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THE MORARJI PAPERS

The
Secret History Of
The Fall Of
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WE HAVE EXPLODED a nuclear device. We have designed and built a nuclear power plant. Our industries produce on a scale that makes us the ninth leading industrial nation in the world. Our know-how in space technology, in computer sciences and in electronics is acknowledged with respect in the developed world.

Despite a thin construction materials market, we put up in record time a sprawling sports complex of international specifications in New Delhi for the Asian Games last year. We had no organised or really skilled labour for the task—the workers were brought in from neighbouring states and were given on-job training. The workers had no housing, but they managed to survive the work. By all accounts it was a great accomplishment.

On the other side, in this very country, when it comes to providing drinking water to the villages, or providing minimal civic facilities like toilets to the villages and towns in India, we freeze. Nothing moves out of election manifestoes or governmental promises and plans. Cities decay, towns reduce to shambles, the telephones do not work, there never is adequate transport, medical facilities for most of the poor are non-existent, even educational facilities are totally inadequate.

And these are the things that matter. The amenity people want most from Kanyakumari to Delhi and beyond is a drinking water well, as Mahatma Gandhi discovered 60 years ago and Janata Party President Mr Chandrashekhar has discovered during his walkathon from South to North recently. (Everyone with eyes to see and a little bit of concern has known of the need all their lives, but that is another matter.) Still, in a land with underground water resources at easily recoverable depths (except in hilly areas and parts of Rajasthan where deeper digging will be required) drinking water is not available to millions of our village people, or when available it is unfit for human consumption.

The hardships—in terms of long distances walked to and from the water source, the long queues, the effort required to draw the water, the inevitable quarrels and the burden of carrying the load back in heat, rain or cold—village folks go through in many parts of India is harrowing, their suffering in drought conditions heartbreaking.

And yet, we have done very little in the last three decades to provide drinking water, done almost nothing to provide toilets, have proved unequal to the task of providing adequate transport, functioning telephone systems or minimal medicine facilities.

Why?

Because your government does not care. Your Prime Minister does not care. Your ministers do not care. Your elected representatives do not care. Our bureaucrats and our planners do not care. And sadly, our people also do not really care.

Let's go back to the exploding of the nuclear device—a very swift, clean, efficient operation carried out in total secrecy. Mrs Indira Gandhi, the Prime Minister, wanted the explosion. Two or three other bureaucrats wanted it. The country at large was unaware of it so the question of them wanting or not wanting it does not arise. The Prime Minister got done what she wanted done.

Consider the Asiad. Mrs Gandhi, the Prime Minister, wanted the spectacle to be held. When the complex was being built, the Prime Minister herself and a member of her government were taking direct, day-to-day interest in the project. Her son Rajiv was involved. Its progress was reported to the Prime Minister at frequent intervals. The Prime Minister's secretariat ensured smooth flow of colossal funds through varied agencies, her Ministers threw out rules books, all hurdles were removed with an efficiency that was truly remarkable. When the complex was completed and the Asian Games successfully held, it was something to be proud of. A job well done.

Then the Prime Minister was interested in the non-aligned Heads of State Conference. Recall the speed and the efficiency; recall how every conceivable need of the distinguished visitors was provided for.

Now Mrs Gandhi is interested in making an event of the Commonwealth Prime Ministers meeting in November. When the Fort Aguada Beach Resort and the adjoining Taj Village facilities were being considered for a short retreat for the visiting Prime Ministers, she went there herself. The bridge on the river Juari on the way to Fort Aguada from the airport which was decaying, unfinished for ten years has been suddenly completed, parts of the road are being widened. Come November and we will see facilities there which were beyond one's reasonable expectation before the Prime Minister's interest.

I have cited these examples, just to show that in our country right from Jawaharlal Nehru's administration, things get done only when the Prime Minister or members of his/her family are interested or involved. Is not Maruti about to make its debut on the road despite Sanjay Gandhi's passing away? Do you think the Maruti scandal would have been laundered into a nationalised industry if Mrs Gandhi was not so directly involved in it? Do you think Asiad would have been pushed through if Rajiv Gandhi was not around to collect the kudos? Do you think the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting is all that important until you see it from Mrs Gandhi's opportunistic angle? Not a few expect mid-term polls to be announced soon after the spectacular gala. After all, did she not herself fail to attend at least one meeting? Tiny Singapore hosted an earlier conference without much fanfare. London holds them as a matter of routine. But to get back to drinking water. What we need to realise is the fact that if the Prime Minister is not interested in providing drinking water, the government is not interested. Once this is realised, then and then only we can move to the next stage: get the Prime Minister interested.

If Mr Chandrashekhar, in the wake of his discovery concerning drinking water, wishes to do something about water, he ought to direct his hoses at the Prime Minister.

R.V. Pandit



The case against Antulay

Your article on Antulay (July 1983) was biased, even though well researched. Though you have done a good job of exposing Antulay's schemes and methods you have conveniently forgotten to mention that other politicians like Sharad Pawar and Shalinitai Patil have also founded trusts with similar aims and through similar methods. Antulay may be the devil, but he is not the only one.

SV Kelkar
Poona-9

Congrats for your cover story on Antulay. As a Southerner I could not figure out what this controversy about trusts and cement was all about. Now after reading **Imprint** I have a clear idea about Antulay's dealings and the significance of the Court Case.

Mohan Pillai
Trivandrum-1

Sai Baba

I was surprised to see an article on Sathya Sai Baba (June 1983) under the slug 'Hocus-Pocus'. I am not his devotee but I do think he is one of the few saints in our country who should command respect. To call him a hoax or a conjurer, is unpardonable sacrilege.

G Vasantha Pai
Madras-20

Both the previous Saibaba of Shirdi and the present one, Sathya Sai, have millions of followers in the world. Sai Baba does not accept anything from anybody, as he declares, "I have come in the world only to give and not to take." He accepts only love, devotion and flowers (on festivals). He materializes *vibhuti*, rings, lockets etc only out of his love for his devotees.

PC Sorcar earns his living by concocting illusions. He is welcome to entertain but your magazine has come under a cloud in the eyes of Sai Baba's millions of followers.

Sushil C Verma
Lucknow-1

Arun Shourie

Dhiren Bhagat's 'scholarly' analysis of Arun Shourie's writings is one of the most facile articles I have read. Shourie, he says, is an ace journalist, but a bad theorist. (Why, pray? Because he misquotes Hobbes!) Mr Bhagat you miss the point completely. The Indian intelligentsia respects Shourie for his sheer guts and perseverance in unearthing corruption and revealing the true, base nature of our *netas*, not for his theoretical acumen, which you are so pained to read.

Shourie writes in anger and often this leads to rhetorical flourishes. But this should be excused because Shourie is justified in feeling angry at the current state of affairs in India. Mr Bhagat obviously does not understand this anger and is unmoved by it, so he falls back to nitpicking. This is a sad commentary of the level of political consciousness amongst our young, presumably bright, so-called 'columnists'.

TK Mahadevan
Bombay-19



The new **Imprint**

Thank you for sending me a copy of the new **Imprint**. I read it with considerable interest and find that your magazine is being widely commented upon.

Karan Singh, MP
New Delhi-21

I am happy to see fiction back in **Imprint**.

KV Chacko
Nagpur-13

What are Godmen and magicians (both second rate) doing in a slick, smart magazine like the new **Imprint**?

Arvind Lele
New Delhi-11

For quite some time I was not in touch with **Imprint**, but the latest issues have fascinated me. The new format is attractive and the contents equally interesting.

Congratulations to Sunaina Lowe for her *Portrait of a Sentimental Hijra* (I would like to read her article on the feminist wave). The *In My Own Room* column on Justice Shah and Shirin Mehta's *Bestsellers and the Dirty Business of Double Dealing* also made good reading.

Shabd Kumar
Bombay-51

I must thank you for the format of **Imprint** but I feel sorry for the reduced number of pages.

BN Bose
Jamshedpur-4

I would like to congratulate you on the new slant. I do hope you will maintain a unique **Imprint** style and not get into the habit of becoming just another publication of the type which is today flooding the market.

AA Borges
Bombay-21

I do not know what happens when a 'serious' magazine like yours takes a plunge into the world of Hindi films, Swadeshi chic and portraits of ultra-rich drawing rooms.

I have a strong, pleasant nostalgia of **Imprint**—of Ruskin Bond, deeply moving biographies, crisp political comments etc. For me **Imprint** has been the most seasoned magazine on the book stall and I hope it will always be so (sigh!).

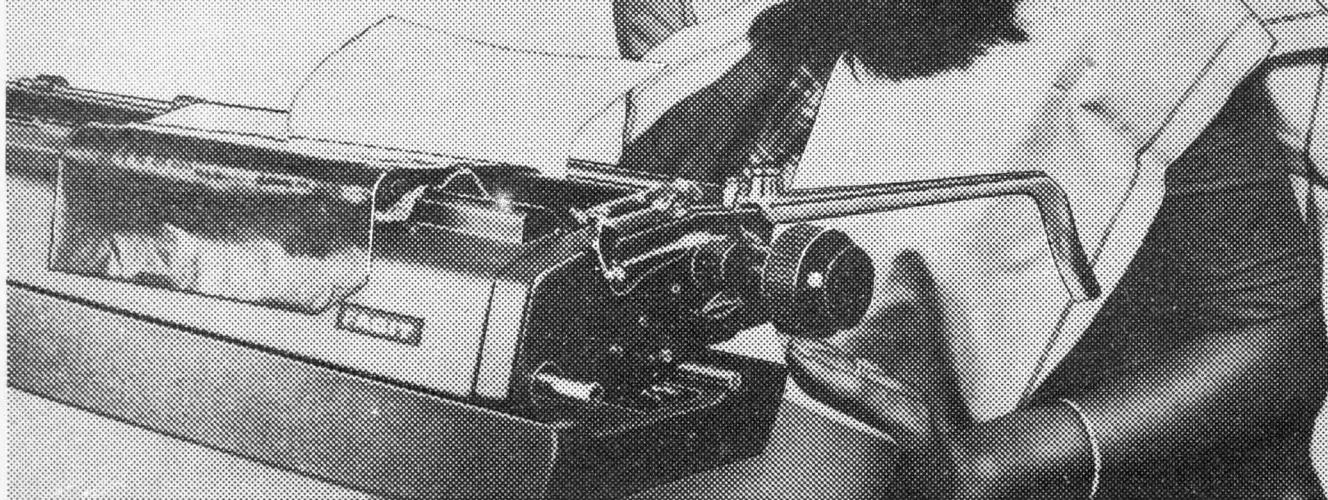
Dr Kaushal Dingra
New Delhi-5

Imprint is going places. When I went out to buy a copy I couldn't get one with my news vendor. Ultimately I procured one with great difficulty and I must say it was worth the effort.

Kathy Menezes
Bombay-26

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on a FACIT.**

**Today,
I'm the P.A.
to the M.D.**



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American tourists, empty five star hotels and visiting Yankee hotshots add to Delhi's somnolence.

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DISCO SWEEPS THE HEARTLAND

It is more than a musical boom. Disco hair pins, disco suitings and disco mutton

shops have invaded the Indian consciousness. A slightly cynical look at the makings of a sociological phenomenon.

Cover photograph:

Ashok Gupta

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Javed Jaffrey and

Aparna Sharma

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THE YOGI AND THE COMMISSAR

By Arthur Koestler

When *Imprint* first carried Koestler's demolition of the Gandhi myth, the Mahatma was unfashionable. Now, in the midst of the Gandhi boom we reprint one of the most influential critiques of the decade.

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The secret history of the fall of the Janata Government pieced together from the confidential documents Morarji took with him when he resigned the Prime Ministership.

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Ruskin Bond serenades the Sruswa and recalls the legends surrounding it.

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In heavily unionised Bombay, the brick kilns still use bonded Adivasi labour. For the workers, there is no respite till the end of their days.

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By Dave Pollock

They are among the world's greatest film makers, but the makers of *Star Wars* and *The Godfather* have fallen out.

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By Dhiren Bhagat

Bombay's newest and youngest columnist takes a look at the likes of Khushwant Singh, Shobha Kilachand and Rajinder Puri.

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BY BM SINHA

SPLITS IN THE SUPREME COURT

The Justices have formed their own groups.

A STRUGGLE IS on present-
ly at the Supreme Court, the
highest seat of India's judi-
ciary, for the protection of
human dignity and freedom
from the laws and the tradi-
tions that violate them. But
how the goal is going to be
achieved is not clear to those
who have watched with ad-
miration the zealous efforts
of the judiciary, despite its
several weaknesses, in modern-
ising Indian society. It has
gone far ahead of the other
limbs of the State in reacting
to the pressures of change.

