would seem, from his total involvement in the theatre. A famous contemporary of his on the stage, G.G. Bodas, has unfortunately wasted his book, *Mazi Bhoomika,* on his squabbles with other artistes, and his liberal self-esteem. Much more rewarding reading are the reminiscences of Govindrao Tembe, musician and actor, who is receptive to the art of others. He has a sense of style too; his occasional attempts at fine writing, however, make the discerning reader a little unhappy. Keshavrao Bhole, a music director who stood out in the tradition-bound world of music with his flair for experimenting, was also a perceptive admirer of the best in the various schools of music; and his reminiscences reflect his varied musical scholarship, the catholicity of which is sometimes marred by prejudices.

Mama Warerkar was an eminent writer in several forms, but his *Maza Natki Sansar* confines itself to his career as a dramatist. A most readable book, with its natural flow, it intrigues some readers with the unfaltering way in which his memory recalls precise details of the events of far-off days!

Personal Essay

The personal essay appeared for the first time about the middle nineteen-twenties, and the credit for pioneering it is controversially apportioned between N.S. Phadke and V.S. Khandekar, who were soon to achieve phenomenal popularity in the novel and the short story. Phadke had a slight edge over Khandekar in seniority. By his own admission he was stirred into emulation by some English essayists. A trivial subject, apparently brought up by a personal experience, usually imaginary, and treated lightly, with an appropriate dash of humour, was his formula. There were, of course, variations on it; but although among its practitioners were several writers of some quality, the formula soon exhausted itself. It would seem that the form has a limited potential as its brief innings in England bears out. But in its heyday there a fairly large number of writers were enriching it, each bringing to it his special gift. Between them they gave

the form as much variety as it could bear. Of the Marathi writers in the form, most were content to derive from the English writers, or from the leading Marathi writers. And even some of the latter had led by virtue of their having gone to the English models earlier. Of these English models, interestingly enough, an uncomplicated A.G. Gardiner or Robert Lynd proved a greater draw than an E.V. Lucas or a Max Beerbohm.

Three writers stood out with their individuality and substantrial contribution to the form. N.S. Phadke, V.S. Khandekar and Anant Kanekar. Of them Phadke enjoyed the most followers because his mode of writing was the most imitable; and also because he spelt it out, describing it as his 'technique'. The careful and accomplished craftsman that he was, Phadke could make a slight content go far: not in probing the subject, but in holding the common reader. And the reader was held by a style which was nothing if not lucid, and which moved with ease, even if, to the critical eye, it was a measured ease! The personal element, so basic to the form, was taken care of by the constant attendance of the first person pronoun on the reader, but it did not reveal a personality. It could be anyone, so faceless was the 'I', and therefore it called for little effort on the part of the reader to identify himself with him. Then there were the embellishments: a touch of what would pass for the poetic, particularly in verbal prettiness, and an even fainter touch of humour; and, occasionally, a slight twist calculated to surprise, and please, the reader. Faithful to his creed of 'Art for Art's Sake', Phadke avoids using moral tags. Apparently, at any rate. It must be granted, though, that they do not stick out: that also is a part of his avowed technique. It is a well-disguised morality; and,in essentials, it is the common man's morality.

With the Khandekar essay, usually, 'the moral's the thing'; and he therefore does not care how long it sticks out. He was then the principal apologist for the 'Art for Life's Sake' creed. And like all his writings, his essays conscientiously live up to it. Their content is earnest. "Meditation on life with sympathetic feeling, and the play of thought springing from it", is what, according to him, an essay should achieve. He set out to blend

thought and feeling in his essays. Their proportion varies, and the blend is not always smooth. The play of fancy quite often overwhelms both—and the reader too. Similes and metaphors abound. Sometimes they are strained. But when they are appropriate, they sometimes make for neat aphorisms, to the joy of adolescent quotation-hunters. There are occasional touches of the genuinely poetic. They are a part of the writer's personality. He has one, though it is not always easy to get at, with all the verbal congestion. Khandekar responds to the contemporary situation with youthful enthusiasm, as he did to some areas of contemporary European literature. He had probably fewer admires thản Phadke, but his were staucher, owing to fewer admirers than Phadke, but his were stauncher, owing to did not lend himself to facile imitation.

Anant Kanekar came to the essay a few years later; and after making a reputation in (and virtually giving up) poetry. But his essays have nothing 'poetic' in them, if we go by the popular connotation of the word. Nor has his poetry (at least most of it) for the matter of that! But the two, the poetry and the essays, complement each other. He is the typical 'progressive writer' of the period, questioning what was regarded as respectable and demolishing it. In the essays he does it playfully, setting up one Ganukaka, a die-hard conservative, to knock him down in a verbal duel. But Ganukaka is more than a useful puppet; he somehow comes alive. Shocking the reader out of his complacence and his dearly held beliefs seems to be Kanekar's main purpose and, therefore, paradox his main tool. But paradox—making things stand on their head—can become a habit; and some of Kanekar's essays seem to spring from it. But repeating oneself and turning out one's stuff mechanically was not for Kanekar; and his output in the form was not large, although the reader response had been most enthusistic from the very beginning. A sign of his integrity as an artist, Kanekar wrote an utterly unaffected prose that had a conversational flavour about it: rather unusual for a style-conscious age.

Two essayists with a distinctive quality but a small output, who reserved better of readers, were Kusumawati Deshpande and N.M. Sant. Kusumawati Deshpande brought to the form

a poet's sensibility and a fine feeling for the nuances of words. Three of her best essays are apparently descriptive: 'Mid-day', 'The Setting Moon', and 'Midnight'. They recreate the mood of the hour, and they are muted poems. Some of her essays are character sketches, etched with delicacy and glowing with sympathy. Interestingly enough, although she was a professor of English, and had studied at a British university, her essays have no English models—as have those of most of the other essayists. They are refreshingly home-bred in texture and flavour.

