

MEINUNGEN, SELBSTDARSTELLUNGEN, KRITIK

Indisches Literatenporträt: Kailash Vajpeyi

Kailash Vajpeyi wurde am 11. November 1934 in Pirthikheda, einem Dorf im Bezirk Unnao (U. P.), geboren. Aus diesem Bezirk stammen auch andere namhafte Hindiliteraten: Nirala, Ramvilas Sharma, Raghuvir Sahay, Ajitkumar. 1949 geht Vajpeyi zur musikalischen Ausbildung nach Lucknow. Der Selbstmord seines älteren Bruders im Januar 1950 führt ihn zur Literatur („da hatte ich was zu sagen“); seither spielt das Motiv des geplanten, verzögerten, nicht stattfindenden Selbstmordes eine wichtige Rolle in seiner Lyrik. Die Universität Lucknow macht ihn zum M. A. und Ph. D.; seine Dissertation schreibt er über den Stil des modernen Hindigedichts. Nach einem kurzen Zwischenspiel bei der Times of India in Bombay geht er, wie viele seiner Kollegen dörflicher Herkunft, nach Delhi. Dort wohnt er jetzt (H-26, South Extension Part 1, New Delhi-49), verheiratet, kinderlos aus Überzeugung, und hat eine verhältnismäßig bescheidene Position am Hastinapur College, Moti Bagh: nur so, meint er, könne er sich seine innere Freiheit bewahren. 1964 erscheint sein erster Gedichtband („Sankrant“, Bharatiya Jnanpith), 1967 sein zweiter und bisher letzter („Dehant se hatkar“, Akshar Prakashan). Fünf Gedichte aus diesen beiden Bänden liegen in deutscher Übersetzung vor¹.

Am 23. Februar 1967 nimmt er in New Delhi an einer Lesung mit H. M. Enzensberger teil. Enzensberger ist von seiner „poetischen Potenz“ beeindruckt.

Vajpeyi rechnet sich zu keiner der vielen Gruppen, die auch in Indien den literarischen Betrieb bestimmen. Am nächsten steht er seinen Altersgenossen Raghuvir Sahay (geboren 1929) und Shrikant Varma (geboren 1931): mit ihnen gehört er zu den Autoren der indischen ‚Stunde Null‘, zur Übergangsgeneration, die nach 1947 das Wort ergreift. In seinem leidenschaftlichen Wahrheitsengagement, dem schonungslosen Aufdecken des Mißlichen, dem Versuch, die persönliche und die nationale Misere kreativ zu überwinden, geht er bisher am weitesten. Konsequenter treten in seinem Stil dekorative Elemente mehr und mehr zurück; an ihre Stelle rücken Nacktheit und Direktheit. Das ‚Ich‘ seiner Gedichte, erklärt Vajpeyi, ist singularisch wie pluralisch zu interpretieren: es steht für die Individualität des Autors genauso wie für das Kollektiv der Intellektuellen der mittleren Generation. Ihr Versagen ist sein eigenes. Dieser von der Kritik oft nicht erkannte Wechsel zwischen der subjektiven und der objektiven Ebene ist bezeichnend für seine poetische Verfahrensweise.

Die beiden Gedichte, hier in deutscher Übersetzung vorgelegt, sollen im Sommer 1970 in Vajpeyis drittem Sammelband erscheinen. „ein brief an ghaliib“ war sein Bei-

¹ In: „Als wär die Freiheit wie ein Stein gefallen“, Hindilyrik der Gegenwart, herausgegeben und übersetzt von Lothar Lütze, Tübingen–Basel: Horst Erdmann Verlag, 1968, S. 60–71.

trag zu einer öffentlichen Lesung zu Ehren des Urdudichters Ghalib (1796–1869) am 16. Februar 1969 in New Delhi. In diesem ‚Brief‘ verarbeitet er Zitate aus Gedichten von Ghalib (Z. 13, 24, 31), den er mit seinem Vornamen Asad anredet. Die Lesung wurde einen Tag später von All India Radio gekürzt übertragen; in Vajpeyis Text fehlten einige besonders kritische Stellen (Z. 11–16, 25, 34–35), was zu einem parlamentarischen Nachspiel führte. Der National Herald vom 12. März 1969 berichtet:

No ‚Censuring‘ of poem

NEW DELHI, March 11—The Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Mr. Satyanarayan Sinha, denied in the Rajya Sabha today that there was any ‘censuring’ of a poem in the radio report of a Ghalib centenary kavi sammelan broadcast from the Delhi station of All India Radio on February 17.

