Dr. K. G. Saiyidain was formerly the education advisor to the Indian Government and Secretary of the Ministry of Education. He is currently a member of the Education Commission of India, a body charged with the task of surveying India’s entire field of educational development.

I had the opportunity of spending a full academic session from the beginning of September 1963 to the middle of June 1964 at the East-West Center, Hawaii. It was a pleasant and profitable experience, as it enabled me to devote almost all my time to uninterrupted research and writing. Writing has been one of my occupations for several decades but it was always done side by side with other fairly full time activities—teaching in the first half—or a little less—and educational administration during the second half of my professional career. This has its advantages, for it keeps alive one’s contact with students, teachers and field work and, in this way, gives it a realistic background. But there are disadvantages, too, if that becomes the normal pattern of work. Such writing lacks leisurely reflection and a certain measure of abstraction which is desirable for creative work. This was almost the first time that I had such leisure. Moreover, the Center provided a congenial atmosphere where one was able to meet many kindred minds working in different fields of academic interest and a few who were specialists in one’s own field—in my case, Education. It was always stimulating to discuss, almost every day, problems of common interest with educators from several different countries. And, in some ways, it was even more exciting intellectually to have fortnightly luncheon meetings at which almost all the senior scholars came together, two of whom usually presented papers in their special fields to an intelligent, interested and mostly lay audience and the discussion and debate that followed took on an inter-disciplinary character. The small, professional discussion groups were useful because they enabled the scholars concerned to view their own research projects in a wider perspective and the bigger group helped to widen the mental horizon of all participants and enabled them to see something of the inter-connections which linked up very different areas of knowledge. These things are possible—and sometimes actually available—in universities but often the teachers in them do not have the time or the inclination or the opportunity which the Center provided within its campus.

Before giving a brief idea of the two writing projects on which I was engaged, I should add that, though no teaching duties formed part of our assignment, we were occasionally invited by university departments or local community organizations or even outside universities to address student groups or public meetings. I was, for instance, invited by the Asian Studies Department of the University to speak on the ‘Influence of Islam on Indian Culture’ and on ‘Gandhi’s Scheme of Basic Education’, by the Central Union Church on ‘Religion in the Atomic Age’ and ‘Islam as a Religion’, and by the Punahou School and the Farrington High School to deliver commencement Addresses on ‘Personal Role in the Creation of Values’ and ‘Preparing the Youth for the World to be’. I also addressed the Phi Beta Kappa and Phi Kappa Phi meetings on ‘Academic Excellence’ and participated in the Swami Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Meetings and the Indian Independence Day Celebrations. Amongst other engagements were three public lectures at the University of Hawaii on ‘The Challenge of Freedom to Education’, a public lecture at Teachers College, Columbia University on The Humanist Tradition in Indian Educational Thought’ and an address at the Phi Delta Kappa Annual Meeting on the ‘Faith of an Educationist’. The Institute of Advanced Projects also arranged a panel discussion on significant educational controversies of the age in which senior scholars concerned with education participated and presented their respective points of view. I mention these to indicate that the scholars had the chance, if they cared to take it, of associating themselves with the wider intellectual and academic life of the University and the community and thus escape the danger of academic in-breeding.

I went to the Institute of Advanced Projects at the Center with two writing projects in my mind—a study of the ‘Humanist tradition in Indian educational thought’ and a study of the place of academic, intellectual and artistic values in life and in the University which was eventually entitled ‘Universities and the Life of the Mind’. This was an ambitious undertaking—the attempt to finish two books within a nine to ten months’ period—but I was able
to complete the project through rather hard and concentrated work and also because I have been interested in these themes for many years and had previously thought about them, read and written something about them and wrestled with some of the issues involved. In connection with the first theme I had collected a certain amount of material in India and, with reference to the second, addressed—just before I left India—a communication to all the Vice-Chancellors and a few other distinguished educationists requesting them to give me their considered opinion about the role that the Indian universities, with which they were familiar, were playing in promoting the life of the mind—or otherwise. But let me tell the story a little more systematically to bring out how the project was actually formulated and developed.