At his death at the age of thirty-seven, N.M. Sant (1909-1946) left behind one collection of essays, and one of poems shared with his wife, Indira. This slight work had held out a promise which remained unfulfilled. Sant's rather obvious pupilage to Phadke did not clip his innate talent in the form, which was considerable. A sensitive, if reticent, young man came through in the essays. And in the poems too which, with Indira's, gently throb with a sense of togetherness which lived on in Indira's later writing with growing maturity. For the perceptive reader the togetherness is in Sant's essays too beneath the surface.

Another essayist whose only collection reveals a sound grasp of the form is G.R. Dodke (1910-1959). He has none of the tricks that sold, or sought to sell, the essay to the undemanding reader. But more than most who attempted the personal essay in this age he has its spirit. That did not however prove enough to win him the recognition he deserved.

Not just recognition—by the surveyors of literature—but popularity was won, in spite of the lack of the spirit of the essay, by V.P. Dandekar (1905-1974). And he did it, it would seem, by dint of sheer quantity. But the work did not involve looking for new paths: he kept to the one that had proved profitable. And that was one which took after Phadke's, occasionally leaning towards Khandekar's. 'A healthy attitude, optimism, generosity, cheerfulness, playfulness and sympathy' are the virtues he prescribes for an essayist. And he made a determined effort to exemplify them in his work. He hung simple morals by simple matters, and these seemed to click with the simple readers.

The formula for success in the personal essay, followed (may be, with minor variations) by some who should have known better, was worked to death by scores of pedestrian writers. Even the

so-called common reader seemed to have realized it, and he turned away from it. Towards the end of this period and during the early part of the next, a different kind of writer breathed life into the moribund form. But, revived, it turned out to be a different form, not quite the old one. The 'personal' in the new essay was authentically and richly so. The richness came from a fine intellect that probed for the complex, impatient with the superficies the 'old' essayist was happy to play with. Thus was the personal essay re-made, and among the re-makers were Dr. Irawati Karve, the anthropologist, Durga Bhagwat, the versatile scholar, G.V. Karandikar, the scholar-poet, and Madhav Achwal, the architect-critic. And no two of them are alike.

Two writers stand apart from these. N.V. Gadgil's (1896-1966) distinction in public life has overshadowed his achievement as a writer. His writings are limited in quantity, but, whatever the form, they have the ture essay quality: with their amalgam of observations, anecdotes and arguments held together by an engaging personal touch. Another public figure of the same generation to have made a mark as a writer is N.G. Goray. He too has the authentic essay spirit. He writes a prose which is unaffectedly elegant: it is all the better as prose for the muted poetic element in it. The letters and diaries he wrote in prison are well known. But even better are his sketches of the Pune of his early days.

Most of the writing of Kaka Kalelkar (1885-1981) too has the essay flavour. Reminiscences—of travels, and of places and persons—form the major part of its substance; and it has usually a touch of poetry—and more than a touch of the moralization peculiar to the Gandhian school of which he was an earnest follower.

Prose of Thought

Into this omnibus category go varieties of prose writing of moderate length, expository, or instructive, or reflective in character, and with none, or very little, of the personal element. Most of the writings of the serious journalists fall in this category. In the days of Tilak and Agarkar the journalist was nothing if not serious, and so he was, by and large, till the end of the last

period. Shivram Mahadev Paranjpe (1864-1929) brought to his writings in his *Kaal* the rhetoric and irony which made him a powerful orator; and since these were fervently anti-British they drew the wrath of the Government—and proscription, N.C. Kelkar, regarded as the doyen of journalists in the early part of this period was more tempered in his expression but, at his best, no less effective with his urbane and subdued humour. He was a prolific writer; and the versatility of his interests, his well-stored mind (which supplied him with apt illustrations), and his lucid, genial style, kept up his large readership. A journalist by profession, the versatile G.T. Madkholkar wrote articles on a variety of subjects, and these impressed his reader with their well-cultivated style and informative content. No less well informed, but more involved in the common reader, S.S. Navare (1900-1984), a dedicated journalist, used a direct, ungarnished style.

This period produced a fairly large crop of non-journalist essayists: men who argued their point of view with conviction—the conviction sometimes imparting a personal savour to the argument. Not all such essays are on living issues. Some have historical themes; others have more general, or academic, ones. Most are fortified with sound learning. Vaman Malhar Joshi gives an exposition of such subjects as 'Art and Morality', 'Truth Goodness and Beauty', bringing to bear on it not only his deep scholarship, but—what distinguishes him most—an open mind which would be scrupulously fair to both the sides of the problem. Overstrained, such neutralism sometimes bogs the writer down in non-commital writing. Joshi's style is perfectly tuned to this attitude. It understates, it is over-cautious. But it is thoroughly unself-conscious, and it elucidates abstractions with ease.

Shripad Mahadev Mate (1886-1957) was very unlike V.M. Joshi. He mostly wrote on problems with a direct social bearing, and his varied reading provided weighty substance for it. Mate had firm convictions and expressed them emphatically. The emphasis was not just loudness; its strength largely came from a skilful, if rather self-conscious, use of language—one of the skills, more of a knack, being the use of obsolate words. Mate's prose carried an unmistakable personal stamp. And his essays, with his own experiences worked into them, came close to the personal essay. The vivid narration reminds us of his achievement in the

short story. The mixture of reformer and conservative in Mate, which seems intriguing now, represented a meaningful aspect of the thinking of those years. The same mixture is evident in S.K. Kshirsagar (1901-1908) and P.G. Sahasrabuddhe (1904-1985) —with the proportion of the two components varying. The former dwells more on topics related to literature, the latter on contemporary socio-political ones.