Mr. Sinha was replying to a short notice question of Mr. Raj Narain who complained that portions critical of the Government were omitted when the recitations of two poets, Mr. Sri Kant Verma and Mr. Kailash Bajpai, were broadcast.

One of the portions omitted, Mr. Raj Narain said, was a fun on the Government’s concept of democracy. The meaning of the other omitted portion was: “This Delhi you (Ghalib) have left has gone ten steps further towards destruction”.

The Chairman, Mr. V. V. Giri, remarked that the member had now broadcast the portions.

Mr. Sinha, denying any mala-fides on the part of the Government, said there was no question of censorship. He said it was a question of ‘editing’. When a function went on for two hours and the radio report had to be given in an hour, every poem could not possibly be broadcast in full.

Replying to a supplementary from Mr. Banka Behary Das, Mr. Sinha said that extracts and not the full recitations were broadcast in respect of some other poets also. — PTI.

Die ungekürzte Fassung des ‚Briefes‘ erschien in der Hindi-Vierteljahresschrift *Ālocnā* 18/8, Januar–März 1969, S. 3; sie liegt der vorliegenden Übersetzung zugrunde.

Das Gedicht „der schlund“ wurde von Vajpeyi in einem Gandhi-Fernsehkolloquium am 21. Januar 1970 gelesen, es ist bisher auch im Original unveröffentlicht.

Den abschließenden Essay hat Vajpeyi selbst aus dem Hindi ins Englische übersetzt; er ist die ‚direkte‘ Entsprechung der ‚indirekten‘ (literarischen) Aussage der beiden Gedichte und kann als deren Kommentar dienen. Die mit dem Einverständnis des Autors an Hand des Hindi-Originals vorgenommene Redaktion des englischen Textes hat sich auf das Notwendigste beschränkt: sein Wert auch als sprachliches Dokument sollte so unbeeinträchtigt wie möglich bleiben.

Lothar Lutze

II

1

ein brief an ghalib

da: wiederum strömt die lava

schafft dampf sich bahn

schlagen gasele wellen am kalten himmel.

hitze im blut

quecksilber in den augen

5

stürzt delhi sich auf dein grab.

hör asad:

ich ein kleiner dichter / oder sagen wir: korrespondent

hundert jahre danach auf den tag

schreib ich wies steht um deine stadt.

10

delhi ist wie du verließest

nur zehn schritte näher jetzt am ruin:

,täglich ein neues gesetz in dieser stadt'

so war es schon

achtzehnsiebenundfünfzig

15

so ist es jetzt tag für tag.

zu deiner zeit kam der brite

er ist noch da / tief

sitzt er drin in den hirnen.

wo spitäler waren sind schlachthöfe jetzt

20

seuchen blühh auf in den gärten.

nein asad:

wer sterben will in dieser stadt

dem tut kein gift mehr not

die scham blieb auf der strecke beim wechsel der partei

25

dichten:

was solls?

angesehn sind die schwätzer allein

schwer zu sagen

wer wessen brot jetzt ißt.

30

du sagtest immer ,vergib'

aber asad:

die fehler machen sind am ruder jetzt

kommt ein neuer minister

hüpfen die alten versprechen ins wasser.

35

die stadt ist gewuchert: ein tumor

jeder freund eine grube mit gras getarnt

sehn eltern ihre kinder ist feiertag

jeder drawingroom: ein gähnen mit aufgerissenem mund.

du warst besser dran asad: 40
 zu deiner zeit
 konntest du noch nach innen gekehrt
 knüpfen dem leid ein seidenes netz
 deiner sorge selbst künder
 selbst hörer sein. 45
 doch hundert jahre danach / heut / jetzt
 ist solche feinarbeit nicht am platz
 innen / außen
 ist haltlos wurzellos dieses geschlecht:
 falsches ist nicht mehr falsch 50
 noch rechtes recht.

