

## FROM THE EDITOR

### PORNOGRAPHY AND PRETENSIONS

No argument has ever been necessary to prove that the flower is beautiful or the fragrance of the lotus is divine. Call it Providence or call it the evolutionary nisus, it has put the capacity to discriminate between the beautiful and the ugly, between what is sweet-scented and what is stinking, in the very system of our senses operated by our consciousness.

This natural trait in man—almost an instinct—will inform him what is literature and what is pornography. Sex is by no means taboo in literature, but pornography is not a synonym of sex. As D.H. Lawrence put it: "Pornography is the attempt to insult sex, to do dirt on it."

And pornography is a far greater insult to literature; even worse; it is a sabotage of literature.

Sabotage indeed, for, employed by the cunning and the clever, it shields itself with excellent arguments. In our own time the arguments vary from narrating an innocent Indian's escapades in the West to portraying historical characters.

There is an embarrassing aspect to it. Snobbery pays in India much more than it does in the West. To be able to speak loudly and nastily of things that should have been left unsaid is considered avant-garde in certain quarters. Writings of a kind that should be consigned to the wastepaper basket within a few weeks of their publication adorn the Indian libraries for decades. And if the stuff is in English, the triumph of snobbery is complete.

The naked body is not vulgar. Nobody takes the condition of the king who walked naked in the celebrated story as vulgar. Nobody looks upon the classical portrayals of Venus in sculpture or painting as vulgar. So far as the naked king is concerned, the message of the story justifies the realism in it. So far as Venus is concerned, the art justifies the realism. Their creators do not reduce themselves to cockroaches peeping over the edge of the bed taking note of the doings on it.

Pornography will be there. But let it remain as pornography, stripped of pretensions to which it has long been accustomed.

## ON THE TIDES OF TIME

For many it will be difficult to imagine the state of Indian dances before the country won independence. Only a few centers kept them alive under the initiative, amounting to sacrifice, of a few individuals.

Freedom has meant a lot for the Indian dance. There is a country-wide resurgence of the different forms of this art.

The wide popularity the Odissi has gained symbolises this. In our scheme to present the history and basic principles underlying these forms, we carry an article on the Odissi in this issue. (Our January '85 issue carried The Way of the Kathak.) The author, Priyamba-da Devi, was one of the most promising artistes in her younger days until she broke away from her art for her higher studies in science abroad. (She is since back in her home-state, Orissa, and back in her art too.) A number of gifted artistes, however, took over the platform and a few of them, like the danseuse Samyukta Panigrahi, Jiave won worldwide interest for the Odissi through their excellent performances.

The popularity of Odissi owes much, among a few other worthy gurus, to Kelucharan Mahapatra, the genius of a teacher. The question the gurus of the Indian dances should try to answer is how far can new innovations be made without deviating from the classical laws of their arts.