

Archaeology for the lay reader

BOOK REVIEW

MANUSHYAN SWAMYAN NIRMALANU (Man Makes Himself) by V. Gordon Childs — Translated by C. Achyutha Menon — SPCS, Kottayam — Price Rs. 12.50.

VERE GORDON CHILDE, who died in 1957, was perhaps the greatest prehistorian of his generation. Born in Australia in 1892, he studied archaeology at Oxford and became the professor of archaeology in the University of Edinburgh and the Director of the Institute of Archaeology in the University of London.

A woman of Palme Dutt in his Oxford days, he applied the light provided by Marxism for the analysis of the data supplied by archaeological explorations and reconstructed man's pre-history to vindicate his belief that the progress of man is rational and intelligible and that in this progress no trough ever declines to the low level of the preceding one; each crest out-tops its last precursor. In *The Dawn of European Civilisation* he made a systematic study of European pre-history in the third and second millennia B.C. and demonstrated the relevance of Europe's barbarian past to the understanding of Western Civilisation. He distinguished the food-gathering savagery of the paleolithic period from the food-producing barbarism of neolithic period, when man became the master of his own food supply through the possession of domestic animals and cultivated plants. For him the index of man's progress was biological survival — in terms of increasing population.

In *New Light on the Ancient East*, he turned from Europe to the Orient. In this and which presented prehistoric archaeology as a most fascinating saga of mankind. Childs formulated the theory of the second revolution of urbanisation as a necessary consequence of the inherent contradictions of the barbarism, mainly the competition for land between hunters and cultivators. The resolution of this contradiction was achieved when farmers were persuaded to bring from the soil a sizable surplus which was made available to support new economic classes not directly engaged in producing their own food. Advances in metallurgical technology destroyed the neolithic base and ushered in conditions of civilisation. The skills involved in the production of metal tools required industrial craft specialisation and gave rise to a class of metal-workers, who travelled widely.

Man Makes Himself is a popular treatment of archaeological pre-history. Childs in this book presents pre-history as a continuation of natural history and stresses the similarities between organic evolution and cultural progress. Progress is conceived in biological terms: Neolithic (agricultural) and urban revolutions are described in detail, but eschewing abstruse technicalities. The revolution in man's knowledge is elaborated, and the dialectics of social progress enumerated. The jigsaw puzzle of pre-history assumes a coherent pattern and the reader perceives an emerging new dimension in human history.

St. Achyutha-Menon's translation is faithfully literal, but at the same time eminently readable. The errors which had crept into the first edition brought out in the revised second edition. One is inevitably reminded in this context of Mr. Menon's translation of *A Short History of the World* by H. G. Wells. With these two volumes Mr. Menon has brought the whole panorama of human adventure through pre-history and English-knowing Malaysians. He deserves the gratitude of every serious reader for making available this short classic of interpretative archaeology to the Malayalam readers.

MUNTHIRIPAZHAM: by Moidu Padayath, Pub. H & C. Stores, Kunnankulam, Rs. 4.50.

THE VARAM: by Sree Narayana Guru, compiled by Dr. T. Bhasakaran, Pub. Smt. N. M. Sajeebail, Dist. NBS Kottayam, Rs. 2.

FREEDOM AND OBEDIENCE IN EVANGELICAL PERSPECTIVE: by Marcelino Truzzi, Pub. Pontifical Institute of Theology and Philosophy, Fuchs, Pub. Pontifical Institute of Theology and Philosophy, Always, Rs. 12.00.

INDIA: by Dr. Thomas Paul, Pub. Pontifical Institute of Theology and Philosophy, Always, Rs. 12.00.

Books received

—N. V. KRISHNA WARRIOR