The humanist tradition in Indian educational thought:

Why did I choose this particular theme? My idea from the outset was to choose a few outstanding leaders of Indian thought—during the last, say, 100 years—and study the impact of their thinking on Indian education. I had envisaged it originally in terms of what might be called the 'creative contribution' made by them to Indian educational theory and practice. However, as I studied my references and pondered over them and discussed my tentative approach with a few friends interested in the theme, I felt that I should try and find a more definite focus with the object of helping Indian as well as foreign students with education to realize what was the most vivid common strand running through their thinking. Neither a majority of Indian teachers nor, obviously, most western teachers and scholars have had such a study presented to them and, therefore, they are, by and large, unacquainted with the values and the ideals which have inspired some of our most creative minds during this period or with their implications for educational theory and practice. The persons I had chosen—Tagore and Iqbal, two outstanding poets and thinkers; Gandhi and Azad, two eminent leaders of thought and of the political movement for freedom; and Radhakrishnan and Zakir Husian, two distinguished educationists—had not been primarily concerned with the production of professional, educational literature, though several of them had worked as teachers in one way or another for short or long periods. But they had significant points of view on life and on the values that should illumine our welt-anschauung and what they had said or written bore, directly or indirectly, on the pattern of education to be developed in the country. This needed to be elucidated and, since I had an international audience in view in writing the book, I adjusted and broadened my approach so as to introduce the individuals concerned, to show the multiplicity of their impingement on the Indian situation and to present, by way of a preamble, the practical and ideological aspects of the situation in some detail. For an exclusively Indian audience, one could—though one really should not—take certain things for granted, but for a mixed audience such a presumption would be obviously unwarranted. Moreover, it is a vividly educative exercise to try and envisage one's own national scene objectively and present it in a balanced and, so far as possible, unbiased way to such an audience. I sent copies of the first chapter to several friends both in India and the United States with a view of eliciting their reactions and was somewhat reassured by the fact that these were, on the whole, favourable. I profited also from the critical comments made by a few local and Indian colleagues on certain other chapters of the book and incorporated a few of their suggested changes of emphasis.

The book started with this introductory chapter, in which an attempt has been made to present the Indian scene partly in the light of the views expressed and assessment made by these thinkers. One chapter is devoted to a critical analysis and discussion of the ideas of each of the selected persons and their implications for education. The emphasis here has been mainly not on what is merely of national, but of human, significance in it and luckily that is also the intrinsic centre of reference in their thinking. The final chapter, entitled "Bridging the Gulf" seeks to answer the question why there is such a lag between theory and practice and what could be done to build a bridge between them so as to "humanize" the educational system in the light of their thought.

The Center provided, through its intellectual climate and the stimulus of its basic purposes, the right setting for this kind of project and the study may be of some use to educationists in the Western countries in so far as it succeeds in defining and elucidating educational and social values and principles which are necessary for the emergence of a better individual and a better social order in the world of today. I had also the opportunity of presenting the main argument of the book in the form of public lectures at Teachers College, Columbia University, and Stanford University. The response of discerning audiences at both places gave me the impression that they found the presentation of this aspect of Indian thought of professional as well as general interest and significance. I might, perhaps, quote a few lines from the Introduction in which I have tried to underline this wider purpose of the book. "I am anxious to convey to the outside readers a sense of the magnitude and the difficulty of the task which confronts education in India and win over
their discerning goodwill and understanding. For, in this so-called ‘one-world’ of conflicts and misunderstandings, no group or nation can afford to dispense with, or under-rate the value of, such sympathy and understanding. In India, we are not concerned with the forging out of a pattern of education to meet a well-defined, rigid, and, therefore, comparatively simple, situation—an education for capitalism or communism, for uncritical modernism or blind revivalism, for materialism or spiritualism. Such an ‘either-or’ approach is out of place in any country and is—if I may say so—particularly unsuited to our national genius and situation. We have endeavoured—with limited success, I must confess—to reconcile various conflicting claims and considerations: to link the old with the new, to work for improving material standards of living without sacrificing the values of the spirit, to build a socialistic pattern of society without endangering the fundamental freedom of thought, belief and expression and to encourage democracy which should make not friends with the cult of mediocrity. An education that has the ambition to meet such a complicated situation must maintain a vigilant, razor’s-edge balance in order to ensure the ‘no single good custom would corrupt the world’. It would be naive to expect that this presentation could be of any value, without some insight into the various motives, factors and forces which weave the setting in which Indian educational thought has developed and must be envisaged and interpreted.