2

der schlund

wo ist jetzt abscheu
 wo glauben gut
 da alles so blitzt und blinkt
 und leckt nach blut.
 unterm gewölbten zeldach 5
 verstand ich manches erst
 als zu verstehen sinnlos war.
 steine türmte zum eigenen grab eine frau
 die millionen blinder kinder gebar.
 wer ist schuld? dachte ich 10
 wer ist schuld? die samen verfault
 kot fraß die kuh
 verbrannt das gesicht hindustans.
 wer drängt sich vor
 in diesem prallgefüllten knochenhaus / wer ists 15
 der unverfrorn stufe um stufe klimmt
 verschwinden läßt die akten?
 richter wie anwalt mörder zeuge zuschauer:
 wie jeder jede rolle übernimmt.
 was liegt ihm schon an dieser erde?
 was weiß er schon von hunger? 20
 ist an der zeit / der aussätzigen / er nicht ein geschwür?
 der rechten straße falschen namen las ich
 suchte das unbekannte ziel / kam dorthin wo
 die schande der geschichte schlief. 25
 man fragte mich warum ich zornig sei
 was aber solls: vergnügt im schlachthof sein?

- um jedes ding und sei es noch so klein
legt sich die schlinge / die löst keiner schnell
ein wettkampf findet statt: im auf-der-stelle-stehn sich-fallen-lassen 30
 beinstellen hintern-vorhang-hüpfen
 was soll der sieg
 wo mieses sich mit miesem mißt.
wenn aus versehen wo ein grashalm brennt
finden sich gangster ein zum urinieren 35
 was solls: im krankenhouse rebellieren?
ein schlag traf mich / plötzlich schmolz mir der leib
nackt stand die schande der geschichte
vor mir
sah ich den heuchel-schlund der dreizehnhundert jahre rückwärtsführt 40
 das nest vorn an der wand.
könig und priester weiser wäscher händler
dichter und künstler spieler tänder
 sie alle kaum geboren stößt man in den schlund
 auch ich bin drin / verstummt und halbverbrannt 45
 heucheln ist dreizehnhundert jahre alt in meinem land.
zum körper jede tür versperrt
alle zur allgemeinen flucht bereit
intrige hintern vorhang
vorn eitel ehrbarkeit 50
 jedes gesicht entstellt und jämmerlich
 weibisch zwei- dreifach vierfach
 heulend sich zu beschweren lachend mitzuspielen geben vor
 zahllose nullen.
so war es ist es wirts wohl weiter sein / soll ich 55
mich anzünden zu weihrauch mich verwandeln
alles entgleitet / soll es! lügen liegt mir nicht
erst dampf / dann wasser / risse bleiben
 faule entschuldigung: gewehr / gedicht.
 wollt / eh ich alt geworden / blinde kinder 60
 stopfen den schlund das nest abreißen ihr
hört meine letzte bitte:
 die erste kugel mir.

Z. 3–5 schlagen gasele wellen am kalten himmel.
hitze im blut
quecksilber in den augen

Poetischer Ausdruck der Schizoidität, die bei solchen Anlässen zutage tritt. Das Gasel (arabisch ‚Gespinst‘, vgl. Z. 43) besteht aus 6–30 vierhebigen Versen und hat das Reimschema aa ba ca da ... (Aufnahme des ersten Reimes in allen geraden Versen).

Z. 25 wechsel der partei

Hindi-Urdu /dalbadal/: eine auch hierzulande nicht unbekannte politische Praxis, die nicht selten zu Amt und Würden führt.