A stranger-looking mixture puzzles one in Dr. S.V. Ketkar: of radical ideas and aggressively orthodox postures, as in a fanatically over-stated pride in the Hindu religion and the Brahmin culture. Dr. Ketkar had an original mind, but it could be erratic and downright prejudiced. The range of his scholarship was most remarkable, and so was his industry. It was these which enabled him to compile the Jnanakosha (Encyclopaedia—in 23 parts)— the first in Marathi, with a few scholars to assist him. It is usual to prefix his name with 'Jnanakoshkar': and that is done in grateful recognition of the work.

The essays V.D. Savarkar wrote during the years of his forced abstention from political activity present a side of him that is unexpected, and incompatible with his popular image. These essays have strong criticism—strong to the point of derision—of several customs and superstitions prevalent among the Hindus like cow worship, for instance. And the criticism gains further sharpness from his vigorous style. For all his profound scholarship (particularly in the social sciences), incisive mind and keen-edged writing, T.S. Shejwalkar (1895-1963) has been a sadly neglected writer. Impatient with what he rgards as a degeneration in most areas of our activity—particularly in the allegedly intellectual ones—he is frank in expression: sometimes more angry and bitter than is good for persuading the reader. But the better kind of reader will always have high regard for him. Of a different temperament as a writer though as rational in his thinking as Shejwalkar, is D.K. Kelkar (1895-1969). He expresses his views on a variety of subjects and sustained by judicious scholarship—firmly, but not contentiously.

S.D. Javdekar (1894-1955) and S.J. Bhagwat (1903-1973), whose names usually carry the prefix 'Acharya', were both open-minded Gandhians receptive to new ways of thinking. Their influence on young minds, particularly of the thirties and the forties,

was wholesome. While instilling into them a deep awareness of their duty to society, they kept them, or retrieved them from narrow, intolerant creeds. Acharya Javdekar's *Adhunik Bharat* (1938) provided a liberalising view of the history of modern India. Acharya Bhagwat's liberalism extended to literature, its most memorable expression being his bold and cogent defence of some allegedly obscene poems of B.S. Mardhekar as a witness at the trial of the poet.

Travelogue

This branch of writing had very little of any merit to show till this period. The one travel account that compels attention is *Maza Pravas* (1907) by Vishnubhat Godse, Varsaikar. Written twenty-five years earlier, the book records some dramatic experiences—particularly those the author had when he was moving around in North India during the 1857 rising. The book blends autobiography with travelogue, and it is candid.

Most of the other travel accounts published till the nineteen forties were rather poor as literature. In a four-volume account of a pilgrimage, for instance, the little that has human interest and significance is smothered by dry-as-dust details. G.C. Bhate (1870-1946), the sheer volume of whose writing—some sixteen books—had acquired him some importance in the form, was shown up by the travelogues that appeared later. One of his books gave an account of his travels in Europe; but it was little better than an unimaginatively written 'guide'. S.R. Tikekar (1901-1979) visited some countries like Iran and Iraq as a correspondent of the *Kesari*. His account of the tour records interesting details about these countries.

Travel accounts were suddenly elevated to the status of a literary form with writers of the calibre of Anant Kanekar, R.B. Joshi and Gangadhar Gadgil writing them. What they wrote was not mainly an account, or even less a bunching of facts and figures, but an expression of their personal response to what they saw and experienced. It is this personal quality, and the creative transformation of experience, that made their writing so different, and so distinguished.

Kanekar's *Dhukyatun Lal Taryakade* (1940) was the first of

such books. It is about the author's travels in Soviet Russia and some countries in Western Europe. Written in the form of a diary, it is pleasingly informal. But the informality and the humour conceal keen political perception. Kanekar's *Amchi Mati, Amche Akash* (1950) is about his travels in certain parts of the country, his travelling companion being the famous artist, Dinanath Dalal, who did the sketches going with, and complementing, the text. It is again Kanekar who comes through more tellingly than the places.

R.B. Joshi's travelogues—*Watchal* (1953), being the first—are essays: neat, if flexible, in form, and personal in tone. And they have behind them a meticulous scholarship which often lights up the details of description with significance. What an ardent imagination can achieve in travel-writing is shown by Gangadhar Gadgil's *Sata Samudrapalikade* (1959), a record of his visit to some countries in Europe and America: more a record of what struck his 'inward eye' sensitizing the latent poet within him. They are rather like a sequence of character sketches of the places. His earlier *Gopuranchya Pradeshat* (1952)—which is about his travels in South India—carries a promise of the later book. Prabhakar Padhye's rovings took him to a larger variety of countries than are within the reach of most lovers of travelling. His *Agastichya Anganat* (1957) and *Tokonoma* (1961) are about South-East Asia and Japan respectively. They are no less about the author himself with his deep interest in politics and peoples, and his youthful response to art and nature. Jayawant Dalvi's *Lok ani Laukik* (1958) is a lively description of American life as he saw it, with his eye for oddities.

Another landmark in the field is P.L. Deshpande's *Apurvai* (1960), an account of his visit to several countries of Europe, which sparkles from page to page with wit and humour—some of it at his own expense. The book is an expression of a personality enriched by knowledgeable interest in a variety of arts and allied subjects, and bubbling with the enthusiasm of an adolescent to see people and places, and to tune to their different ways with warm understanding

Kaka Kalekar's travelogues have a special place, though most of them are rendered from the Gujarati. They have a true feeling for nature, a well-stocked mind, a receptive approach un-

hindered by parochialism of any kind, and an all-pervasive nationalist outlook.