The struggle is, however,
marked by two striking fea-
tures—one, the ideological
beliefs of some of the dis-
tinguished members of the
judiciary and two, caution on
the part of some other
judges in rushing into changes
that may harm society instead
of benefitting it. But in the
past months it is the ideologi-
cal outlook of some of the
judges that has dominated the
scenes in the court and the
Bench's judgements.

A recent instance was
the Court's decision to re-examine capi-
tal punishment. The matter arose be-
cause Deen Dayal, a condemned pris-
oner petitioned the Supreme Court chal-
lenging the constitutionality of the
death penalty. Deen Dayal had been
condemned to death in 1974 and had
tried a variety of means to escape the
gallows. Some astute lawyers, sensing
the mood of the Bench, advised him to
go to the Supreme Court and on May
6, a bench composed of Justices
Chandrachud, Venkataramiah and
Mukherji stayed his execution for ten
weeks and asked the government to ex-
plain why hanging did not violate



Articles 14 and 21 of the Constitution.
The matter will be taken up this
month.

In February, the Court had already
delivered a major judgement against
the death penalty. A Tamilnadu con-
vict TV Vaitheswaran had sent the
Court a mercy petition in March 1982,
only to have it rejected. The Court did
not know then that he had been sen-
tenced in 1975. This February, when
it heard a fresh appeal from Vaithes-
waran, it ruled that if the delay in
execution of the death sentence ex-
ceeded two years, it was liable to be
commuted to life imprisonment.

The judgement was significant be-
cause most death sentences take longer
than two years to implement. In effect,
the Court had ruled against the ex-

ecution of *all* death sentences.

Many lawyers felt that the
Court had overreached itself.
They felt it was now attempt-
ing to legislate by judgement.
Moreover, the ideological fac-
tor also came into play. The
judgement was delivered by
Chinnappa Reddy, who is
widely perceived as being left
wing. Many left wing jurists
(including Krishna Iyer, a
former Supreme Court judge)
have actively campaigned
against the death penalty.
Now, it seemed that judg-
ments were being used to
sneak in ideological shifts in
the law.

Five weeks later, the Court
seemed to admit that it had
been too hasty. A three-judge
Bench, presided over by Chief
Justice Chandrachud ruled,
while hearing another peti-
tion, that there could be no
automatic commutations of
the sentence. It conceded that
in most cases, it took at least
four or five years for the
sentence to be executed.

The brave and controversial
judgement had, in effect, been
revoked. But the fact that the Court
had shown the courage to be so
adventurous initially, is in marked
contrast to its earlier timidity. Till 1977,
the Court had a limited view of its role.
It tended to restrict itself to interpret-
ing legislation and avoided putting for-
ward its own concept of what the law
should mean. During the Emergency, it
was so subservient to Mrs Gandhi's
regime that lawyers had begun to
despair of ever getting enlightened and
liberal judgements from the Bench.

Since 1977, that has changed. A
major advocate of this change is PN
Bhagwati, widely regarded as one of
the Court's brightest jurists. Despite
the controversy that has dogged him
(Arun Shourie attacked him a few years
ago) Bhagwati has had a hand in some

BM Sinha is the former Managing Editor of
Probe. He now freelances from Delhi.

Some lawyers get their cases heard before judges whose views are favourable to their clients.

of the Bench's landmark judgements. In the Maneka Gandhi case (in 1978), Bhagwati held that any encroachment on personal freedom must not be arbitrary, unfair or unreasonable and that it must satisfy the test of Article 21 (protection of life and liberty). The Janata government, which had impounded Maneka Gandhi's passport was properly chastened.

Bhagwati has now become the Court's leading 'public interest' judge—an activist who has interpreted the Supreme Court's role so it is now a defender of the public interest. His critics however maintain that in his enthusiasm to change things Bhagwati fails to see that totalitarian forces can take advantage of his verdicts. In the Minerva Mills case, Bhagwati held that Fundamental Rights could be subordinated to the Directive Principles—a judgement that could be misused.

Some of Bhagwati's colleagues on the Bench differ from him on the role of the Court. This is now so widely known that lawyers can anticipate judgements simply by learning what the composition of the Bench is. The legal profession also feels that judges have political views. Just before the Assam elections, Mr Justice Bahrul Islam resigned from the Court and stood on a Congress (I) ticket—this further strengthened the view that the judges were not apolitical.

By last year, some of the Court's disagreements were also beginning to surface publicly. Speaking at a symposium in Pune in October 1982, Mr Justice VD Tulzapurkar referred to the dangers that the judiciary was facing from both within and without. After delivering a few broadsides at the Attorney General, he turned to his colleagues. One of Tulzapurkar's colleagues, Justice Desai had referred to the Indian judicial system as a 'smuggled' one, because it had been brought in from Britain. Now, Tulzapurkar made his dissent clear. Why should anyone insinuate the system was 'smuggled', he wanted to know. The

audience did not miss the reference to Desai and it realized that Bhagwati was being criticized when Tulzapurkar expressed his reservations about public interest legislation. Was it not giving birth to 'unseemly trends', he asked? He was also critical of the practice popularized by the likes of Bhagwati of treating any letter addressed to a judge as a writ petition. Did this not compromise the impartiality of the judiciary? In the famous judges case, Bhagwati had poked gentle fun at the Chief Justice and this too, did not meet with Tulzapurkar's approval.

In January 1983, one of the Court's so-called 'leftists' reacted to Tulzapurkar's criticisms. Inaugurating a seminar in New Delhi, Mr Justice Chinnappa Reddy delivered what can best be described as a Marxist view of the judicial system. Sprinkling his talk with such buzz-words as 'bourgeoisie', he put forward the claim that the Constitution deflected any attack on class interest by placing restrictions on some of the fundamental rights by providing for preventive detention, by relegating the right to work to the Directive Principles while enshrining the right to property as a fundamental right. It was the bourgeoisie that had triumphed in 1947 and the constitution it laid down reflected its narrow class outlook.

According to Reddy the Constitution makers' bourgeoisie outlook was reflected in the fact that they did not even mention the word socialism in the Constitution—it was added to the Preamble 27 years later, through the 42nd amendment. But even this, Reddy feels is too inadequate—the Constitution would become socialist only if it includes the fundamental right to work, education, decent wages and 'State control over the means of production'. He concedes that the Indian constitution is quite liberal. Such liberalism according to him is the bourgeoisie's weapon against feudalism but is still very far removed from 'scientific socialism'. Reddy believes the Indian judiciary has consistently supported the

interests of the bourgeoisie, challenging the feudal order on the one hand, and resisting radical change on the other.

Reddy did not think that the Court was a purely bourgeois institution because if it was regressive at one stage it was progressive at another. Some judgements reflected 'historical consciousness' while others reflected 'class consciousness'. Nevertheless, the general tone of Reddy's speech was critical of the constitution.

It is worth noting that Reddy was one of the five-member Bench that had heard the Coking Coal case some months before (the others were Venkataramiah, Bahrul Islam, Bhagwati and Sen). Except for Sen, all the judges had made comments about the Minerva Mills judgement that were seen as being uncalled for. The Court had ruled in that case that Directive Principles could not have supremacy over Fundamental Rights (Bhagwati had delivered a minority judgement). The four 'activists' on the Coking Coal bench had used that opportunity to attack this decision. For the 'progressives', the Minerva Mills judgement was a manifestation of 'class consciousness'. Indeed, Reddy approvingly quoted large chunks of Bhagwati's minority judgement.

And so, the split persists. That the Bench is divided can no longer be concealed. Just as the Supreme Court has its conservatives and liberals, the Indian Court has its activists (or progressives) and its more conservative members. In fact some lawyers get their cases heard before judges whose views they know are favourable to their clients.

Whether this split will be resolved, remains uncertain. But even if it does not, many jurists are agreed that it is by its^{self}, not necessarily a bad thing. In any evolving judicial system there will be a divergence of views. That the Court should represent more than one view is probably, desirable in such circumstances.

BY KF RUSTAMJI

COULD THE ARMY TAKE OVER?

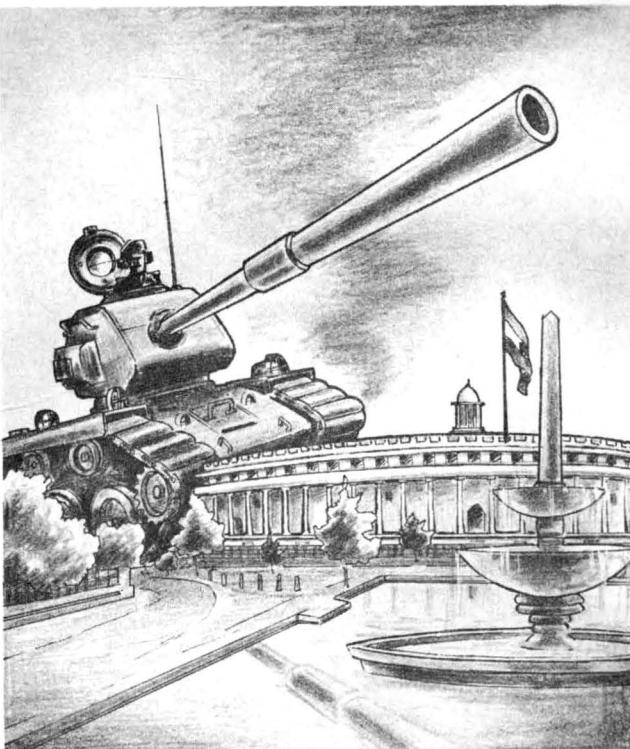
A distinguished policeman probes the military mind.

MANY GOVERNMENTS the world over and especially on our flanks, have been toppled by military coups d'état in the last three decades. Local and foreign media cagily refer to it as a possibility here and the subject comes up periodically for heated discussion in drawing rooms, coffee houses and bazaars when administration is at a low ebb, when prices are spiralling and essential commodities are not available, when normal and basic facilities are in a state of collapse owing to indiscipline, and most of all, when people are thoroughly disgusted with the antics of corrupt and ineffective politicians.

Trying to fathom the mechanics of the coup problem in its depth as a case study, I specially requested a good military friend of mine—who has been an expert in high command and who is a thinking combat soldier of repute—to frame for me the essential inputs for a successful military coup d'état at a lunch we had together in a busy restaurant. (I realised as soon as we had settled down that it was the wrong place to talk of military coups.) He scribbled a few jottings for himself on the back of a paper napkin then gave me his exposé so readily that, for a moment, my policeman's mind was taken aback. Is it true, I wondered, that every military officer at sometime or the other in service has thought about the possibility and given it up as a bad proposition?

To revert to the General (and here it is best that I quote him as exactly as possible), he said to me in his clipped Dehra Dun accent:

"The bill of fare is an open secret after so many coups all round us. I



have made a study of the subject and I stand convinced that modern military coups, on the classical pattern, are only possible under extremely favourable conditions where all the required and interrelated inputs are available, at a given point of time and space, to guarantee certainty of success. The hazard of miscalculation when a country is so large and heterogeneous, like ours, is indeed great. Let us take the inputs one by one." He cleared part of the table and put the salt cellar in the middle.

"First, there has to be an over-ambitious, utterly ruthless and totally selfish military leader with a paranoia of great dreams for himself." (He used the salt cellar to symbolize the dictator.) "He should have been entrenched in a suitable position of power over a period of some time and the forces *de frappe* he is to employ should be dispositioned correctly so that they are poised near his intended targets.

"Secondly, this future military dictator has to be served by a totally

loyal, absolutely committed, united and homogeneous instrument of power—in the form of mobile military units and formations preferably of one class, creed, race and thinking—led by a *junta* of officers who will carry out his orders without any reservation not only in one single geographic spot like the capital city, but also simultaneously at numerous strategic locations all over—ensuring that there is no opposition whatsoever to their scheme either from within their own service or from the other sister services of the armed forces in the early stages."

Three forks were placed round the salt cellar, representing the armed services.

"Thirdly," he continued, "the coup leader has to be certain beyond a shadow of

doubt that he and his cabal enjoy, throughout planning and execution, absolute secrecy ensuring that nothing is known to any squeamish elements among their own colleagues—and the various intelligence agencies. Also that they have full control over their own communications—all nets—and complete knowledge regarding all other nets like radio, police, railways. Also, he would have to implement a cunning deception-cum-cover plan of great ingenuity to fool everyone."

He plucked a flower and placed it on the salt cellar. The dictator looked like a man in a straw hat protected by steel.

After a large deep swig of beer and after carefully selecting another Charminar (in the old days it must have been black Balkan Sobranie) from his sliding 'Gold Smiths and Silver Smiths' crested cigarette case with the Piffer colours in enamel, our inspired General continued: "A good point of impact is usually the national capital city and it is best if it is a 'one horse town' with

KF Rustamji was a distinguished police officer and Director General of the Border Security Force.