- Z. 37–39 jeder freund eine grube mit gras getarnt
 seh'n eltern ihre kinder ist feiertag
 jeder drawingroom: ein gähnen mit aufgerissenem mund.
 Drei Pfeiler einer traditionellen Gesellschaft: Freundschaft, Familiensinn, Gastlichkeit. Die ‚grube mit gras getarnt‘ ist die Falle, die für die Elefantenjagd gebaut wird. Der ‚drawing-room‘ muß oft als Sinnbild des Mittelklassen-Wohlstandes herhalten; das auch im Hinditext benutzte Wort ist wegen seiner beabsichtigten englischen Assoziationen unübersetzt geblieben. Vgl. auch die entsprechende Anmerkung in „Als wär die Freiheit wie ein Stein gefallen“, S. 98.
- Z. 43 ein seidenes netz
 Dieses ‚Netz‘ (/jāl/) tritt als Topos meist in Verbindung mit der traditionellen mājā-Vorstellung auf.
- Z. 5 unterm gewölbten zeldach
 Metapher für die ehemals alles überspannende Kongreßherrschaft.
- Z. 8 eine frau
 (Mutter) Indien.
- Z. 12 kot
 Nach Auskunft des Autors wurde das Hindi-Wort für ‚kot‘ (/gū/) im Fernsehen absichtlich entstellt wiedergegeben.
- Z. 23 der rechten straße falschen namen
 Bezieht sich auf die Beschriftung der Schilder umbenannter Straßen Delhis in fehlerhaftem Hindi.
- Z. 40 der dreizehnhundert jahre rückwärtsführt
 D. h. bis zur Herrschaft des Königs Harṣavardhana in Nordindien (606–647).
- Z. 41 das nest
 Metapher für die häusliche Geborgenheit der (im westlichen Sinne) Arrivierten.
- Z. 48 zur allgemeinen flucht
 Versuch, die Doppeldeutigkeit von Hindi-Urdu /bhāg lenā/ (1. ‚teilnehmen‘, 2. ‚fliehen [können]‘) in der Übersetzung wiederzugeben.
- Z. 58 erst dampf
 Geläufige Metapher für vergeudete (revolutionäre) Energie.
 Vgl. auch Vishvanath Tripathi, „Familie“:
 und ich:
 kochend
 ein Kessel Wasser
 der dampfend dampfend sich erschöpfen muß.
 („Als wär die Freiheit wie ein Stein gefallen“, S. 56.)
- Z. 59 gewehr / gedicht
 D. h. das Gedicht sei so gut wie das Gewehr, wolle man die Gesellschaft verändern. Wahrscheinlich Niederschlag einer literarischen Diskussion des Jahres 1968, in der von der Ohnmacht des Literaten die Rede war, dessen Aufgabe wohl das ‚Zeigen‘, nicht aber das ‚Tun‘ sei.
- Z. 63 die erste kugel mir.
 Vajpeyi ist einer der wenigen Literaten, die bereit sind, sich und ihre Produktion ernsthaft in Frage zu stellen.

III The Situation of an Indian Writer Today

Where does a thinking, comprehending and creative man in India, stand today? Which are the inner and outer pressures which form his subconscious. Of which inner dichotomies is he the victim and to what extent has he been able to free himself from tradition and to what extent is he still dogma ridden? Clarifying all these points I will try to analyse the stance from which the Indian writer is reacting and thinking today.

From the point of view of history India is a country which gained its independence in the year nineteen hundred and forty seven after nine hundred years of slavery. A country which has the Vedic, Opnishadic, Aranyak, Pauranik and Six Schools of Philosophy traditionally established, which has concentrated on resolving the mysteries contained in the layers of the subconscious mind since the past three thousand years. Problems concerning Creation, God, Soul, Intellect, Mind Action, Birth & Rebirth and emancipation have preoccupied the minds of thinkers. Where Mathematics, Chemistry, Mechanics, trade, astronomy, Sociology etc. have not been neglected either. Where primarily Hindu religion is followed but where religions like Jainism, Buddhism, Sikhism have also gained a place of their own. This is a country where from birth to death, life is divided and pinned down into many sections and where death is only an occasion for the soul to take a new form. In this country more than fifteen languages and hundreds of dialects are spoken. Where not only the corporate and the incorporate shapes of God but also rivers and trees are worshipped.

In 1947 when India became independent, the division of the country and the continuation of English as the official language were two calamities which could not be avoided. The sequence of events which ended with the death of the Mahatma Gandhi brought to the forefront the results of the first, but the consequences of the second decision still continue to be apparent in the country today, and especially in the case of the intellectual who truly understands Indian situation. As language plays not only a significant but a necessary role in the process of thought and expression in daily life as well as in the depth of creation and reflection, I will take this up first of all with special reference to the intellectual caught between the two wheels of tradition and politics.