Humour

To fit humorous writing within a distinct literary form is a pointless, perhaps also a humourless, exercise. No humourist worth his salt would willingly submit to it. He strays across frontiers, hops over hedges, keeps deviating and is, generally, a nomad by temperament. The short story is wide-spreading enough to accommodate his free-wheeling; and most of the humourists have found its pliancy to their liking. Some, like C. V. Joshi and Shamrao Ok, did it so much as to almost settle there. They and some others of that ilk, have been considered together above as writers of the 'humorous short story'. P.S. Kolhatkar, a noteworthy humourist, has been included in the bunch of the writers of character-sketches.

The two most outstanding humourists of the age, P.K. Atre and P.L. Deshpande, have written in more 'forms' (including those in the domain of film) than the much-used adjective 'versatile' can easily cope with. Their work in drama, being more than a literary 'form', is treated in that section. So is Atre's in poetry, and Deshpande's in travelogue. There is no medium for humour that they have not used and and used irony, satire, with parody, caricature, burlesque, and what with supreme skill: you have. And for their effective manipulation, they have the requisite control over the subtleties of language. Atre's weakness for exaggeration quite often gets out of hand, and so do his personal prejudices. Deshpande is much less prone to such lapses. A much worse lapse in humour is bad taste. Deshpande is free from it. Not so Atre. His recklessness sometimes drives his to it. But both Atre and Deshpande, at their best (and much of Deshpande's best has appeared after 1960) have a quality of humour that places them among the illustrious writers.

The number of humourists writing in this period was large; an indication of the happy fact that humour was no more suspect—as it is in a society which takes itself too solemnly—and as it was some sixty years earlier. In the hands of the better writers, it is more than mere entertainment; it is a corrective; and this

is good for the health of society. Out of the large number of humourists I would mention the ones who have their individuality. Most of these have their loving readership: some have a very large one, the others not so large. V.A. Buva, the most prolific of them, is probably the most popular. Ramesh Mantri and Vasant Sabnis are a little less prolific, but hardly less popular; they have a little more variety too. The literary world has supplied most of the incongruities for S.S. Rege's humour, and of course, the subjects for his strain of parody. Bal Samant and Bal Gadgil, too, have mainly drawn on that world—its follies and pretences, and its frauds and hypocrites. Dattu Bandekar (1909-1959), condemned to journalistic hack-work, fitfully achieved a level of satire and irony which would do credit to the best humorists. Deceptively flippant, his humour sometimes gave glimpses of the miseries a hypocritical society inflicted on those outside its respectable pale. Neglected when alive, Bandekar has been almost forgotten since his death, except by a few.

Women writers are saved from the charge of being devoid of humour—to go by their writing, that is—by Laxmibai Tilak's autobiography and Shakuntala Paranjape's character sketches. Shakuntala Paranjape's humour is a little different from Laxmibai Tilak's. It is bolder, and sometimes irreverent. These two women are not just exceptions among women writers; their humour is exceptional—in its two different ways—in the world of Marathi humour!

Of course, humour, is a quality of mind, an attitude to life; it is often found in solution even in otherwise serious writing, and enriches it. And a fair amount of writing has it.

Character Sketch

A kind of writing that hovers uncertainly between the short story and the personal essay is the character sketch. This flexibility particularly appealed to the temper of the 'new' short story later, but it had done it earlier to a writer like Kusumavati Deshpande, some of whose sketches span the two forms. (as in *Moli* and *Deepadaan*). These however were imaginary characters.

Not so the characters in the sketches done by several writers of the period. These could be public figures as in D.V. Divekar, and a few others; persons not known to the writer, and therefore, in a sense, distant—in most cases respectfully distant. This usually made for flatness in characterization, though in many cases they were enlivened by anecdotes. In some cases the writer projected himself more than his subject. Among the most readable collections of sketches are V.D. Ghate's *Kahi Mhatare ani Ek Mhatari* (1939) and Dr. Kamalabai Deshpande's *Hasara Nirmalya ani Chimanya* (1945) Ghate's sympathy and humour bring his characters alive; Kamlabai Deshpande's subjects are mainly old women who have braved much suffering with a smile. A few little girls are also included. But the best collection—although it has been lamentably neglected by readers and critics alike—is *Rinanubandhi* (1942) by Prabhkar S. Kolhatkar (1896-1972) who added to the humour he had inherited from his illustrious father, S.K. Kolhatkar, (particularly, the habit of punning) his own touch of irreverence. But the irreverence was inoffensive—delightful, in fact —and the son had a greater sympathy for men's foibles than the father, and none of his satiric intent. This brand of P.S. Kolhatkar's humour is also seen in the notes he wrote for his fortnightly *Sanjeevani*, a selection from which has been published. These notes have met with an even sadder neglect. Kumar Raghuvir's (Raghuvir Samant: b. 1909) character sketches cannot always be marked off from the short story. They have considerable variety in their subjects, as also in the emotions which colour them.

Letters

Another minor form, letter-writing, produced a fair amount of work. Most of the letters had not been meant for publication and thus they are un-selfconscious and don't agect the 'literary'. Not that one can always determine with certainty which of the letters are of this kind.

The letters Hari Narayan Apte, the novelist, wrote to G.V. and Kashitai Kanitkar, a couple who shared his thinking on social reforms, besides being his friends, have been brought to-

gether in *Haribhauchi Patre* (1929). These letters were much more than a vehicle for views. Occasionally enlivened by light banter, they have a personal tone. And they also provide a glimpse into the life of the educated urban middle-class around the beginning of this century.