The dictator's life would be made miserable by fasts- unto-death, strikes of all types, millions in procession.

concentration of all critical and key national personalities and installations (like the cabinet, the main radio, television and all other inter-communication stations, etc), whose sudden seizure would generate all over a total collapse of government in power and create a wave of popularity for the new dictator. The change is exhilarating for a few days, for people wanting a change badly."

The waiter, who appeared with the soup, was driven away with a brusque command. He looked back at us. Tomorrow intelligence will come to know, I said to myself, that two men were discussing military matters in a furtive manner, one of them looked like a military officer and the other was nondescript, probably a foreign agent.

"Another prime requirement," (the salt cellar dictator had to be shaken over the soup), "is that the masses of the people, who should not be of too many different creeds, castes and religions, must have lost faith completely in the parliamentary form of democracy and there should be among them no leader of eminence who can arouse popular and hostile reactions quickly against the coup. In fact certain key national leaders, both military and political, will have to be suitably eliminated by the coup-makers in advance, but then so far we have had no habit of this particular exercise, like some of our neighbours."

After a pause, the General continued: "Finally, despite the ultimate failure of all military coups the world over (including the initial popularity waves for the odd Ayub Khans) our pocket Napoleon and his minions will have to possess that absolute fanatical inner conviction that their actions would be to the national good."

He continued: "Now I must tell you how and why a military dictatorship would fail in India. Supposing some damn fool were made to climb on the horse; he would be brought down very soon—not by the paramilitary—but by the women and children

who have brought down Ayub and several others. Students made Ayub resign in three months. Women have shown in Assam what they can do to hold up battalions of men. The dictator's life would be made miserable by *dharnas, morchas*, fasts-unto-death, strikes of all types, millions in procession. What can a handful of police or paramilitary do against the raging avalanche of people in an overpopulated country like ours?

"You are right," I said. "Even if the rate of population declines, which seems unlikely at present, we will still have large scale killings from about the year 1985, like the mass killings in Indonesia and China. The fertility of the land has been declining, we are decimating the forests, fouling our rivers, fragmenting the land, even reducing the rainfall—doing everything that will decrease our overall production—at a time when population is increasing furiously. We may reach a stage soon when murder becomes a biological necessity."

To this he added: "As a people we do not believe in birth control. And the younger generation has little faith in non-violence. The mass killings have started already—tribal violence in Tripura, street riots in Ahmedabad, anti-Harijan clashes in Uttar Pradesh.

"As a 'coupologist,'" he continued, "I must say that coups are also possible through insurgency or by proxy when some future political and competent authority is forced, due to chaos, to legally grant to an Indian Bonaparte the reins of the country's government."

If the forces of logic are against such an action by the Indian Army, then why have our people and the media talked about military coups *d'état* periodically? Is it because of a panic-rumour habit to which we are all addicted? Or is it because of journalistic jingoism? Or is it because of the fear of retribution on the part of some corrupt and power hungry politicians? For instance, many may recall that soon after Prime Minister Nehru's

death in May 1964, a prominent national newspaper, *The Statesman*, in a signed centre-page article mentioned sinister movements of a large number of Indian army units into the capital city as well as the gathering of certain 'over-ambitious' top military commanders—all ostensibly under the cover of arrangements being made for the funeral. The paper alleged that nothing untoward took place because of last-minute panic on the part of two of the top coup leaders. How easily such a story can be compounded! Perhaps the tale was made up by some discontented army individuals wanting to slander their colleagues and gain a little cheap popularity, thereby trying to show that they were more loyal to the party in power than anyone else.

Earlier, in 1960, there was a rumour that General Thimayya was planning a coup because he could not get on with Krishna Menon, the Defence Minister. Both Nehru and Thimayya ignored the rumour as a joke, even ribbing each other about what one would do to the other in case it turned out to be true. Years later, when Mrs Gandhi was unseated there were repeated rumours that General Raina, then Chief of Army Staff, had been asked to take over the Government, but he had refused to do so. This again turned out to be just a rumour.

By the time we had finished our lunch I had come to the conclusion that the essential inputs of a successful and classical coup by our military do not exist at all in the case of parliamentary democracy in India today. Further, it would be ridiculous to imagine that our present paramilitary forces can ever counterbalance the might of the Indian Armed Forces. The paramilitary neither have the requisite weaponry nor the warranted leadership to interfere in the rare event of a successful coup, but if there is an abortive situation, they might be utilized, in some limited degree and with the active cooperation of other loyal elements. Nevertheless, even at some

of our national institutions—where I have been asked to lecture to discriminating audiences—the question crops up inevitably as to whether the Border Security Force was created as a counterpoise to the Indian Army. A military coup *per se* under our conditions is impossible. What, however, can take place, as my friend the coupologist said to me, is that the constituted legal and competent authority may some day order—formally and in writing—the Indian Army to temporarily take over a situation which has totally gone beyond control in some large portions of the country or the entire nation or due to hunger for retaining power and/or continuing one's own party rule. In that remote eventuality, it is also feasible that—having once sat, initially against his own will, in the seat of power and tasted absolute authority as well as temporary popularity—some future Indian Army Samudragupta and his military colleagues may not like to relinquish charge when the situation has been restored. It is this kind of a coup directly generated by the politicians themselves, that the public will have to guard against.

My learned military expert—with a

glow on his scarred face and his monocle clapped on his seeing eye—said: “The whole subject—in relation to our country—is utter baloney, absolute poppycock, mere myth.”

Times have changed, I said to myself. There was a time when Mohammed Ayub of Pakistan made it appear, thanks to American help, that a military dictatorship was the best form of government for a poor country. It took Ayub only a few years to ruin a whole sub-continent. Since then coups do not seem to be very popular.

“Coups d'état,” the General continued, “are of course possible, in our context, by only the non-military. But that, old chap, is another story. The totally patriotic elements on the Indian scene, are our nation's Armed Forces. And you should thank God for that.”

I said ‘Jai Hind’ with some fervour as we moved out.

In view of the possibilities however, our national systems should be checked again and again by injecting intrinsic inner strengths to defeat any diabolical aims by power-hungry Caesars. They wield in their hands the big stick of jobbery and rank (ranging from public

sector assignments to ambassadorships to governorships to many plum elevations) as well as other attractive rewards including honours and awards (ranging from national decorations to grants of all sorts of *sanads*, contracts, licences and benefits). These are indeed tempting plums to dangle before anyone who is ambitious. After all we too have in sizable numbers those who ‘just for a handful of silver’ can desert a nation in crisis. It is, therefore, crucial that our political morals and character should permit periodic changes of ineffective and unpopular governments through the democratic voice of the people projected via the process of secret ballot box. Our intrinsic strengths should continue to be developed on many fronts like: good democratic habits and purity in elections, our unity in diversity as well as our traditions and way of life. Above all we must not permit vice and corruption in the ruler, which led to the fall of numerous dynasties in the past. The former British Prime Minister James Callaghan described India as a ‘crowning jewel of democracy.’ Let's hope the jewel is not stolen by some adventurer to stick into his cap. ♦



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BY ARUN CHACKO

FIVE STAR VISITORS

Muted Yanks and empty hotels. Delhi snores on.

IF ANYTHING COMPETES with the perversity marking the conduct of Indo-Pakistan relations, it is the conduct of Indo-American relations.

US Secretaries of State and on occasion even Presidents may visit New Delhi generating a lot of local excitement. Mrs Gandhi will undoubtedly return to get her hair done in New York and charm Washington society with her presence and silk sarees. But save for temporary (often bogus) euphoria during the visit, the world's two largest democracies will invariably return to their traditional, though muted, hostile relationship.

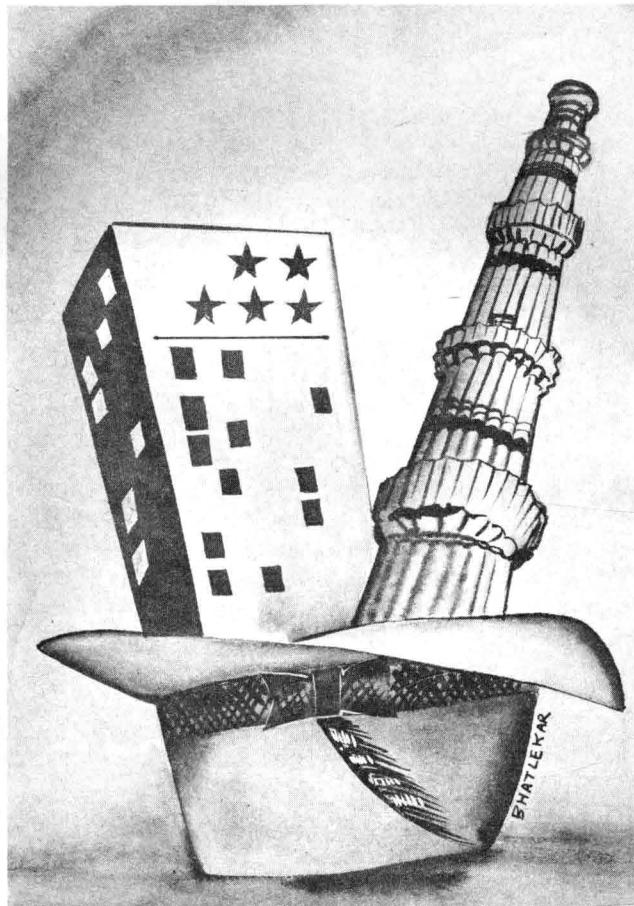
Secretary of State George P Shultz's recent visit was no different. For anyone who wished to read between the lines of the fairly guarded statements emerging from both sides, the trip was unlikely to set either the Yamuna or the Potomac on fire.

The question of spares for the Tarapore Atomic Power Station might ostensibly have been sorted out. But given the American system, there is many a slip between official approval and implementation.

The seeds of the fairly disastrous course of Indo-American relations go back to the early '50s. Then, according to their frontier theory, you were either a good guy which meant for capitalism, the free world and their military alliances. Otherwise, quite simply, a Communist and a mortal enemy. No shades of gray were permissible.

Non-alignment, even though it was so obviously necessary for Indian self interest, was just another pinko plot and those who were part of it were treated accordingly. Obviously, Paki-

Arun Chacko is Associate Editor of Boston's The World Paper. He is based in Delhi and writes frequently on sub-continental affairs.



stan took advantage of the situation, virtually became a US satellite, and in a few years India and the United States were ranged on different sides on almost every subject under the sun. For them Pakistan was obviously much more reliable—and useful.

While American attitudes towards non-alignment are more rational today, the early damage done to Indo-American relations cannot easily be repaired. Both sides have been locked into opposing positions for decades and cannot easily extricate themselves from them. Given the American view of the world, geopolitical needs and the marginal importance of India, the compulsions of Indo-American relations are not great enough for them to look at this country very differently.

Also for the mass of America, India

always criticises the US in the UN and takes positions alongside the Soviet Union. This causes problems for this country even when the US President and State Department is well disposed towards it, since almost every action has to be ratified by a Congress which reflects the electorate's views. During a conservative Republican regime like the present one, the situation is almost impossible.

Given past form, unless we perform a highly unlikely volte face of Chinese dimensions, Indo-American relations will either be lukewarm or bad. Seems a pity, because there really are more things in common than the state of the relationship suggests.

* * *
GEORGE SHULTZ PROBABLY had no option. But this is absolutely not the best time to visit the capital, though the monsoon has certainly taken the edge off summer's heat.

However, if one happens to come, finding five star accommodation at one star prices is no problem. In fact, given spiralling rents and inadequate housing, it might be worthwhile permanently living in luxury hotels and certainly cheaper.

As matters stand, it is possible to get a Rs 600 room in a spanking new hotel for just Rs 150. Though a little discreet haggling at the front office might be required for that kind of discount. Rooms at half prices are freely available. Monthly boarders would probably do much better.

Thanks to the rather grandiose dreams of our planners, about ten new five star hotels were sanctioned to come up in time for the Asian Games. As is well known, though getting various government concessions, none did. What's more, they weren't even needed, which says a lot for our planning.

We demand health certificates when our prime traditional export is communicable disease.

Almost a year later, a few have opened their doors for custom. Only, there is no custom.

Many of these new hotels have eight to ten per cent occupancy. The best off among them no more than 30 per cent. What will happen when the other four or five at fairly advanced stages of construction come onto the market is anybody's guess.

Why officialdom could not take the advise of proven experts in matters beyond their comprehension is hard to understand. At a widely reported press conference shortly after the fateful decision, Mr MS Oberoi, the genius behind the Oberoi Hotels' world-wide success, clearly and unambiguously warned the government of the perils of creating an unmanageable glut. Precisely that is happening.