India as you have heard and read is an agricultural country with a huge population, and most of its people reside in the villages. The average daily income of its people is a rupee a day. Since independence this income has perhaps doubled. I do not have the exact statistics. There are two classes amongst the educated in India, One type goes to expensive private schools where the medium of instruction is English and the other type is the one taught through regional languages and their standard of education is deplorable. These two types of educational institutions have produced two types of young people in the last twenty two years. They react differently, one type is averse to his own traditions and way of life but also represents the upper class in India for whom everything like education, jobs etc. are readily available. The other section is made up of young men who get their education in limited circumstances and who continue to face difficulties in their search for jobs and positions and who are deprived even of the facility of expression since they are not equipped with the required tool, i.e. language, because they have been trained to use a language which has no relevance outside their immediate environment.

Like these youngmen there are two sections amongst the thinking class of India also.

Some of these have been educated and brought up according to the British Standards and have inherited an imported culture and, believing that English is the only way to knowledge, through their writing cater to the needs and requirements of the same sort of people living in the cities of India. And the other half are content to express themselves in their regional language for a limited number of readers. Both sides have their own arguments their own view points but in tradition ridden India where mechanisation is just beginning to infiltrate the way of life and as a result of which the countryside is emptying fast, the problems of all thinking, creative people are almost identical. For example how to make modernism and tradition co-exist, how to make an ancient and agricultural land accept machines. How to bring about the integration of the people with the help of a common language. How to fill the gap between dogmatic belief and scientific knowledge.

This social change in the Indian society has made the inner world of the creative writer strangely complicated. The exodus to the cities and mechanisation create their own values whereas India is still not free of its traditional spirituality and caste system. As a result of literacy, Urbanisation, speeding automobiles, and huge constructions, the pace of life has become fast and isolation of the individual has become a problem but the private world of an average Indian is still preoccupied with self emancipation, the soul and the life after death. This dual living has given birth to a brand of hypocrisy peculiarly Indian which is reflected in the social as well as the creative world of Indians.

From the point of view of sociological studies we are all aware that with the introduction of power and speed in our life, we come to believe in the life of the moment and are gripped with an uncertainty regarding the future. Everything becomes alien, moving speedily and ever eluding grasp. Due to the rapid production of ever new products easily available material possessions cannot hold the interest for a very long time. In a country where the change in values is a recent phenomenon and where caste, religion, language, community, etc. are aspects of institutions which go back three thousand years in history and where independence has come after a long period of nine hundred years, how complex and full of tension their transitional period at the level of sensibility can be is not an easy task to assess at such a distance. As a creative artist I and my other colleagues perpetually live in this state of tension. This problem becomes even more complicated when central employees and trades people are taken to be the true representatives of the Indian mind. Unintelligent, clique ridden, dishonest bureaucrats, brought up in a tradition of mental slavery, journalists, lawyers and clerks tied with English, all these people exist only for themselves, and to this end start advocating themselves as true Indians and their various and foul opportunistic thoughts as culture and call the senseless aping of the West 'Scientific attitude'. In those conditions to write in a regional language becomes not only pointless but also full of many inherent dangers.

Before independence, the freedom struggle had brought all the Indian people together and made them share and work towards one goal, one end. Every Indian's inner world was a world of ideals. Because of the similarity of aim, there was a feeling of oneness and mutual understanding in social life. There was a possibility of inter