Shyamkantachi Patre (1933) collects the letters written to G.S. Sardesai, the well-known historian, by his only son, Shyamkant. These letters, most of them from abroad, took on a tragic hue retrospectively owing to the writer's premature death in Germany. The letters, which carry descriptions and comments, bring out a sensitive and thoughtful young man. The letters of Sane Guruji have the earnestness and childlike nature which won him great popularity as a writer and high respect as a person. Their moral purpose does not weaken the personal quality of the letters. The same could be said of the letters of Kaka Kalelkar. They have, in addition a happy vein of nature description. The novelist N.S. Phadke's letters to his wife, Kamla, remind you of his personal essays, and sometimes even of his fiction. There are a few other collections of letters which should be of interest to the reader wanting to know more about the period.

Natya-Chhata

Natya-chhata, a minor-looking form with a considerable potential was the creation of 'Diwakar' (Shankar Kashinath Garge 1889-1931), and it died with him. Diwakar was absorbed in drama (though his extent work in the form is confined to two playlets, and the translation of a play by Maeterlinck) and poetry (though no poems written by him are available). In his *Natya-chhata* is a fusion of the dramatic and the poetic as in Robert Browning's dramatic monologue. The stimulation had come from Browning, but Diwakar's 'form' is different—apart from being in prose—and bears its distinct stamp. He wrote a mere fifty-one pieces—in eighteen years. Slender but well-chiselled work. A majority of these are based on some incongruity within the person speaking; and these drew a host of mediocre imitators who killed off the form. The other pieces, with their psychological depth—and, in some, an exposure of

social injustice—were passed over by the imitators, and by the common readers too.

Literary Criticism

It is only to be expected that as creative writing grows there should be a corresponding growth in critical writing. This is specially true of a period like this when the creative writing shows constant change in its modes and objectives. Ordinarily criticism tries to keep pace with creative writing, in however limping a manner; but sometimes it is criticism which anticipates a change in literary fashion by acting as a stimulus. Of such criticism which could, in a sense, be called 'creative', there are a few happy examples in this period.

The contest between Sanskrit poetics and Western literary theory for primacy as an influence on Marathi criticism continued in this period. However its vigour and relevance declined in the latter half of it, with other—and more seminal—issues coming up.

Histories, or surveys, of Sanskrit poetics or of its branches, appeared in a fairly large number. And so did books giving an exposition of specific theories from them. While many of these were designed as handbooks for University students, some had a wider scope. This latter kind entered the deeper waters of theory. The better ones among these again brought to their analysis tools available in the Western literary and psychological theories. This, in a few cases, led to a comparative study, and these were generally not marred by any narrowness of spirit. The classic of Sanskrit poetics—*Kavyashastra*—had always had its devoted expounders; but Bharata's *Natyashastra* now invited more and more scholars. Co-ordinating the studies in these two 'shastras' has proved to be rewarding: particularly in providing a more comprehensive view of ancient Indian thought in these related spheres, and also in charting its development.

Of the scholars who brought to their exposition of Sanskrit poetics, for comparison and contrast, Western critical concepts two of the earliest were R.S. Jog and D.K. Kelkar. An Aristotle or an I.A. Richards was of use in the elucidation of some theory in Sanskrit. Kelkar also shows a consistent aware-

ness of the social role of literature, K.N. Watve's doctoral thesis on the *Rasa* theory is fairly exhaustive. The long debate on the theory that has continued beyond our period—particularly on the adequacy and applicability of the theory—was, of course, not fuelled by the book; but several of the debaters have found it a handy book for reference. G.T. Deshpande's *Bharatiya Sahitya Shastra* (1958) has been rightly acclaimed as one of the most satisfying expositions of the major schools of thought in Sanskrit poetics. It is succinct and it avoids undue use of the 'technical' terms in the subject, and set illustrations: two rather common impediments for the uninitiated reader. G.K. Bhat's writings are scholarly and critical, and they make interesting reading, even if they are a little expansive in expression. The emotional effect of tragedy has been, like the 'rasa' theory, a favourite subject for controversy, and such controversies go well beyond Sanskrit literature for examples. A few books on the work of the leading poets in Sanskrit appeared during the period—as by R.S. Jog and K.N. Watve, and two on Kalidas, one by V.V. Mirashi and the other by R.P. Kangle. And yet no history of Sanskrit literature with a true historical perspective and a critical approach has been written: in our attitude to the study of Sanskrit, however great the respect for it and however frequent the references to it, on the part of a fair section of writers—and readers.

English literature, with all the prestige it has enjoyed and the frequent references to it at all levels of critical writing, has not been written about at any length, and depth—although literary periodicals have, off and on published articles on the leading writers in it. And hardly any of them are contemporary writers. As for Western critical thoeries, on which there is considerable reliance on the part of critics, and students and teachers of Marathi literature, there are a few books on them—like the ones by R.S. Walimbe and S.K. Kshirsagar. But there is in them more enthusiasm for than assimilation of the theories, and those of the former seem little better than academic pot-boilers.

An interesting direction in critical inquiry was opened up by Dr. S.V. Ketkar's *Maharashtriyanche Kavyapareekshana* (1928). Does Marathi have its indigenous critical theory, or is its theory

derived from Sanskrit and English? Dr. Ketkar's book argues for the former view. The inquiry was pursued in greater detail by Dr. M.G. Deshmukh's *Marathiche Sahityashastra* (1940), to support Dr. Ketkar's view. Somehow, no significant contribution to it has been made since then.