The Oberoi itself has shelved its plans for an extension. Another hotel, the Sofitel is already up for sale. The Taj is doddering and engaged in an unseemly price war with its nearest competitor, the Maurya. The Centaur seems to be doing better than either but only by a whisker. And Charanjit Singh's dream hotel, the Meridien, which has been surrounded with so much controversy and allegations of arm-twisting, may probably never get completely built—it is just not worth the effort. Prices in the restaurants of all these hotels have swooped to an unimaginable (at least by five star standards) low.

Hotels require at least a 50 per cent occupancy average over the first three or four years, to stand any chance of making a subsequent profit. But there isn't even a faint hope of that at present. Despite widely reported government pronouncements to the contrary, the tourist business has consistently been at an ebb. Foreign tourists coming to India constitute only a very small fraction of the world-wide tourist traffic—smaller than that of those going to Thailand, Singapore or even Sri Lanka. Of course, even amongst those few who would like to come to

India for a holiday, many are likely to be turned off by our inexplicable visa restrictions.

* * *

TALKING OF INDIA'S tourist potential, this country's charms for the average traveller are somewhat overstated and perhaps to buttress that officialdom fudges the figures. Annual tourist arrivals are stated to be around 800,000 when in fact over three quarters is ethnic traffic. It goes straight from the airport to the villages of Punjab, Gujarat or Kerala and hardly contributes to tourism earnings.

Anyone who specifically comes to India has to be fairly interested in architecture. Our remaining attractions—Goa, Kashmir or the temples—are pretty far flung and everyone knows Indian Airlines' efficiency especially in confirming onward tickets. Getting there is both expensive and time consuming.

But the point is how many people are that interested in old buildings. Who among us, for instance, would travel all the way to Vienna just to see its spectacular architecture, though it has much more than that.

Much better deals are available outside India and at cheaper cost. And you don't have to cope with infuriating Indian bureaucracy right from the time you land. For instance, only we have the cheek to demand health certificates, when our prime traditional export has been communicable disease.

To give credit where it's due, Delhi has recently made considerable strides in giving us equality with foreigners. Many a tourist was willing to brawl with hotel managements for refusal to serve his Indian guests liquor. Thanks to some misguided official attempt to save our souls, we could not drink in public places. Mercifully, now we can.

As an infuriated English friend faced with this situation commented, "There are two places I know Indians cannot drink in hotels—South Africa and here."



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COSMIC

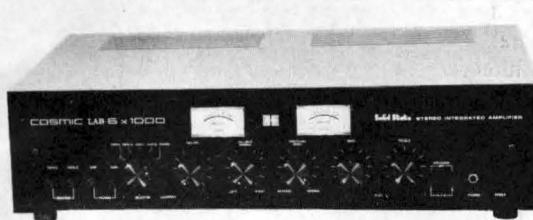
The 600 watt System



STUDIO STANDARD SERIES K 8 STEREO CASSETTE TAPE DECK

Operation System: Feather-touch Logic Control System. **Track System:** 4 track, 2 channel stereo system. **Power Source:** AC 220/240V 50 to 400 Hz. **Tape Speed:** 4.76 cms/sec. \pm 1%. **Tape:** Low Noise-High Output; CrO₂; Metal. **Motor:** DC, electronically speed-controlled. **Tape Drive:** Single Capstan. **Wow & Flutter:** Less than 0.055% WRMS. **Amplifier:** DC Amp Configuration (Record Amp). **Signal-to-Noise Ratio:** Metal Tape — better than -58 dB (NR OFF); better than -65 dB (NR ON). CrO₂ Tape — Better than -57 dB (NR OFF); better than -63 dB (NR ON). LH Tape — Better than -55 dB (NR OFF); better than -60 dB (NR ON). **Frequency Response:** Metal Tape — 20 Hz to 20 KHz (30 Hz to 17 KHz \pm 3 dB). CrO₂ Tape — 20 Hz to 18 KHz (30 Hz to 16 KHz \pm 3 dB). LH Tape — 20 Hz to 15 KHz (30 Hz to 15 KHz \pm 3 dB). **Overall Distortions:** Less than 1.5% (LH Tape — 1 KHz/O dB). **Real Analysed Distortion:** Less than 0.7% (LH Tape 1 KHz/O dB). **Input Sensitivity:** Line 100 mV; MIC/DIN 0.3 mV (Recommended microphone impedance 600 ohms/10 K-ohms). **Output Level:** DIN/Line 1 V ("0" VU). **Headphones:** 1.25W/8 K-ohms. **Bias Frequency:** 85 KHz. **Heads (2):** One Sendust REC/PB. One double gap erase. **Fast Forward/Rewind Time:** 95 secs. for C-60 (normal). **Power Consumption:** 20W. **Dimensions:** 46.5 \times 28.5 \times 11 cms. **Weight:** 8 Kgs. (Approx.). **Additional Features:** 14-dot Fluorescent Peak Level Indicator, Tape Counter Memory, Bias Fine Control, 3-position Bias/Equalizer Selector, REC/PB MUTE Function, Noise Reduction System, REC/PB Timer Function, Remote Control (Optional).

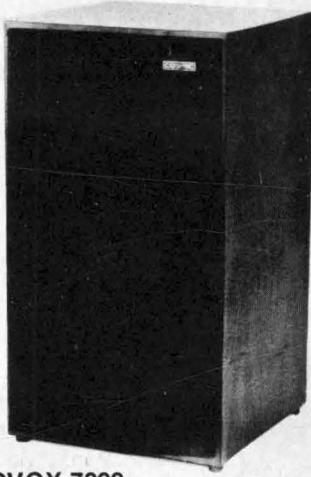
An ideal system for
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LAB 6 \times 1000 HI FI INTEGRATED STEREO AMPLIFIER

Panorama Control

Power Output: 600 Watts peak music power (I.H.F.) RMS 150 Watts per channel at 4 ohms. **Harmonic Distortion at Rated Output:** Less than 0.01% at 1 KHz. **Intermodulation (70 Hz. to 7 KHz. intermixed at Amplitude ratio 4: 1):** Less than 0.06%. **Power Bandwidth:** 10Hz to 20 KHz \pm 0.5 dB. **Frequency Response:** 10 Hz to 40 KHz \pm 0.5 dB. **Hum & Noise:** 90dB below rated output, typically 100 dB I.H.F. **Input Sensitivity & Impedance:** Mag PhonoRIAA Equalised 1.5mV/47 K-ohms, Ceramic Phono 55mV/580 K-ohms, Aux I & II 300 mV/350 K-ohms. **Filters:** Rumble-3 dB at 50 Hz at 6 dB/oct. Hi-Filter-3 dB at 5 KHz at 12 dB/oct. **Speaker Sockets:** 4 Sockets for impedance 4 to 16 ohms. **Power Source:** 220/240V AC 50 to 400 Hz. **Dimensions:** 50 \times 34 \times 12 cms. **Wt.** 13 Kgs



COVOX 7000 SPEAKER SYSTEM

Frequency Response Range: 20 to 20,000 Hz. **Nominal Impedance:** 8 ohms. Matching Lab 3000, Lab 5000 and Lab 6 \times 1000 amplifiers, provided amplifier is driven within its rated undistorted power and in flat tone control positions.

Components: 1 full range woofer and 1 mid-range combined 30 cms., 1 dome tweeter.

Dimensions: 72 \times 40.5 \times 44 cms.

Weight: 28 Kgs. **Cabinet:** Rose in mat finish



HS 410DD DIRECT DRIVE STEREO TURNTABLE

Platter: 30 cms. diameter with Built-in Stroboscope for 50 Hz and 60 Hz. Dynamically Balanced. **Speed:** 33 1/3 rpm and 45 rpm factory set, with variable pitch control for both speeds, independent of power supply voltage and frequency. **Motor:** Servo controlled — Direct Drive. **Wow & Flutter:** Below 0.04% RMS JIS C5521-3.8. **Tone Arm:** Automatic return and stop. Precision counter balanced. **Cartridge:** Magnetic, with diamond stylus. **Cartridge Shell:** Removable, adjustable setting for minimum tracking error. **Stylus Pressure Adjustment:** 0-2.5 gms. **Bias (anti-skating force):** Adjustable. **Arm Lowering:** Hydraulically damped. **Total Weight:** 6.5 kgs. **Dimensions:** 45.1 \times 35.5 \times 15.2 cms.

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USP

Disco Sweeps The Heartland

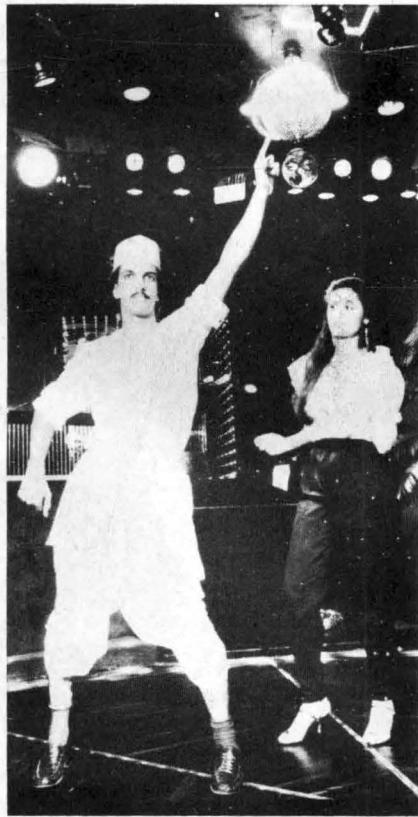
From films to advertising, disco has permeated the Indian consciousness. A slightly cynical look at this sociological phenomenon.

DISCO IS PERHAPS the most significant Western invention to hit these shores since toothpaste.

It has turned the music industry inside out. *Disco Deewane* a Nazia Hassan-Biddu record has sold 500,000 units making it the best-selling record in Indian history. Other disco records with names like *Chal Disco Chal* and *M3* have followed in its wake. And now, everybody's gone disco. Ghazal singer Runa Laila has recorded a disco LP in London. *Nikaah* girl Salma Agha has done her own Abba-style disco record. Rock singer Nandu Bhende is recording disco versions of Shammi Kapoor songs. And torch singer Sharon Prabhakar has made another disco album.

It has left its mark on the film industry. Actors with limited talent like Mithun Chakraborty have soared to the top grade because they shine in disco sequences. Vamps like Kalpana Iyer have seen demand for their services increase now that disco has become a part of Hindi cinema. Films with such titles as *Disco Dancer* have recorded massive collections. And the cabaret scene that used to be a staple of every Hindi film has been discarded in favour of a disco scene.

But disco in India is more than just an entertainment phenomenon. It has become a state of mind. The *paanwalla*



DISCO

Disco Bandwagon

As disco has caught on, several people who had nothing to do with disco have found fame (if not fortune) in the disco world.



SABIRA MERCHANT

Well-known stage actress and TV quiz show hostess in Bombay. Now best known as the part owner of Studio 29.



NANDU BHENDE

In the '70s, Bombay's leading rock singer. Now sings Shammi Kapoor hits to a disco beat in *Disco Duniya*.



BAPPI LAHIRI

Music director Hindi films. Had some

initial success (*Chalte Chalte*) but then found that quickest way to get rich was to 'adapt' (ie plagiarize) foreign disco songs. His biggest project to date has been *Superuna* with Runa Laila.



SHARON PRABHAKAR

Started out singing Joan Baez songs. Later switched to ballads and torch-songs. Known in Bombay as star of *Evita*. Known elsewhere for three disco albums—the English *Qurbani*, *Chal Disco Chal* and *Disco Mastana*.



RUNA LAILA

Bangladesh's leading playback singer. Reputed for her beautiful voice and *ghazal* singing. Now sings Bappi Lahiri's disco hits.



SALMA AGHA

Twice divorced Pakistani settled in London. Came to Bombay to become an actress (later starred in BR Chopra's *Nikaah*) but found fame with *Abba-Agha* in which she sang Abba songs in Hindi to a disco beat.