state exchange of ideas and communication. For these reasons, the time immediately preceding Independence was a time of internal and external harmony. Outside there might have existed lack of opportunities, poverty and terror but somewhere deep inside Indians were bound together. Because every Indian's aim was Independence the ideal gave the feel of reality, but as soon as Independence was gained this situation disintegrated. Because the moment of decision was over, freedom had been acquired, this ideal situation deteriorated rapidly and the thread binding Indians slackened. Mutual dialogue came to an end and gradually narrower points of view emerged. Although it is true that this took some time to happen and this was because of Pandit Nehru. Nehru with his personality, thinking and his acceptance of the necessity of scientific development tried to maintain a balance between the different people of India and to some extent he succeeded in doing this. Whatever might have been the nature of the ultimate destiny that he envisioned for India, it would not have been as disappointing if India had not been attacked by China. This was the third calamity which further influenced, shaped and increased the confusion in the mind of the intellectual in India. It has been called the last factor which completed the process of disillusionment which had started way back in the fifties. The doubt, fear and insecurity which started in the Indian subconscious with the death of the Mahatma not only came full circle during the Chinese aggression but became permanent. The question which Indians have been repeatedly asking themselves has been: 'Is the attitude of non-violence, peace and co-existence which is the basis of Indian thought and philosophy relevant in the modern context where nuclear weapons have come to dominate all political and other attitudes?' When the Indian intellectual places his country on the world map and tries to analyse and assess his stand then he is faced with a strange dilemma. In his own country he is the victim of language, starvation and historical cruelties whereas internationally he has no place as an intellectual and his worth is not recognized. In this period he has come to realize and accept that without power there is no knowledge or rather no recognition of knowledge. Now the dilemma he faces is how and whether he should help his country acquire power or not and whether he should actively participate in the political set-up of his country or not. For social leadership, language is the most powerful tool, and a language which can bring home to his people the voice of thinkers and creative writers. But unfortunately the confusion regarding national language still persists in India. Even if he was to resolve this problem, how can he ever advocate the necessity of increasing political aggression and military power, for the survival of his country. Because here he comes face to face with his inner, traditional Indian values. The history of religion makes it clear that religion is originated because of the necessity of disciplined and controlled behaviour and conduct of man in society. But man in trying to establish the superiority of his religion above those of others has done everything that basically all religious thought condemns. All other religions of the world believe in conversion whereas the Indian religion does not permit it. In a country where non-violence is an attitude, a way of life, a religious dictate, where destruction of life in any form is forbidden, where the visible world of reality is declared a hallucination — the Maya — where detachment, humility and introvert tendencies are recommended, how can anybody advise or suggest an increase in violence or means of violence. In this strange situation the Indian Intellectual is neither on the side of religion and tradition nor of full political activity. The problems of an Indian author are the problems of the young

man who lacks opportunities and means, but has some abilities and too many ambitions.

The means of communication have provided him with the facility of acquiring an internationally alert and well equipped mind, but it is virtually impossible for him to place himself anywhere in the world. Here also he is faced with a dilemma, all his own. He is aware of the inner turmoil, disturbances and disruption in the social life of the so called developed and progressive countries which are materially and scientifically well equipped. It is also true that the consequences of a mechanized life were pointed out long ago by the Western philosophers like Kierkegaard and Jaspers. Their thought content was the result of the realization of horror at the increasing dehumanization of all human institutions. Herbert Marcuse has completed this circle. Now should the Indian intellectual who is aware of the implications of the growing materialism and scientific progress (according to Professor Breginsky's predictions regarding Technitronic age) advocate such progress or should he not, the alternative being that he should ask his people to stand still or to continue to exist as they are doing. He is faced constantly with the question of what should be his role in India today, where human potentialities are not being exploited at all. As I have said earlier the most difficult and useless burden that a young literate Indian has to carry is his Education, which gives him nothing, equips or trains him for nothing, takes him nowhere. This education policy which was introduced by Lord Macaulay to prepare clerks and make the British Empire well run and efficient is still being imposed on an average Indian youth today, who considers or is made to consider himself an outsider and a superfluous entity in his own society. Because of the density of population each little article has become the object of fierce competition and rivalry and most of the guardians have no choice but to either leave the children uneducated or to give them the education that is available. It is obvious that this gives the younger generation an acute sense of insecurity.

When this Indian youth, born around Independence, looks around and out to the West through the help of papers, magazines and other mass media all that dazzles him is the glamour, the wealth, the endless opportunities. This superficial glamour is all that he sees, and he is incapable of comprehending the frustration that goes with it, thus he blindly tries to either imitate it or run to the West. Being in the university I am confronted with this disease but I find myself helpless as a teacher and a creative artist to correct it.

All the dichotomies and contradictions I have mentioned are applicable to all the creative people in India. In the last twenty years, just as an average Indian has become slothful, so also at the level of writing and thinking the intellectual has been faced with a similar dilemma, which has become evident especially in the sixties. In some of the writers it has appeared as frustration but mostly it takes postures of satire, anger, disillusionment and finally fear which express a cruel historic destiny and irony.