A major part of the writings on literary theory in Marathi have sprung from controversies, if they did not start them themselves. The most long-lasting of these controversies—Art versus Morality, as its popular abridgment goes—warmed up in the nineteen thirties after the publication of N.S. Phadke's *Pratibhasadhan* (1931), which espoused the cause of 'art'. But the first to speak up for the cause was N.C. Kelkar, who did it in his presidential address at the Marathi Sahitya Sammelan of 1981. "We must not set the secret police of purpose-finding after art" sums up his stand. As this controversy has shown, art means different things to different people. To Phadke, popularly regarded as the high-priest of art, it was in the ritual prescribed by his book, and practised by himself—being no more than craft and its function was no higher than entertainment, though 'art for art's sake' was its impressive slogan. 'Art for life's sake' was the slogan of the rival creed, which was associated in popular imagination with V.S. Khandekar, and which he kept expounding from time to time. The 'life' in this phrase was about as vague as the 'art' in the other one: Meanwhile, the words 'progressive' and 'reactionary' that had gained extensive wide currency in England and the U.S.A. were imported here, and in the process became even hazier. 'Morality', the antithesis to 'art' in the age-old formulation of the controversy also lent itself to a variety of meanings—from the narrowest conservatism to noble ethical values. All such woolly expressions made the critical scene slippery and confounding for some time.

However, Marxist critics like D.K. Bedekar, Lalji Pendse and later Sharatchandra Muktibodh entering the arena, gave the 'life' in 'Art for life's sake' a precise, hard meaning. To them, art is a product of the socio-economic conditions under which it is produced, and the artist has a responsibility to the society. The word 'progressive' acquired a positive meaning in the context of this view, however loosely it might have been used in those years. The view soon gained a fairly large following. But

its fortunes kept fluctuating, here as elsewhere, according to the winds that blew from the political field. They were rather down during the ten or fifteen years after World War II. P.Y. Deshpande veered away from his early Marxist stance to an individualist one. S.D. Javdekar's *Purogami Sahitya* (1941) cogently demolishes Phadke's literary hedonism, and stresses the social obligation of literature—but without going the whole socialist way. To Kala Kalelkar, his fellow-Gandhian, the obligation primarily relates to moral-cum-spiritual values. G.V. Kaveeshwar's criticism of Phadke also springs from the same values. Kusumawati Deshpande's critical writings—which comprise a history of the novel and some articles—are mindful of the social context, but do not overstress it.

Although in a lesser way than in poetry, B.S. Mardhekar was a pathfinder in criticism, and the path—and also the paths taking off from it—have been fruitfully worked since. One of the essays in his *Wangmayin Mahatmata* (1941) highlights 'sincerity to oneself' as a pre-requisite for creative writing; another, the complexity of texture in the good poem. His earlier essays in English—collected in *Arts and Man* (1937)—carry the seeds of much of this and later writing. The latter, brought together in *Soundarya Ani Sahitya* (1955), offers a definitive statement of his views. The more important of these are: Beauty is an ultimate and autonomous value (like truth) in art; its realization depends upon one's sensibility; the aesthetic is a valid emotion; in the hierarchy of the arts, poetry has one of the lower places, it being a 'mixed' are, not a 'pure' one like music, which has the highest place; 'form' and 'rhythm' are the essential elements in literature; 'new emotional equivalences' characterize genuine 'modernity' in poetry.

These writings of Mardhekar gave a fillip to the study of aesthetics, not that all his views were uncontested. Surendra Barlinge, Prabhakar Padhye, R.B. Patankar, M.P. Rege and G.V. Karandikar, among others, have contributed to the debate. Whether aesthetics has a direct application to literature has also been debated.

Gangadhar Gadgil's career as a critic has been almost coeval with that as a creative writer, and only slightly less important. He hit the critical scene as a bouncing defender of the

'new' short story and the 'new' poetry; he took on its attackers from different sides—including those who expect art to serve the purpose of some ideology, particularly the socialist ideology. And he has been since a tireless and militant spokesman for the autonomy of art. 'Art for art's sake', a sloppy doctrine as popularised by Phadke, has been given a sound basis by Gadgil.

A more acedemic and less contentious exponent of the autonomy of art is W.L. Kulkarni. A meticulous scholar, he has brought to the Marathi reader a good deal of the contemporary literary thought of the West. Balanced in his evaluation of books and writers, Kulkarni attaches great importance to the personal response of the reader to a literary work.

In the writing of literary history, the valuable pioneering work of V.L. Bhave has been mentioned before. In some of the histories that followed—of V.S. Sarwate, V.P. Nene and A.N. Deshpande—it is the industry that impresses one more than the critical judgment or the sense of history. The same is true of B.S. Pandit's history of poetry, but not of R.S. Jog's which shows critical insight and a historical perspective, while also straining (a little too hard) to be fair V.P. Dandekar's two-volume history of drama is an example of ineffectual industry. S.N. Banhatti's history of drama has painstaking research behind it but not enough critical perception. Kusumawati Deshpande's history of the novel relates the various phases of the form to the changing social scene, and its evaluations of books and writers are incisive, and catholic in taste.

It was at the beginning of this period that the literature of the Mahanubhava sect, which had been languishing in a code-script for centuries, was discovered and de-coded, and thus retrieved to the delight of the student of language and literature. V.K. Rajwade was the first to break the code; but it was V.L. Bhave who was the first to bring the literature to light. Dedicated research on the part of scholars like H.N. Nene, V.B. Kolte, Y.K. Deshpande and V.N. Deshpande has made more and more Mahanubhava works available, competently edited and interpreted. It has also produced books on the sect.

Folklore, which till recently was largely the preserve of the sentimental, romantic writer, has now begun to be treated with scientific objectivity by such scholars as Durga Bhagwat. A

researcher who has shown high promise in a rather similar field—the life of the common people in the medieval period and their cults and other beliefs—is R.C. Dhere.