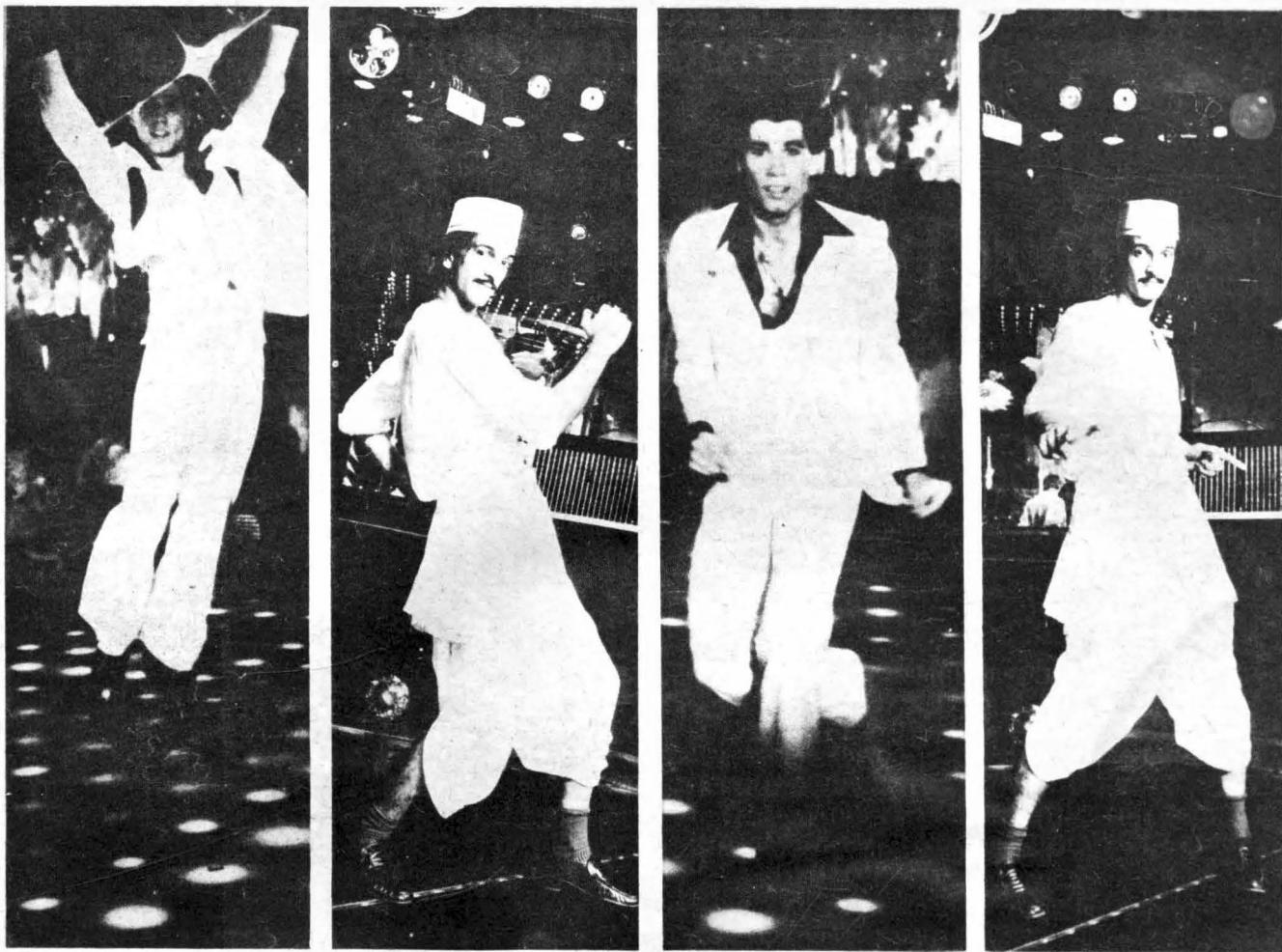
AMIT KHANNA

Graduate in literature from St Stephen's College. Ran magazine in Delhi. Later began handling Dev Anand's affairs and produced *Manpasand* (flop) and *Naya Johny* (incomplete), both with Anand. Now writes lyrics for disco albums like *M3* and *Star*.



KALPANA IYER

Formerly a restaurant hostess at the Oberoi Sheraton hotel. Then, a successful model who entered Hindi films as a vamp. Now known only for hip-wiggling disco dances (ie *Hari Om Hari*).



Disco has become a sweeping generalization for anything modern or Western.

hawks a disco *paan*. The barber offers disco haircuts. Shakila Banu Bhopali rejuggles her repertoire and calls it *disco-quawali*. Hundreds of clean-cut, vegetarian kids do Gujarati folk dances to the sounds of a rhythm box and call it *disco-daandiya*. And in their wake come the disco *raakhis*, the disco hair pins, the disco horns and the trucks that proudly bear such hastily painted names as Disco-O-1250.

Where there's a fad, there's an advertising man. Every second campaign contains sequences shot in a disco, and every third jingle bounces along to a disco beat. Subash Silk Mills have named a brand of suiting—DISCO and the word flashes out from hundreds of billboards. More unusual still, Babubhai Jagjivandas, a stuffy suburban showroom in Bombay has refurbished its image disco-style. Loud commercials show two unspeakable adolescents performing unmentionable gyrations on a sleazy disco floor to the regurgitating burps of a Moog synthesizer. You may laugh, but market research shows that this is among the

most successful advertisements currently showing.

Visit a small town, and disco's all-pervasive influence hits you in the face. *Disco Dancer* has them dancing in the aisles, Nazia Hassan has them wiggling their tushes to her juvenile moans and the only foreign actor they've heard of is 'Travalauta', him of the white polyester suit and swaying arms.

Disco may be a kind of music, but it's also much more than that. It encompasses sequined disco *chooridars* and lurex *duppattas*; urchins who flog 'disco' rubber bands by the road side; girls who wear their hair in plaits at the side of their heads and imagine that this is 'disco-style'; and young men in tight trousers that squeeze their crotches like tourniquets.

Nobody may know quite what it means, but disco rules, OK?

WHAT, YOU MAY well ask, is going on? What, in the name of Donna Summer, is this kind of 'disco' supposed to mean? And just what do

all these *chooridars*, hair pins, and *daandiya raases* have to do with disco?

There are no answers, only interpretations. To Bappi Lahiri and the other disco-struck composers, disco means putting rhythm boxes on their sessions, or better still, stealing tunes and calling them their own. To film producers, disco means showing a lot of extras waving about wildly amidst flashing lights. And to the admen, disco means a concept with favourable associations that miraculously propels their products to sell-out status.

Some, more perceptive observers, have their own hypotheses. Says lyricist Amit Khanna, "Disco in India has very little to do with Western disco culture. It has become a sweeping generalization for anything modern or Western in fashion or music. In the Indian heartland, anything mod becomes disco."

Adds Deepak Gera of Sista's Advertising, "In the old days, every Hindi film would have a bizarre cabaret sequence. It was totally unreal but to people who had never been to a night

DISCO

Disco Plagiarism

Anything Abba and Boney M can do Bappi Lahiri can do again. But as our list shows, Bappi might be the King of Plagiarists, but he is not the only one! Not all plagiarists lift entire songs, some lift only short instrumental sections. The following is the list of plagiarised songs of both kinds:

Mamma Mia
(Abba)

Mil Gaya Hum Ko Saathi
Mil Gaya
(Hum Kissise Kum Nahin/
RD Burman)

That's The Way I Like It
(KC & The Sunshine Band)

Ek Rasta, Ek Rahi
(Ram Balram/Lakshmi Kant
Pyarelal)

I Feel Love
(Donna Summer)

Rhamba ho ho ho
(Armaan/Bappi Lahiri)

Rasputin
(Boney M)

Mausam hai rangeen
(Sun Meri Laila/Bappi
Lahiri)

One Way Ticket
(Eruption)

Hari Om Hari
(Pyaara Dushman/Bappi
Lahiri)

Man Machine
(Kraftwerk)

Raat baaki, baat baaki
(Namak Halal/Bappi Lahiri)

Brown Girl In The Ring
(Boney M)

Tere naam ke hum diwaane
hain
(Judai/Lakshmi Kant
Pyarelal)

Fifth of Beethoven
(Walter Murphy)

Pag Ghungroo baandh,
Meera naachi
(Namak Halal/Bappi Lahiri)



Disco sequence from Sun Meri Laila.

Disco Top Ten

Home-grown

This is our list of the ten best-selling Hindi disco records ever.

1. *Disco Deewaane* — Nazia/Zoheb/Biddu
2. *Qurbani* — Biddu/Kalyanji Anandji
3. *Star* — Nazia/Zoheb/Biddu
4. *Superuna* — Runa Laila/Bappi Lahiri
5. *Karz* — Lakshmi Kant Pyarelal
6. *Armaan* — Bappi Lahiri
7. *M3* — Mussarat/Peter Moss
8. *Sanam Teri Kasam* — RD Burman
9. *Disco Dancer* — Bappi Lahiri
10. *Namak Halaal* — Bappi Lahiri



International

These are the ten best-selling foreign disco records in India.

1. *Saturday Night Fever* — The Bee Gees and others
2. *Night Flight to Venus* — Boney M
3. *Mouth to Mouth* — Lipps Inc
4. *Greatest Hits* — Donna Summer
5. *Love in C Minor* — Cerrone
6. *Disco Darling* — Luisa Fernandez
7. *From Here to Eternity* — Giorgio
8. *Caribbean Disco Show* — Lobo
9. *Stars on 45* — Starsound
10. *Glow of Love* — Change

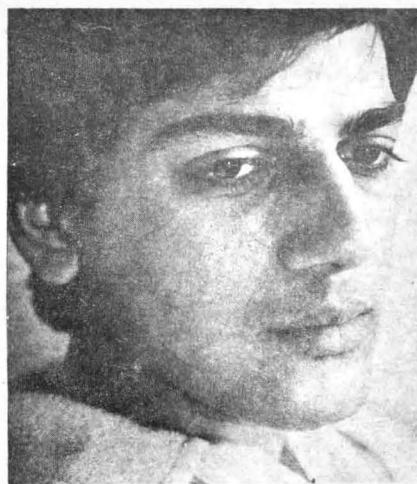




Biddu Appiah.



Nazia Hassan.



Zoheb Hassan.

club and never would, it represented glamour, sex and Westernization in one package. For the new generation, disco has taken over. For people who've never been to a discotheque, and for the lower classes, it symbolizes their fantasies of glamour and sex."

For the non-Westernized, non-conventional educated crowd that was looking for an introduction to the delights of permissive, modern, Western society, disco has offered the ideal handle.

Free sex, free glamour and freak out.

BUT WHY DISCO? Why not rock? Why not the hippie era? Why is disco the first Western fad to really penetrate the heartland? What has John Travolta got that Jimi Hendrix didn't?

Well, disco's had the right beat at

the right time. It's come along in the '80s when the post-Independence, quasi-Westernized, semi-educated generation had needed to make the sonic jump from being perceived as *manibhais* and *bhaiyyas* to becoming *hep-cats* and swingers.

Besides, disco's safe and undemanding. The hippie era contained suggestions of opting out, of rebelling, of going into drug-induced stupors and of (gulp!) destroying society-as-we-know-it.

Not a pleasant prospect.

But disco is pap. And pap is what you make of it. If you want it to mean hair cut straight, Amitabh Bachchan style, Walkman headphones wrapped around your ears, and lyrics like *Hum Tum Ban Jaaye Daddy Cool*, that's OK. There is no threat implied in a mechanical music, created by machines

for morons. Everybody is comfortable with disco, be he a 50-year-old Feroze Khan in *Qurbani*, his hairy belly locked in deadly combat with his shirt button, or a 15-year-old pimply schoolboy, his wardrobe replete with Smash attire and Intershoppe chic.

Disco makes no demands. It is the great leveller.

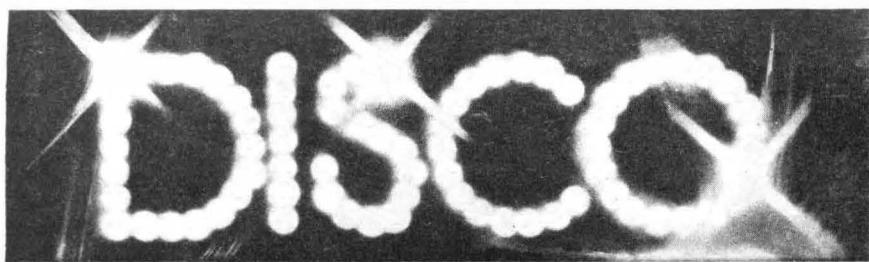
WHERE DID IT all begin? How did the monotonous machine-made beat become the heartbeat of our times? Discotheques, in one form or another, have been around for years. In the early '60s, there were jam sessions, and in the late '60s there was Delhi's Cellar and Bombay's Blow Up.

But this disco boom has a life of its own, outside of Ghungroo and Studio 29. Its followers are not the kind to frequent the Nineteen Hundreds or The Number One. To be sure, they've heard of all the fancy discos with their strobes and their exclusive membership lists, but they know they're never going to get there.

