MY IMPRESSIONS OF THE "DAWN"

It is only recently that I received the issues of the 'Dawn' in exchange for the Review of Philosophy and Religion. The first time I turned the pages of the 'Dawn' I was reminded of the magazine "Great Thoughts" published in England. There is nothing more life-giving than an idealistic philosophy of life; and a journal conducted with the sole aim of keeping the flame of idealism burning through both the dark and bright fortnights of a month, deserves not only our sympathy but attention.

All literature is the expression of a race. Periodical literature, in spite of the mountain of trash it brings forth only to be forgotten, does serve humanity in a different way. It gives life to literary endeavour and is a record of contemporary thought, some of which must find place in the literary history of our times, when it comes to be written later. The spirit that prompts the 'Dawn', appears to be the idealistic urge in Young India so much in evidence in all departments of life at present. Such an urge, when it finds expression through the well-laid columns of 'Dawn' is bound to prove conducive to the growth of the nation.

The 'Dawn' has just finished only its first year of existence and has a great future before it. A philosophy of balanced thought and action which is an out-come of a deep study of apparently divergent cultures is very badly needed at the present time; and if the 'Dawn' maintains its present broad spiritual and cultural outlook, it is bound to play a great role in the New India before us. I wish, therefore, a happy and prosperous new year to the 'Dawn'.

P. K. GODE, M. A.,
Editor,
Review of Philosophy and Religion,
Poona 4.
DAWN

BEHOLD!
Another New Year
Out of Eternity is born!
May it bless thee,
And beautify thy life,
And sing to thee
A song of Radiant Health,
A song of the New,
A song of the True,
A song of the Peace
That passeth pain,-
A song of Light and Love!

T. L. Vaswani

SEAL OF THE AGE

By Prof. Nicholas de Roerich [Himalayas]

Everyone who has studied the History of Mankind has of course noticed the unexplainable but clear fact of a definite seal of every age, which characterized human life on most remote continents, where there couldn’t even be a chance of contact nor communication. If we take the oldest periods of the stone age: does not the similarity of things of this period strike us, whether they come from Europe, or Egypt or America or Asia! We do not know whether our forefathers then spoke one language, but they certainly did think in the same way, otherwise they couldn’t have created the same forms and wouldn’t have applied the same technique in all its peculiarities. When we look back to the bronze age we find the same unifying forms, the same generalization of household utensils. We say for instance—a sword of the stone age, and often do not even pronounce any name of the people, because the object clearly belongs to the age and the nation is obliterated as something of secondary importance. When we analyze all subsequent ages, we find again the same typical seal of the age, though the way of thinking clearly differs. The Roman style, the Gothic: they are the same age, finding their response in most remote lands. The Renaissance—its multicoloured forms have appeared simultaneously not only in the West, but also in the East. It is not strange to see the same technique not only in Russian icons, but also in Italian primitives, and Indian and Persian miniatures and in Chinese and Tibetan paintings. The same seal of the age, the same sign of the human mind, which without radio and telegraphs rules the world and its evolution.

But beware of involution, as antipode to evolution!
Beware that the artists and artisans of the mediaeval ages should not become proud comparing the quality of their creations with the forms, bereft of individual mark, of our age. There was often no need even for an artisan of the mediaeval ages to sign his name, because the quality itself and the character of the article produced by him, was already the best seal in itself. And what if the seal of the age, this honorable crest of centuries, would turn for our age into a mark of disgrace! Only that a general sign of our times should not occur, when because of ignorance everything characteristic is obliterated and the human heart becomes stamped by the thorns of standarization.

Some will ask us: "Would it not be self-conceited to pre-determine a seal for our age? Those who created the human life of the past, did not bother about the seal of their age, but simply did as they considered better and more dignified". We shall reply: "Of course it would be an inadmissible conceit to think of establishing a seal of the age, but every conscious human being cannot help thinking of those high specimen of sincere human creations, the existence of which leads our thoughts to comparison."

Indeed, how could we pass by the inner quality of old craftsmanship without comparisons and pondering? How not to appreciate the care with which a special piece of wood was chosen for an image of the Madonna? How not to notice the most exquisite application of various shades of amber? How not to admire the most ingenious use of the form of a pearl for the body of a statue in the hands of a Venetian master? This skilful selection of material fully corresponded and even strengthened the technique of the hand of the artist. The brush moved assuredly and the chisel followed boldly the creative thought, in full desire of the best expression, without nurturing any tempting dream of material gain or similar commercial ideas.