Valuable research has been done in prosody by M.H. Patwardhan (the poet Madhav Julian) and N.G. Joshi. The poet Anil's first writings in free verse (*muktachhanda*) created a sharp controversy in the early forties, but within a few years it petered out with poet after poet taking to the form. Language, a forbidding subject to all but the specialist, has aroused some interest in a slightly wider circle of readers with N.G. Kalelkar writing on it with clarity and crispness, and relating it to the life of the people. Other books on the subject, like K.P. Kulkarni's have only served the needs of students—and that too unsatisfactorily. Grammar continues to be a forbidding—nay, a dreaded subject!

Periodicals

There was a further increase in the number and the variety of periodicals. With women's education taking firm root, the number of women readers kept growing, and this fact was as well reflected in the periodicals as in literature. Apart from the monthlies ostensibly catering to them, several had them in mind in the kind of writing, particularly fiction, they put out.

Of the dailies, the *Nava Kaal* (1923) of Bombay, edited by K.P. Khadilkar, the eminent dramatist, was mainly political in character. It was Gandhian in creed, the editor, once of the *Kesari*, having parted company with the Tilak school. The *Dnyanprakash* (1849-1950) of Pune, which had started as a weekly, became a bi-weekly, and later (1904) a daily, was broadly liberal in its politics. During this period its Sunday edition made some reputation with its literary section. The *Sakal* (1933) of Pune was founded and edited by Dr. N.B. Parulekar. It soon clicked with readers, particularly with the news-hungry small-town readers. Under the editorship of G.T. Madkholkar, the well-known novelist, the *Tarun Bharat* (1944), a Nagpur daily, made a mark, particularly in the Vidarbha region.

The *Kesari*, under N.C. Kelkar, continued to have a strong influence for some time; but going over to a less militant politics

than Tilak's, it gradually alienated itself from the younger reader. And when, by 1930, under Mahatma Gandhi, the nationalist movement became more dynamic and multi-dimensional, the appeal of the *Kesari* narrowed down further. The non-Brahmins, now vigorously seeking a political identity, as well as social equality, ran their own periodicals. Some of the more well-known of these were Shripatrao Shinde's *Vijayi Maratha*, Bhagwantrao Palekar's *Jagriti* and K.S. Thakare's *Prabodhan*. The better ones among such periodicals had an influence that extended beyond the non-Brahmins, and nourished the cause of social reform. The Brahmin-non-Brahmin controversy warmed up during the twenties; but it was largely confined to the press and the platform, and did not spill over into literature.

Of the weeklies, a few deserve special mention. The most distinguished was the *Pragati* (1929-34), edited by T.S. Shejwalkar, who later made a mark as a historian. Its distinction lay in its rational and spirited analyses of different contemporary problems, not merely political ones. It is still remembered by the serious-minded with respect, but also with the regret that the high standard set by it was not followed, and that it was read by only a few. The *Chitra* (1935-1948) attempted quite a mixture: politics, the arts (including literature), and the lighter kind of entertainment. It was founded by Anant Kanekar and Dr. G.Y. Chitnis, the latter a scholarly Royist. The *Vividh Vritta* (1925-1960) known for its pungent commentary on men and matters, specialised in exposing the fraudulent and the phoney—like some god-men of those days—without being consistently rational. Its politics too were confused. Starting with an allergy to the Tilakite, it also developed an allergy to the Gandhian; and the allergies were as personal as political. One may describe it as being 'half-heartedly liberal', without being far wrong! Its popularity declined with the death of its founder-editor, R.K. Tatnis, in 1952. M.G. Rangnekar's *Tutari* and *Vasundhara* were lively weeklies of the thirties, fairly varied in their content, but all of it light-weight. The *Mouj* (1923-60) would not have even got a mention had it not, about 1943, transformed itself, rather suddenly, from a trashy into a serious weekly, and paid for it with the apathy of the common reader, though the better kind of reader bravely stood by it. Dr.

B.R. Ambedkar (1891-1956), the great scholar and statesman, worked all his life to awaken the untouchables to their rights—among other means, through his weekly *Janata* (1931-1956). The spirited 'Dalit' literature, of the post-1960 period could be said to be a literary expression of the awakening.

The monthlies multiplied during the period, though many of them were short-lived. The most popular of them, *Kirloskar* (1929) has continued to enjoy the distinction to this day. Its short stories and its articles on topics of living interest are tailored to the reading needs of as large a clientale as possible. The formula too became popular. The two other monthlies of the house, the *Stree* (1930) and the *Manohar* (1934) have also prospered. These magazines have, without being radical, consistently supported social reform, and carried 'new' ideas to distant parts of Maharashtra, and also beyond it to a large number of 'pockets' of Marathi-speaking people, helping them keep in touch with their 'native' land. The *Yeshwant* (1928-50) gave only short stories, maintaining a fairly high quality in its heyday with several leading writers contributing to it. So too did the *Huns* (1933), still going strong.

Some magazines spurned the easy road and, inevitably, fell by the way, sooner or later. The *Ratnakar* (1926-33) offered quality fare with much variety in it, without however trying to promote the truly new. It served as a model for magazines of the better type for several years. The *Jyotsna* (1936-41) was more literary, and more inclined to the 'new'; but, as with *Ratnakar*, not all the glitter of its contributers' names, or of those of some of its seven editors, could keep it going for long. The *Abhiruchi* (1943-52), published from Baroda, was more pronouncedly 'new', its most significant contribution being its critical projection of the literary scene compelled attention. to poetry and the short story. Like the weekly *Mouj*, the monthly *Satyakatha* (1933-1982), published by the same house, underwent a sea-change around 1945, and continued to be a dedicated and uncompromising vehicle for experimental work in creative and critical writing. As notable as these was the fortnightly *Pratibha* (1933-37), devoted to literature, and catholic in taste. It attracted the best among writers and readers, but there were not enough of the latter to sustain it beyond

four years.