Today's disco generation got the message from Biddu, the Bangalore boy who made it as a record producer in London. There had been false starts before, of course. In 1972, a young Zeenat Aman had ground her rounded hips to the strains of *Dum Maro Dum*. And half the country had stood up and taken note. But it took Biddu, Feroze Khan, Nazia Hassan and once again, Zeenat Aman to really set the speakers squawking. In 1980, Feroze Khan's film *Qurbani* featured Zeenat miming *Aap Jaisa Koi*, a Biddu tune, to Nazia's voice. The record soared straight to the top of the charts, Nazia became a star overnight, and the *desi* disco craze was born.



Disco-style Babubhai Jagjivandas ad.



Disco Poetry

Hindi film lyricists like to call themselves 'poets'. These extracts from the lyrics of popular disco songs should put paid to that claim.

*Ooie ooie chori chori baatein hon
Ooie ooie aisi mulaqatein hon*

STAR — Biddu/Amit Khanna.

*Chhodo chhodo meri rahan
Meri bahan — ah, ah, ah
Yeh hai pyar ki hathkadi
Disco station, disco*

HATHKADI — Bappi Lahiri/Majrooh Sultanpuri.

*Y. O. G. A.
Karo yoga, yoga.*

HAADSA — Kalyanji Anandji/MG Hashmat.

*Jhumo, Nacho
Gaao Mere Saath
I am a disco dancer.*

DISCO DANCER — Bappi Lahiri/
Anjaan.

*What's your problem?
Kya hai tera gum bata
Kyo duniya se hain tu bekhubar
Gum na kar.*

KAL YUG — Vanraj Bhatia/Balwant Tandon.

*Tu ek disco
Mein ek disco
Yeh duniya hain disco.*

KHUDDAR — Bappi Lahiri/Anand Bakshi.

*Daku Daku
Mein bhi daku
Tu bhi daku
Dono daku
Dono dil loote
Daku daku.*

CHAL DISCO CHAL — Peter Moss/
Amit Khanna.

A Nazia Hassan Chronology



1980

FEROZE KHAN IS shooting *Qurbani* in London. The Hassans, a middle-class Pakistani family hang around Zeenat Aman, the film's star. The unit is invited for dinner to the Hassan's Wimbledon home. Late after midnight when everybody is very drunk, the Hassans rouse their sleeping children, place guitars in their pyjama-ed hands and make them warble folk songs for the assembled company.

Feroze Khan is very impressed.

Feroze meets composer-producer Biddu and asks him to write a disco tune for *Qurbani*. Biddu obliges. Lyrics (*Aap Jaisa Koi Mere Zindagi Mein Aaye*) are written. Singer is required. Feroze Khan suggests Nazia. Biddu thinks he is joking. Feroze Khan never jokes.

Nazia's *Aap Jaisa Koi* vocal is punched in line by line. Much to everyone's surprise, record is number one hit. Feroze and Nazia remain friends.

1981

Nazia (with younger brother Zoheb) comes to India. She is very friendly with Feroze, less friendly with Zeenat. Will she consider a career in showbiz, she is asked. No, she says, I want to go

to Oxford or Cambridge.

Nazia returns to London. Film magazines say that she had an affair with Feroze Khan. Nazia and Zoheb send cyclostyled letters to every magazine denying the rumours and referring to Feroze as an 'elderly man'. Feroze Khan is not amused. Anil Sud, Managing Director of HMV suggests that Nazia and Biddu record a whole album of Hindi disco songs. The Hassans agree but demand a) that Zoheb be allowed to write some of the lyrics and b) that their names are as large as, if not larger than, Biddu's on the jacket.

Disco Deewane is released. It is the best-selling record in Indian history.

Nazia and Zoheb come to India. They are disparaging about Biddu, do not seem to know who Feroze Khan is and speak highly of their own talents. Nazia is asked, "What are your musical influences?"

"Let's get one thing clear," she snaps. "Nazia inspired Zoheb and Zoheb inspired Nazia." Amen.

1982

Nazia and Zoheb refuse to sing for *Star*, Biddu's follow-up to *Disco Deewane*. Undaunted, Biddu signs up Mangal and Parvati Maharaj. The Hassans have a change of heart. They will sing, they say, if EMI (HMV's parent) lets them record for the US and UK market. EMI agrees.

Star is released. It is a big hit.

Nazia and Zoheb announce that Zoheb is more talented than Biddu. Henceforth, they will produce, write and sing their own material.

The Hassans release their first record for the foreign market. It sinks without a trace. They begin to call themselves Hazan. EMI plans a big push for their next record because Monsoon have an Indian style hit in the charts. Nazia to interviewer: "I think Monsoon have no talent." The Hazans (sic) appear on such TV programmes as the David Essex show.

Their record sinks without a trace.

1983

Nazia and Zoheb seem to have forgotten about Oxford or Cambridge. They are determined to find chart success in England. None is forthcoming.

They have no plans for any Hindi releases. They say that they will never work with Biddu again.

Nazia reported to be hitting the London-Sindhi turbo-prop set. ♦

The following year, Biddu and Nazia got together again. This time they recorded a whole album of disco songs and called it *Disco Deewane*. *Aap Jaisa Koi* had set many records. *Disco Deewane* broke them all and set new ones. Throughout the country, Nazia's songs became the theme tunes for the times. People who'd never heard of disco suddenly discovered a new passion. Callow youths who'd never shaken a leg in their lives, suddenly learned what boogie meant. And when even 'Melody Queen' Lata Mangeshkar rang up HMV and demanded "Who is this girl?" it was clear that disco had arrived.

Of course, other musicians lost no time in clambering on to the disco bandwagon. Music India discovered a middle-aged Pakistani woman called Mussarat in Canada and made her record Hindi versions of Boney M. The results were pretty awful, but such was the disco fever that the record sold. Then the company tried to repeat the success of *Qurbani*. Bashir Sheikh and Sharon Prabhakar recorded English versions of *Aap Jaisa Koi* (sample lyric: *If someone like you should come into my life, what a wonder it would be*) and other *Qurbani* songs.

Meanwhile the originals continued to sell. The *Saturday Night Fever* soundtrack had been the best-selling foreign record in the history of the Indian record industry (80,000 copies sold) and other disco albums notched up huge sales figures. Boney M, Sigma Fay, Eruption, Chic, Donna Summer, The Munich Machine—the hits kept coming.

To take the trend full circle, HMV's parent company EMI discovered to its surprise that *Disco Deewane* was a bestseller in South America. Retitled *Hindu Disco*, it topped the charts in Peru, Panama and Costa Rica.

There was gold in them thar grooves.

BY 1982, THE disco boom had taken on a life of its own, quite independent of Biddu. The Aarey milk colony piped in *Aap Jaisa Koi* to its cows and the milk yield went up. Asked to present a 'cultural item' for the Asian Games, the Union Territory of Goa sent a disco troupe. And the band-*baajawallahs* who traditionally escorted wedding *baraats* with out-of-tune renditions of *Come September* switched to equally off-key versions of *Disco Deewane*.



Salma Agha flanked by Amit Khanna and Bappi Lahiri.

When Biddu tried to go a step further and parlay the success of his second LP *Star* into a film with teen idol Kumar Gaurav, he found to his chagrin, that the crowds weren't interested. They had found their level of disco-satisfaction, with their *disco-andiyas* and disco hair cuts. The disco cult had broken loose from its origins.

The chubby Bappi Lahiri emerged as the new wizard of the disco *duniya*. His records were like juke boxes. Large chunks of other people's music were lifted and transposed onto his own slight compositions. Frank Farian, Pete Bellotte, Giorgio Moroder, Barry Gibb—they had nothing on fat little Bappi. He had all their best tunes neatly plagiarized on his records and anything they could do, he could do again (and again, and again, but that's another story....).

Throughout 1982-83, Bappi became the Prince Churning of the disco grooves, churning it all out, month after month.

AND SO THE disco bandwagon rolls on. Switch on your TV or your radio and Vanraj Bhatia's disco jingles for *Thums Up*, *Forhans* and *Pan Parag* fill the air. Go through the release schedules of any record company and disco records are prominently featured (Music India has a big campaign ready to launch Bhupendra's new disco effort). Watch any Hindi film and the usual squad of extras is

there, going through the disco motions yet again. In the streets, the hawkers sell their disco hair pins, and in private homes, Runa, Nazia, Sharon and Mussarat compete for equal time on the turntable. Wherever you look, disco manages to sneak in. (An example: At the Republic Day 1983 parade, the Punjab float represented a floating restaurant in which four debonair *sardarjis* sipped tea and listened to—you guessed it—Disco music.)

There are some signs though that the disco boom is turning into a whimper. A few agencies have scrapped plans for disco-based campaigns because they fear that the disco craze has run its course. Record companies too, are becoming more cautious than they have been in the past.

On the other hand, many of the people involved in the disco industry are brimming with confidence. Says lyricist Amit Khanna, "I give the disco craze at least another three or four years. It has coincided with the spread of portable cassette recorders and both the market for disco and for cassette recorders will grow in tandem." Bappi Lahiri has recently returned from abroad (if you want to know next year's disco hits, just check what foreign records he bought this time) and there is talk that his next project will be an international album for WEA Records. The discotheques themselves, continue to flourish—Studio 29 has them queueing up all night. It augurs well. ♦

Mahatma Gandhi— The Yogi And The Commissar

By Arthur Koestler

When Imprint first carried Koestler's demolition of the Gandhi myth the Mahatma was unfashionable. Now, in the midst of the Gandhi boom we reprint one of the most influential critiques of the decade.

“IT TAKES A GREAT DEAL of money to keep Bapu in poverty...” That flippant remark was made by Mrs Sarojini Naidu, poet, politician and one of Bapu’s intimates; but she could hardly have been aware at the time of the almost prophetic significance of her words. They actually referred to her loyal efforts to collect money for Gandhi’s campaign for khadi, homespun cloth. Like all his crusades, it was intended to serve both practical and symbolic purposes. Its practical aspect was the boycott of foreign goods, primarily of English textiles, combined with the fantastic hope of solving India’s economic problems by bringing back the handloom and the spinning wheel. At the same time, on another plane, the spinning wheel became an almost mystical symbol of the return to the Simple Life, and the rejection of industrialisation.

“The call of the spinning wheel,” Gandhi wrote in *Young India*, “is the noblest of all. Because it is the call of love... The spinning wheel is the reviving draught for the millions of our dy-

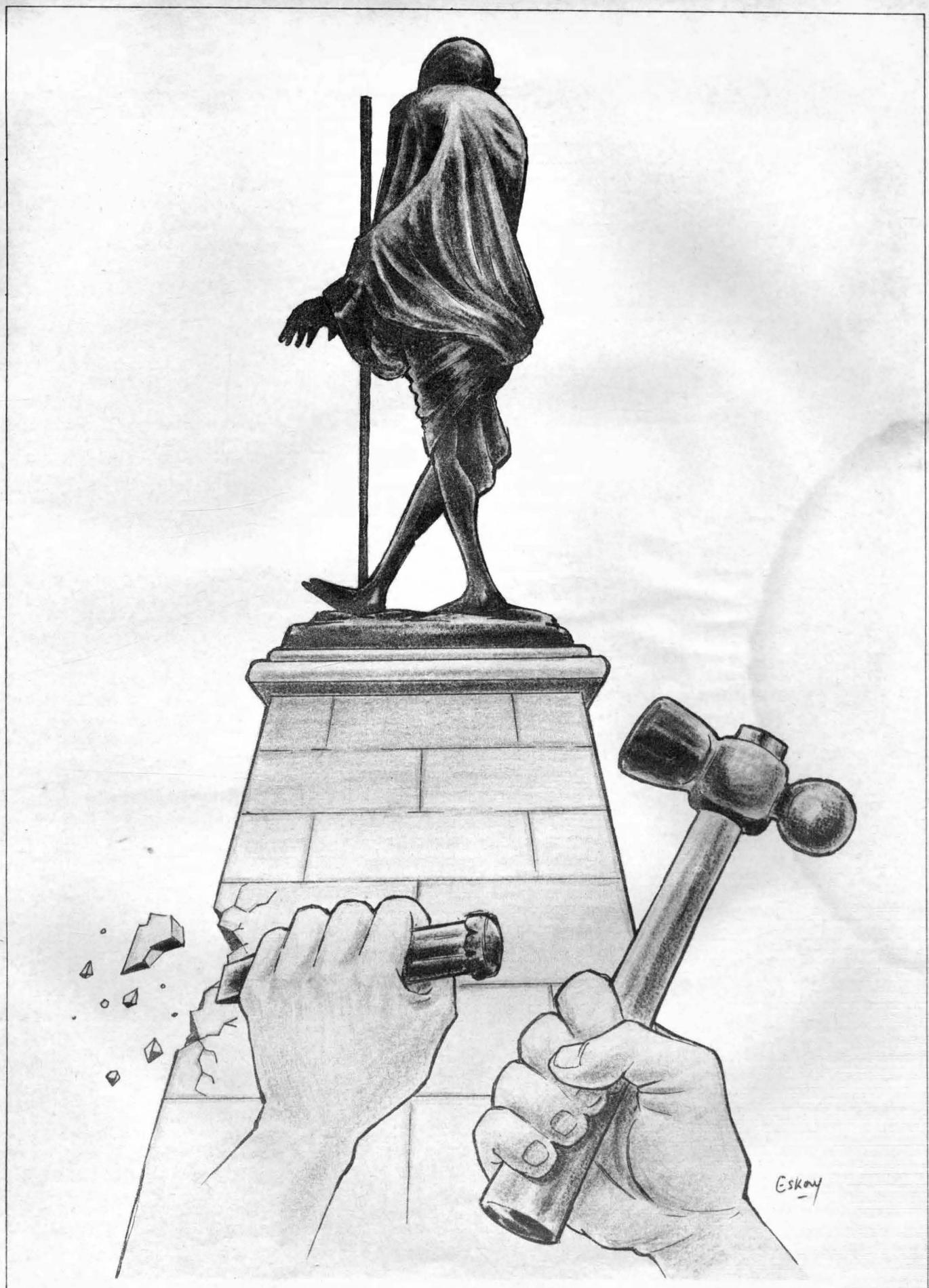
ing countrymen and countrywomen... I claim that in losing the spinning wheel we lost our left lung. We are therefore suffering from galloping consumption. The restoration of the wheel arrests the progress of the fell disease...” The wheel was a life-long obsession which reached its climax in the late '20s, between two imprisonments. It spread among his followers and ran through the successive stages of a fashion, a cult, a mystique. He designed India’s national flag with a spinning wheel in its centre. He persuaded Congress to resolve that all its members should take up spinning and pay their membership dues in self-spun yarn; office-holders had to deliver 2,000 yards of yarn per month. When Congress met in session, its seasoned politicians would listen to the debates while operating their portable spinning wheels—*tricoteuses* of the non-violent revolution. Schools introduced spinning courses; the plain white cloth and white cap became the uniform of the Indian patriot, Nehru called it ‘the livery of freedom’, while Gandhi praised the wheel as ‘the sacrament of millions’ and ‘a gateway to my spiritual salvation’. At the same time he organised public bonfires of imported cloth, threw his wife’s favourite sari into the