These powerful characters, which are depicted in old portraits were not built up occasionally. They often expressed a strong and leading thought, which in its radiant flame burnt all sparks of evil, which like hideous reptiles crept into the human hearth. The radiance of this glorious flame reflected also on the magnificent Lorenzo and on many rulers and all those who despite their own imperfection were near to the magnificence of the Beautiful. The by-name "the magnificent" came to them from the Beautiful. Take away these wonderful sparks of art, of indestructable precious stones of creativeness, and many countries would perhaps be deprived of the most valuable, which gives them their place of honour in the Pantheon of the World. Without these treasures of creativeness we would have no right to think even of the Banner of Peace, which in all respects stands as a honorable symbol of spiritual aspiration.

It is not for the contemporaries to force the establishment of a seal of the age—life itself attends to this. But it is no doubt the duty of every thinking being to ponder upon the best quality of every produce. In attempting to construct a new life, we have just faced the harmful conception of standarization. It is correct that the life of the new era should serve the demands of the wide masses. Verily, life should be adjusted towards an amelioration of human existence. But who can affirm, that the vulgar form of a mass-product is the most desirable. And who can in his innermost justify these hideous forms of everyday utensils deprived of any individuality, made only for the sake of cheap price, as if in hope that these objects because of their poor material will decompose quickly and tracelessly. Such hope is hideous! True, many of our
modern books because of bad paper will decompose into
formless blocks, our poor enamel will break up and our
metallic alloys, the pride of standarization and cheapness, even
if deformed by rust, will strike the eye by their ugliness.

The primitives reached us in their brilliant colours,
although their creators had no conceit to wish to make them
as samples for ages. By no means. The ancient artists
simply wished to make their creations as good as possible in
order that the utmost care should be justified by the flaming
heart itself.

"Books are streams of Wisdom", "creative art is the
highest", "books are gifts of the highest spirit", "the master
of his craft is higher than the knight of the sword". Thus
old masters believed. On this sound understanding, fully
conscious of responsibility, guilds and unions of icon-painters
and all those manifold creative organizations grew; those
bodies of artisans still amaze us by their good quality of
produce and nobleness of striving. It is true, many materials,
before they could be applied, took decades to be prepared.
We know that the oil for painting was stored in monasteries
for decades, becoming naturally purified. This was done not
in conceit, but because of experience. Why has this know­
ledge vanished nowadays? Somebody will try to explain it by
the vanity and rush of contemporary life. Some may even go
so far as to state that to-day mankind has no time to spare to
think of quality. Such supposition would be most malevolent
slander. The head of a factory of most prosaic utensils once
admitted that buyers prefer such articles, in which the form is
refined and the beauty of originality is expressed. Quite true,
no need to blame the ignorance of the masses for vulgar
standarization. The most harmful ignoramuses are not
amongst the masses. Like plague, they are spread amongst
all classes, sometimes even reaching high social positions. By
their negative prominence they incur slander on the masses.
Their perverse imagination imposes upon the masses such
vulgar produces which the masses never asked for.

Verily also now high quality materials could be prepared
for the expression of the human spirit. Also now one could
prepare such materials for decades ahead, in order that the
achievements of chemistry may indeed justify their durability
and may establish an expedient application of the necessary
compounds. But for this one should first of all think of the
future and of the responsibility of the present generation for
the quality of the age. This is not conceit, not pride, but in
the contrary it would be but a strict control over the growth
of consciousness and evidence of care that the best steps
continue the ascension of humanity. In all schools and
educational institutions the question of the quality of produce
should be discussed under all angles; this refers both to the
outer and inner quality. We are establishing a World Day of
Culture, when in all schools and public societies simultaneously
the cultural treasures of humanity should be proclaimed and
affirmed. Together with the World Day of Culture should
also be established an "hour of quality". How significant will
be this hour for working out the true seal of the age, when
young minds, horrified by the possibility of a shameful mark of
disgrace, will strive towards a dignified seal, towards a noble
sign, which will crown all their creative efforts.

One thing is absolutely clear: at a moment of unheard
tension of world energies, all cultural forces must be united.
Verily in such a significant hour cooperation in the name of
the General Good and realization of the great might of
creative thought should be brought into life urgently and
victoriously.