Another literary periodical, *Sameekshak* (1940-1951) was an earnest effort, particularly in its earlier years, to counteract the influence of the 'popular' modes. It too did not last beyond a few years. Neither did *Chhand* (1955-60), a slender bi-monthly edited by P.S. Rege which made a mark by promoting the newest trends in writing.

Literature was only one of the several subjects on which the *Lokshikshan* (1928-41) carried weighty articles. The *Samaj-swasthya* (1927-53), far ahead of its times in its ideas on sex, society and religion, propagated these fearlessly. R.D. Karve (1882-1953), its editor—and, quite often the sole contributor—suffered ridicule, poverty and prosecution for doing it. He wrote a blunt, unvarnished prose, showing up by contrast the affectations and embellishments of what passed for 'literary' prose.

The journals of some of the regional literary organisations have been doing valuable work in literary criticism, and by publishing research articles.

Epilogue

1920-1960

Dates marking off a period of history are usually associated with important events. So are they here: 1920 was the year of the death of Lokmanya Tilak, and 1960 of the birth of the Maharashtra State. Neither was, strictly speaking, an event in the literary sphere. But then these spheres—the political, the social, the intellectual, the literary (and artistic)—are not insulated from one another; they interact. If we did not realize this our understanding of life would be the poorer for it. The death of Lokmanya Tilak created a vacuum in the life of Maharashtra: mainly in the political sphere, but it had its impact, in different measures, in the intellectual, social and literary spheres. The birth of the Maharashtra State was of course principally a political event: one for which its people had been agitating for years. Thus achieving political identity meant bringing together a people, united by language, but fragmented by accidents of history. This new-found oneness would

be an enrichment, not merely in the numbers, but in the widening of the variety of sub-regional backgrounds. It is at this point of the fulfilment of a long-cherished aspiration, with Maharashtra on the threshhold of a new order, that this literary history stops.

This history begins with a relatively lean period: a vacuum caused in the literary world by the death, within a few years, of four of the makers of the literary renaissance in the previous period. But the vaccum was short-lived. New urges and new ways, however halting and perfunctory some of them might seem at this distance of time, kept the literary life astir. The 1930's brought several zealous attempts at making a radical change in some genre or the other; but somehow together these did not effect the change they had set their hearts on. There were some minor revolutions, if one may say so, but they were far from adding up to a major one. And yet they were instrumental in the creation of a proper atmosphere for the 'revolution in 1947.

But even this 'revolution' was not as comprehensive as it might have been. It operated mainly in poetry and the short story. These two forms scaled remarkable heights in the hands of some writers; and even the average achievement in them was of an incomparably better quality than at any other time. And the two forms have not only maintained their standard of achievement, they have improved upon it. Curiously enough, the novel was sluggish in responding to the changed atmosphere. The performance of a few novelists, and a few individual novels, raised hopes of a general toning up of the form; but these proved abortive. As for drama, it was towards the end of the period that it started groping for ways that would reactivate it, and the groping brought its rewards later. Some minor forms like the essay and the travelogue showed flickers of the new spirit. So did literary criticism. But a not-so-minor form like biography was content with its stale, profitless ways. The new literary culture, that is, was confined to some areas. Not all the moss-grown barriers had broken down.

Inevitably in the early years of the 'new poetry' and the 'new short story', enthusiasm for them was restricted, but it soon started growing wider. Here, as in drama later, the gap bet-

ween minority art and majority (or popular) art kept contracting at a pace which was gradual, but steady enough to hold out hope for the health of literature.

This unevenness in development granted, the achievement of Marathi literature, as a whole, in these thirteen years is unmatched by that of any period even double its length. As for this period of forty years in spite of its unpromising beginnings, its total achievement compares favourably with that of any other period. It has a variety of artistic endeavour, and it reflects the changing social ethos—its pace of change growing strikingly in the latter half—faithfully and completely.

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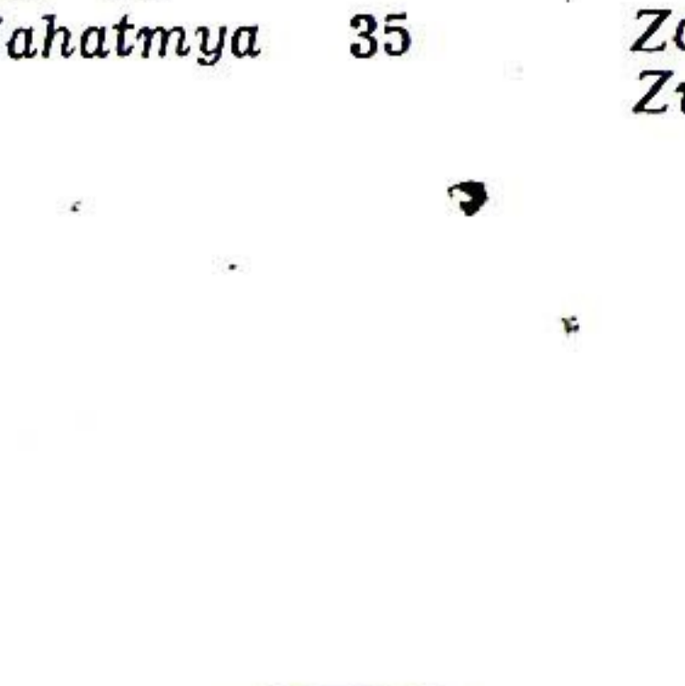

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