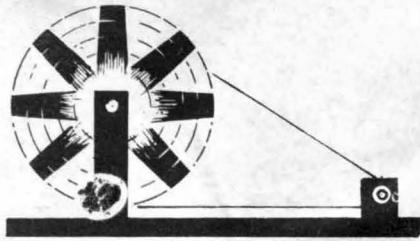
flames, and got himself arrested.

ONE OF THE FEW INDIAN INTELLECTUALS who dared to protest against the khadi mystique was the poet laureate, Rabindranath Tagore. He was a life-long admirer of Gandhi, fully aware of his greatness but also of his crankiness. I shall quote him at some length, because he seems to have realised in a single intuitive flash the basic flaw in Gandhian leadership. In 1921, after a prolonged absence, Tagore had returned to India full of expectations ‘to breathe the buoyant breeze of national awakening’—and was horrified by what he saw. “What I found in Calcutta when I arrived depressed me. An oppressive atmosphere seemed to burden the land. . . There was a newspaper which one day had the temerity to disapprove, in a feeble way, of the burning of foreign cloth. The very next day the editor was shaken out of his balance by the agitation of his readers. How long would it take for the fire which was burning cloth to reduce his paper to ashes?...

“Consider the burning of cloth.... What is the nature of the call to do this? Is it not another instance of a magical formula? The question of using or refusing cloth of a particular

Arthur Koestler, a distinguished writer and journalist died recently in London. This article originally appeared in *Imprint* and the *Sunday Times* (London) in 1969.





It is impossible to dismiss the khadi crusade as a harmless folly. On the contrary, the wheel was a central symbol of Gandhi's philosophy and social programme.

manufacture belongs mainly to economic science. The discussion of the matter by our countrymen should have been in the language of economics. If the country has really come to such a habit of mind that precise thinking has become impossible for it, then our very first fight should be against such a fatal habit, the original sin from which all our ills are flowing. But far from this, we take the course of confirming ourselves in it by relying on the magic formula that foreign cloth is 'impure'. Thus economics is bundled out and a fictitious moral dictum dragged into its place.... If there be anything wrong in wearing a particular kind of cloth, that would be an offence against economics, or hygiene, or aesthetics, but certainly not against morality.

"The command to burn our foreign clothes has been laid on us. I, for one, am unable to obey it. . . . Where Mahatma Gandhi has declared war against the tyranny of the machine which is oppressing the whole world, we are all enrolled under his banner. But we must refuse to accept as our ally the illusion-haunted magic-ridden slave-mentality that is at the root of all the poverty and insult under which our country groans."

TAGORE HAD SMELT A HOLY RAT in the khadi mystique. The boycott of English textiles could be justified as a measure of economic warfare in a nation's struggle for independence. But this did not apply to other countries and to call all foreign cloth 'impure' was indeed an appeal to magic-ridden minds. If it were advantageous for India's economy to forsake foreign imports and produce all the textiles it needs, that would still leave the question open whether a return to manufacturing methods predating the industrial revolution was feasible—even if it should be deemed desirable in the name of an idealised Simple Life. But this problem, too, was by-passed by calling the wheel a sacrament and a gateway to salvation. In his reply to Tagore, Gandhi went even further in what one might be tempted to call sanctimonious demagogic—if one were not aware of the pure intentions behind the muddled thinking. Rejecting Tagore's accusation that the khadi cult was begotten by mysticism, not by reasoned argument, Gandhi wrote: "I have again and again appealed to reason, and let me assure him that if happily the country has come to

believe in the spinning wheel as the giver of plenty, it has done so after laborious thinking. . . . I do indeed ask the poet to spin the wheel as a sacrament... Hunger is the argument that is driving India to the spinning wheel. . . . It was our love of foreign cloth that ousted the wheel from its position of dignity. Therefore I consider it a sin to wear foreign cloth. . . . On the knowledge of my sin bursting upon me, I must consign the foreign garments to the flames and thus purify myself and thenceforth rest content with the rough khadi made by my neighbours. On knowing that my neighbours may not, having given up the occupation, take kindly to the spinning wheel, I must take it up myself and thus make it popular."

Khadi did indeed become a popular cult among his ashramites and among active members of Congress—but never among the anonymous millions for whom it was intended. The attempt to make the half-starved masses of the rural population self-supporting by means of the spinning wheel as a 'giver of plenty' proved to be a dismal and predictable failure. The spinning wheel found its place on the national flag, but not in the peasants' cottages.

A few years ago, a Member of Parliament in New Delhi said to me wistfully: "Yes, I do wear khadi, as you see—a lot of us in the Congress Party feel that we have to. It costs three times as much as ordinary cotton."

It took a great deal of money and an infinitely greater amount of idealism and energy, 'to keep Bapu in poverty'. It is impossible to dismiss the khadi crusade as a harmless folly. On the contrary, the wheel as an economic panacea and the 'gateway to salvation' was a central symbol of Gandhi's philosophy and social programme.

HIS FIRST BOOK, HIND SWARAJ or Indian Home Rule, was written in 1909, when he was 40. He had already achieved international fame as leader of the Indian community in South Africa and initiator of several non-violent mass movements against racial discrimination. The book was reprinted in 1921 with a new introduction by Gandhi in which he said: "I withdraw nothing of it." In 1938, he requested that a new edition should be printed at a nominal price available to all, and wrote yet another introduction, in which he affirmed: "After the stormy 30 years through which I have since

passed, I have seen nothing to make me alter the advice expounded in it." *Hind Swaraj* may thus be regarded as an authoritative expression of opinions to which he clung to the end and as a condensed version of Gandhian philosophy. It extols the virtues of Indian civilisation, and at the same time passionately denounces the culture of the West.

"I believe that the civilisation India has evolved is not to be beaten in the world. Nothing can equal the seeds sown by our ancestors. Rome went, Greece shared the same fate, the might of the Pharaohs was broken; Japan has become westernised; of China nothing can be said; but India is still, somehow or other, sound at the foundation. The people of Europe learn their lessons from the writings of the men of Greece or Rome, which exist no longer in their former glory. In trying to learn from them, the Europeans imagine that they will avoid the mistakes of Greece and Rome. Such is their pitiable condition. In the midst of all this India remains immovable and that is her glory. . . . Many thrust their advice upon India, and she remains steady. This is her beauty. . . .

" . . . India, as so many writers have shown, has nothing to learn from anybody else, and this is as it should be. . . . Indian civilisation is the best and the European is a nine-days wonder. . . . I bear no enmity towards the English, but I do towards their civilisation."

HIS REJECTION OF WESTERN culture in all its aspects was deeply felt, violently emotional and supported by arguments verging on the absurd. The principal evils of the West were railways, hospitals and lawyers: "Man is so made by nature as to require him to restrict his movements as far as his hands and feet will take him. If we did not rush about from place to place by means of railways and such other maddening conveniences, much of the confusion that arises would be obviated. . . . God set a limit to a man's locomotive ambition in the construction of his body. Man immediately proceeded to discover means of overriding the limit. . . . I am so constructed that I can only serve my immediate neighbours, but in my conceit, I pretend to have discovered that I must with my body serve every individual in the Universe. In thus attempting the impossible, man comes in contact with different religions and is utterly con-

founded. According to this reasoning, it must be apparent to you that railways are a most dangerous institution. Man has gone further away from his Maker."

If this line of argument were accepted, not only the vast government-owned Indian railways would stand condemned, but also Gandhi's favourite book, the *Bhagavad Gita*. For its hero is the noble Arjuna, who drives a chariot (with Krishna as his passenger) in flagrant transgression of God's will that he should only move as far as his own feet will take him. Gandhi himself had to spend an inordinate proportion of his life in railway carriages 'rushing from place to place', faithful to the tradition that the leader should remain in touch with the masses. It was not the only paradox in his life; in fact, every major principle in Gandhi's Back-to-Nature philosophy was self-defeating, stamped with a tragic irony. (Even as President of Congress, he always insisted on travelling third-class; but he had a special coach to himself.)

Lawyers fare no better in Gandhi's programme than railways: "Men were less unmanly if they settled their disputes either by fighting or by asking their relatives to decide them. They became more unmanly and cowardly when they resorted to the Courts of Law. It is a sign of savagery to settle disputes by fighting. It is not the less so by asking a third party to decide between you and me. The parties alone know who is right and therefore they ought to settle it."

It should be remembered that Gandhi's first step towards leadership was achieved by his successful settling of a lawsuit as an attorney in Pretoria; and his successes in negotiating with the British were as much due to the charisma of the 'naked fakir'—to quote Churchill—as to the legal astuteness of the 'Middle Temple lawyer'.

PERHAPS THE MAIN ASSET IN THE complex balance-sheet of the British Raj was the introduction of modern medicine to India. But in Gandhi's accounting, hospitals fare worst: "How do diseases arise? Surely by our negligence or indulgence. I overeat, I have indigestion, I go to a doctor, he gives me medicine. I am cured. I overeat again and I take his pills again. Had I not taken the pills in the first instance, I would have suffered the punishment deserved by me and I would not have overeaten again. . . .

"I have indulged in vice, I contract a disease, a doctor cures me, the odds are that I shall repeat the vice. Had the doctor not intervened, nature would have done its work and I would have acquired mastery over myself, would have been freed from vice, and would have become happy.

"Hospitals are institutions for propagating sin. Men take less care of their bodies, and immorality increases."

And in a letter to a friend, also written when he was 40: "Hospitals are the instruments that the devil has been using for his own purpose, in order to keep his hold on his kingdom. They perpetuate vice, misery and degradation and real slavery."

HE TRIED TO LIVE UP TO HIS convictions by experimenting all his life with nature cures, ayurvedic remedies and an endless succession of vegetarian and fruitarian diets. But he was assailed at various times by fistulae, appendicitis, malaria, hook-worm, amoebic dysentery, high-blood pressure, and suffered two nervous breakdowns in his late 60s. Each time he was seriously ill he started on nature cures, refusing Western medication and surgery; each time he had to capitulate and submit to drugs, injections, operations under anaesthesia. Once more his principles proved to be self-defeating in the most painful way. Yet while his belief that diseases are caused by 'negligence, indulgence or vice' was naive to a degree, its correlate, the belief in the power of mind over body, was a source of strength which carried him through his heroic fasts.