**Universities and the Life of the Mind:**

This second book was, in a way, a more ambitious project as it started with the idea of trying to assess the place of the academic, intellectual and artistic interests and values in life and the role they had played in enriching its meaning and purpose. I soon realized, in discussing the scheme with some discerning friends, Indian and foreign, that the scope was too wide and it was necessary to define it more sharply. The title was consequently changed from the ‘Life of the Mind’ to ‘Universities and the Life of the Mind’, with the accent on the role of the universities in developing such a life. The first part was envisaged as a general study of the problem, discussing briefly how the mind of man had been on a valiant pilgrimage throughout history in quest of knowledge and wisdom; how this had been a great cooperative adventure in which all ages and races and cultures had joined and to which each had made some contribution; how such cooperation was becoming increasingly imperative; what conditions are favourable to the free growth of this life of the mind; and how both technology and humanism are woven into it because in the world of today, we cannot afford to ignore either, whether our object is the securing of material prosperity or constructing the edifice of the good life. The quest for truth which appears to be an intellectual exercise is seen to widen into an education in values and to form the foundation for certain basic qualities of character. Arguing from that position, the book goes on to underline the significance of intellectual values in education and of maintaining the academic standards of the universities as high as possible so that their graduates may be able to deal intelligently and wisely with the highly complex and difficult problems of the contemporary world. As I have put in one of the chapters, "I plead, therefore, for a purification and reaffirmation of intellectual values in the universities, for a radical improvement of standard of scholarship, for a clear recognition that they are not just centres for passing examinations, whose validity and meaningfulness every one (including the examinees) questions. I do so, not because intellectual values are the only values that matter and other objectives are not important but because these values are central to the work of the university and many of the other values stem out of them. The university is engaged in something much more important than granting degrees—it is helping students to become scientists, mathematicians, geographers, historians, men of letters, psychologists and what not. Its real business is to provide the zest and excitement of discovery, of expanding horizons, of the cross-fertilization of ideas which is possible in a lively multi-faculty university and may conceivably be denied to the narrow groove researcher who digs deeper and deeper but knows little about his intellectual and academic neighbourhood. I plead for research and teaching being associated, going hand in hand so far as possible, so that the teacher may himself feel, and occasionally communicate to his student, the thrill of the discovery of new knowledge or new frontiers and a glimpse of the channels through which it is made. Likewise, it is important that the man who is predominantly concerned with research should not lose contact with teaching, because it keeps his mind fresh and guards him against the danger of becoming too narrow in his outlook."

The second part of the book has a more specific purpose—the examination of how universities in general and Indian universities in particular are discharging their functions in promoting life of the mind and what are the causes which stand in the way of their doing so effectively and adequately. For this part of the work it was necessary to obtain materials and information as well as opinions and reactions from the ‘field workers’. So I addressed a letter to the Vice-Chancellors of all the Indian universities—and later a suitably revised communication to a certain number of distinguished university men and women in the United States and elsewhere—inviting them to express their views about the problem in general, their specific experiences in their own universities and the reasons which had hindered the universities in playing their rightful role. I received quite good response—though, naturally, the quality varied from person to person—but there was broad, in fact enthusiastic, agreement with the definition of the purposes of the university as

**Continued on page 34**