

**NOT FOR PUBLICATION**

RM 24

Mathura, India  
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Mr. Walter S. Rogers  
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522 Fifth Avenue  
New York 18, N.Y.

Dear Mr. Rogers:

Two young men whom I had never seen before just walked into my room, and seeing me at the typewriter one said, "Are you writing history?" Besides illustrating how quickly and vaguely knowledge of a stranger's presence and purpose spreads about in some circles of this city, the question capped with ironic humor my efforts of several days. For the fact is that in reviewing my work of the past sixteen months, with the purpose of writing a report to you and the Trustees of the Institute, I have been attempting to summarize the substance of some of my reading. I have roughed out about fifteen pages, seeking to describe with some order the consciousness I have gained of Indian civilization. It has been a pretty unsatisfactory attempt, due as usual to my practice of viewing things as a whole and finding a pattern in the whole before I have enough honest certainty of detail to be sure the pattern is really there. Just before the young men came in, I had finally decided to drop the attempt, to send no report for now, and to write simply a brief, somewhat subjective letter such as this is going to be. Their question was unconsciously ironic, and came just at the moment to focus my mind to the proper answer: "No, I shall not try to write history yet awhile." It gave me a laugh at my own expense, rather than gloom.

This tendency to give diffuse attention to a wide range of social phenomena, rather than concentrating on a single aspect at a time, has plagued me all during my reading while in India. The tendency seems inherent in my whole general approach to this work. When starting my work in Indian history, I didn't know what the limits of my exploration were supposed to be, or should be; hence I wandered wherever the field looked promising, wherever it seemed to contain an answer or an aspect that should not be overlooked. I read conscientiously and fairly heavily at the various educational institutions I attended, but without sufficiently rigorous mental preparation or planning, without really deriving as much guidance and supervision from professors as I might have, and without sufficiently mastering one topic before passing on to the next. This has led me to my present feeling that I have made a useful survey of Indian past and present life which, if separated into 'subjects', would include some part of each of the following: philosophy; religion, in social and political as well as doctrinal aspects, including Islam and Christianity in addition to Hinduism; social structure, the legal and customary rules that tend to stabilize it, and some modern influences tending to change it; political and administrative history, touching on political theory as well as actual practice; and modern economic development. But as far as actual knowledge is concerned, it is my impression that a good nine-month university course covering the above subjects would have given me greater confidence, because the material would have been presented in prepared and orderly fashion in contrast to the less organized way in which I plunged first into one topic, then another. (I understand the University of Pennsylvania is now developing such a course on India).

A facet of this wandering, incidentally, was a mental demand for comparative information or analysis. During my four months at Benares and Aligarh, I dipped into ancient hymns, epics, law codes, chronicles, and philosophical and sociological speculation, and modern commentaries and histories written from them. This gave me a new and vivid sense of the depth of history, a new perspective. It awakened my curiosity as my college course had not equally done into the processes of social development, but at the same time it revealed my lack of knowledge of western history and development. It was therefore no accident that during my early illness I found no book on India as interesting as The Condition of Man, Lewis Mumford's study of western man's moral, social, and inner development; even so, I don't pretend to have done justice to that book. Later, when reading on the economic evolution of India, I referred to the Hammonds' Rise of Modern Industry, to seek contrasts and similarities between economic change in 18th century England and the less drastic change in 19th and 20th century India; again I didn't take fullest benefit from the excursion because reluctant to take too much time. I suppose a final example of my unfulfilled search for wholeness was the increased spiritual interest and concern which my stay at Saharanpur served to release somewhat.

In a real sense, this demand for comparison and inter-relation, this search for other men's insights in an effort to reach a more complete view, can be said to come within the range of a sentence in your October 24th letter: "One of your difficulties, it seems to me, is that you expected to get on too fast." In any study, I suppose, certainly not least in the study of human affairs, a valid admonition is to take one step at a time, to make sure of past ground before moving forward. At least I now see sharply one result of my more hasty leaps: I am now hesitant to write a report outlining the patterns I have found, for lack of sufficient groundwork with which to complete the patterns or to assure either myself or you that the patterns are there.

Yet I'm not sure that you would have had me do completely differently in my reading. You write, in your memorandum, of the Institute's 'experiments' in developing men knowledgeable in certain areas; and the Institute has infrequently adopted obvious or routine methods. I read in that fact an attempt to avoid the stereotyped, and to give the individual student - whose sensitivities and aptitudes toward a given situation will be different from those of another student - an opportunity to adjust into his own channel. And necessary to such adjustment is a survey such as I have made. If I have failed to discipline my mind to a continued, connected piece of work, well thought out and brought to conclusion, if I have failed to become certain of much in Indian history, I have at least widened my range of interest and thought. Perhaps it may soon become possible to plan out coordinated pieces of solid work within that range.

I view my work in ancient and medieval Indian civilization as unfinished, and intend to continue reading in that field as a sideline during coming years. For it is connected with present-day India, and as I live in a rural environment I hope to be able to view in practice something of the religious concepts of which I have read, to see in action the caste and sub-caste councils whose structure and function has been described in books. My work in political and constitutional developments of recent times is still less complete. In May and June, months when both climate and diet become difficult in rural India, I have in mind further reading in this modern period; I have made inquiries about spending those two

months at Almora, a United Provinces hill station where Hindu cultural and religious movements also attract my interest. Similarly in economics: I plan to do some background reading and keep abreast of current economics news during my village stay.

In short, I am still not confining myself narrowly. Until I have explored one further field, perhaps more important than the bookish spheres in which I have been working, I will not be ready to coordinate and define my program more closely. That field is rural experience. I have delayed my visit and stay in a village too long already; now I am impatient with my attempts to consolidate past experience and lessons in a report. I shall instead try to bring the lessons to bear on my future activities.

I was grateful for the suggestion, in your October 24th letter, that I "take it easy" while in a village, allowing the "slow process of absorption" to play at least as great a part as the gathering of facts. That is in accord with my own inclination, and also with the advice of Dr. Arthur Mosher, of the Allahabad Agricultural Institute, who has had considerable experience of Indian village life. Perhaps the remaining ten weeks before May's heat starts will not be sufficient for such absorption, but that I shall know more about only after undertaking what should be an interesting and enjoyable experience. In two or three days, therefore, I will leave Mathura city for the village of Barsana, where I will spend some introductory days as the guest of a country doctor.

Yours sincerely,



Richard Morse

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