About schools and 'literary education' in general he was as scornful as about hospitals, railways and law courts. "What is the meaning of education? It simply means knowledge of letters. It is merely an instrument and an instrument may be well used or abused. . . . We daily observe that many men abuse it and very few make good use of it; and if this is a correct statement, we have proved that more harm has been done by it than good. . . .

"To teach boys reading, writing and arithmetic is called primary education. A peasant earns his bread honestly. He has ordinary knowledge of the world. He knows fairly well how he should behave towards his parents, his wife, his children and his fellow villagers. He understands and observes the rules of morality. But he cannot write his own name. What do you propose to do by



Gandhi almost invariably refers to the act of love as an expression of man's 'carnal lust' or 'animal passion' and to woman's role in the act as that of a 'victim' or 'object'.

giving him a knowledge of letters? Will you add an inch to his happiness? Do you wish to make him discontented with his cottage or his lot?

"Now let us take higher education. I have learned Geography, Astronomy, Algebra, Geometry, etc. What of that? In what way have I benefited myself or those around me? . . .

"I do not for one moment believe that my life would have been wasted, had I not received higher or lower education. . . And, if I am making good use of it, even then it is not for the millions. . . .

"Our ancient school system is enough. . . . To give millions a knowledge of English is to enslave them. The foundation that Macaulay laid of education has enslaved us. . . . Hypocrisy, tyranny, etc, have increased; English-knowing Indians have not hesitated to cheat or strike terror into the people. . . ."

GANDHI TRIED TO LIVE UP TO HIS principles and never sent his sons to school. He intended to teach them himself, but did not find the time. They never had a chance to learn a profession. In his own words: "I will not say that I was indifferent to their literary education, but I certainly did not hesitate to sacrifice it in these higher interests, as I regarded them. My sons have therefore some reason for grievance against me. Had I been able to devote at least one hour to their literary education, with strict regularity, I should have given them, in my opinion, an ideal education. But it has been my regret that I failed to ensure for them enough training in that direction. . . . But I hold that I sacrificed their literary training to what I genuinely believed to be a service to the Indian community. . . . All my sons have had complaints to make against me in this matter. Whenever they come across an MA or a BA, or even a matriculate, they seem to feel the handicap of a want of school education. Nevertheless I am of the opinion that, if I had insisted on their being educated somehow at schools, they would have been deprived of the training that can be had only at the school of experience, or from constant contact with the parents. . . ."

I shall return presently to the effects this contact had on Gandhi's sons. In the public domain, his hostility to intellectuals with an English education who 'enslaved India' did not prevent

him from adopting as his political successor young Jawaharlal Nehru, a product of Harrow and Cambridge. If Western civilisation was poison for India, Gandhi had installed the chief poisoner as his heir.

FROM HIS EARLY THIRTIES, TWO ideas of overwhelming, obsessive power were uppermost in Gandhi's mind and dominated his life: *satyagraha* and *brahmacharya*. *Satyagraha* means, broadly, non-violent action; *brahmacharya*, sexual abstinence; but both terms, as we shall see, had for him much wider spiritual implications. The two were inextricably interwoven in his teaching, and more bizarrely in his private life. Significantly it was in the same year—1907, when he was 37—that he took his vow of chastity for life, and started his first non-violent campaign.

Gandhi's negative attitude to sex was reminiscent of, and partly inspired by, Tolstoy's but more violent and baffling. A partial explanation of its origins may perhaps be the famous episode, related in his autobiography, of his father dying while he had intercourse with his wife. He was then 16 (having married at 14) and had spent the evening, as usual, ministering to his sick father—massaging his feet—when his uncle relieved him. What could be more natural than that he should join his young wife? A few minutes later, however, a servant knocked at the door, announcing the father's death—which apparently nothing had presaged. "I ran to my father's room. I saw that, if animal passion had not blinded me, I should have been spared the torture of separation from my father during his last moments. I should have been massaging him, and he would have died in my arms. . . .

"This shame of my carnal desire even at the critical hour of my father's death. . . . was a blot I have never been able to efface or forget. . . . It took me long to get free from the shackles of lust, and I had to pass through many ordeals before I could overcome it."

HOW MUCH THIS EPISODE contributed to Gandhi's attitude to sex is a matter of speculation. But the effects of that attitude on his own sons are on record. He refused to send them to school because he wanted to mould them in his own image; and since he had renounced sex, he expected them to do the same. When Harilal, the

oldest son, wanted to marry at the age of 18, Gandhi refused permission and disowned him 'for the present'. Harilal had the courage to marry nevertheless—he had achieved a degree of independence from his father by living with relatives in India while Gandhi still lived in South Africa. When his wife died in the influenza epidemic of 1918 Harilal, who was now 30, wanted to remarry; but again Gandhi objected. From that point onward, Harilal began to disintegrate. He became an alcoholic, associated with prostitutes, embraced the Muslim faith and published an attack on his father under the pen-name 'Abdullah'. When he became involved in a shady business transaction, a solicitor wrote a letter of complaint to Gandhi. Gandhi published the lawyer's letter in his paper, *Young India* (June 18, 1925), together with his own reply, which amounted to placing Harilal on a public pillory: "I do indeed happen to be the father of Harilal M Gandhi. He is my eldest boy, is over 36 years old and is the father of four children. His ideas and mine having been discovered over 15 years ago to be different, he has been living separately from me. . . . Harilal was naturally influenced by the Western veneer that my life at one time did have. His commercial undertakings were totally independent of me. . . . He was and still is ambitious. He wants to become rich, and that too easily. . . . I do not know how his affairs stand at the moment, except that they are in a bad way. . . . Men may be good, not necessarily their children."

Father and son hardly ever met again. On her deathbed, Gandhi's wife, Kasturbai asked for her first-born. Harilal came, drunk, and had to be removed from her presence; 'she wept and beat her forehead'. He was also present at Gandhi's cremation. Although it is the duty and privilege of the oldest son to light his father's funeral pyre, he kept, or was kept, in the background. He died a month later in a hospital from tuberculosis. His name is rarely mentioned in the voluminous Gandhi literature.

HARILAL MAY HAVE BEEN A DIFFICULT CASE under any circumstances, but the second son, Manilal, was not; he remained a loyal and devoted son to the end. Nevertheless, the way Gandhi treated him was just as inhuman—there is no other word for it. At the age of 20, Manilal committed

the unforgivable sin of losing his virginity to a woman. When Gandhi discovered this he made a public scene, went on a penitential fast and decreed that he would never allow Manilal to marry. He even managed to persuade the guilty woman to shave her hair. A full 15 years had to pass until Gandhi relented, on Kasturbai's entreaties and gave his permission for Manilal to marry—by which time Manilal was 35. But in the meantime he had been banished from Gandhi's presence and ashram, because he had lent some money, out of his own savings, to his disgraced brother Harilal. When Gandhi heard about it, he made a scene accusing Manilal of dishonesty on the grounds that the ashramites' savings were the property of the ashram. Manilal was sent into exile with instructions to become a weaver's apprentice, and not to use the name Gandhi. "In addition to this," Manilal later told Louis Fischer, "Father also contemplated a fast, but I sat all night entreating him not to do so and in the end my prayer was heeded. I left my dear mother and my brother Devadas sobbing. . ." After a year as a weaving apprentice and a publisher's assistant, Gandhi ordered him to Natal to edit *Indian Opinion*. Apart from visits, Manilal remained an exile to the end of Gandhi's life.

IN FAIRNESS, GANDHI'S TREATMENT of his two oldest sons must be seen in the context of the traditional Hindu joint family household, over which the father holds unrestricted sway. To go against his decisions is unthinkable; as long as Bapu is alive, the sons are not regarded as having attained fully adult status. But even against this background Gandhi's relentless tyranny over his sons was exceptional—he rode them like the djinn of the Arab legend, whom, in the guise of an old man, his young victim cannot get off his shoulders. "I was a slave of passion when Harilal was conceived," he was wont to say. "I had a carnal and luxurious life during Harilal's childhood." Quite clearly he was visiting his own sins on his sons. By his efforts to prevent them from marrying, he was trying to deprive them of their manhood, convinced that he had a right to do so, since he had voluntarily renounced his own. Their crime, which he could never forgive, was that they refused to follow him on the lofty path of *brahmacharya*.

This becomes even more evident by comparing the way he treated them with the favours bestowed on a young second cousin, Maganlal. "Maganlal is dearer to me than one who is a son because so born," Gandhi wrote to his brother. And while his own sons were not allowed to go to school, he sent Maganlal (and another young second cousin) to study in England. Why this contrast? When Maganlal died at the age of 45, Gandhi explained the reason in his obituary: "He whom I had singled out as heir to my all is no more. He closely studied and followed my spiritual career, and when I presented to my co-workers *brahmacharya* as a rule of life, even for married men in search of Truth, he was the first to perceive the beauty and necessity of the practice."

GANDHI ALMOST INVARIABLY refers to the act of love as an expression of man's 'carnal lust' or 'animal passion', and to woman's role in the act as that of a 'victim' or 'object'. He did know, of course, that women too have a sexual urge, but had a simple answer to that: "Let her transfer her love. . . to the whole of humanity, let her forget she ever was or ever can be the object of man's lust." Intercourse, he taught, was only permissible for the purpose of procreation; if indulged in for 'carnal satisfaction', it is a 'reversion to animality'. Accordingly, he unconditionally rejected birth control, even within the limits permitted by the Catholic Church.

When Dr Margaret Sanger, the pioneer of family planning, visited Gandhi in 1936, she talked about the catastrophic consequences of the population explosion in India and elsewhere and appealed for his help, pleading that 'there are thousands, millions, who regard your word as that of a saint'. But throughout their conversation "he held to an idea or a train of thought of his own and, as soon as you stopped, continued it as though he had not heard you. . . . Despite his claim to open-mindedness, he was proud of not altering his opinions. . . . He accused himself of being a brute by having desired his wife when he was younger and classed all sex relations as debasing acts, although sometimes necessary for procreation. He agreed that no more than three or four children should be born to a family, but insisted that intercourse, therefore, should be restricted for the entire married life of

the couple to three or four occasions."

AS A SOLUTION TO INDIA'S POPULATION

problem this was about as realistic as the return to the spinning wheel. Yet it was deeply rooted in Gandhi's religious beliefs. If khadi was the gateway to salvation, *brahmacharya* was 'the conduct that leads to God'—which is what the word literally means. Thus, to quote his secretary and biographer Pyarelal, "*Brahmacharya* came to occupy the place of honour in Gandhiji's discipline for *satyagraha*... It was the *sine qua non* for those who aspire to a spiritual or higher life"—and thus for all ashramites, married or not. How deeply he felt about this is illustrated by an episode in Gandhi's first ashram—Phoenix Settlement in South Africa: "Once when I was in Johannesburg I received the tidings of the moral fall of two of the inmates of the Ashram. News of an apparent failure or reverse in the [political] struggle would not shock me, but this news came upon me like a thunderbolt. The same day I took the train for Phoenix. Mr Kallenbach insisted on accompanying me. He had noticed the state I was in. He would not brook the thought of my going alone, for he happened to be the bearer of the tidings which had so upset me. On the way my duty became clear to me. I felt that the guardian or the teacher was responsible, to some extent, at least, for the lapse of his pupil... I also felt that the parties to the guilt could be made to realise my distress and the depth of their fall only if I did some penance for it. So I imposed upon myself a fast for seven days and a vow of having only one meal for a period of four months and a half. Mr Kallenbach tried to dissuade me, but in vain. He ultimately accepted the propriety of the penance and insisted on joining me.... Thus considerably relieved, I reached Phoenix. I made further investigation and acquainted myself with some more details I needed to know. My penance pained everybody, but it cleared the atmosphere. Everyone came to realise what a terrible thing it was to be sinful."

THIS EPISODE—INCLUDING THE

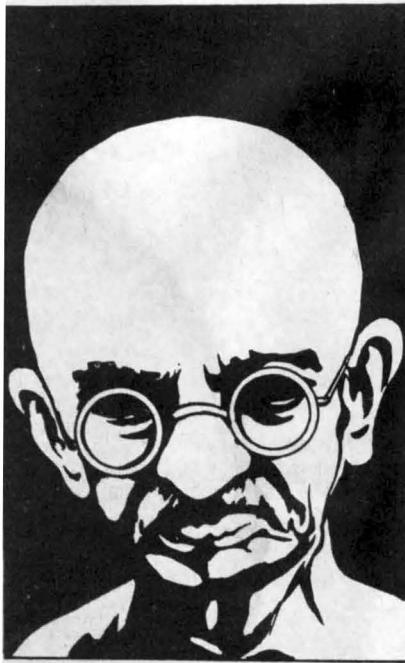
reaction of the unfortunate Mr Kallenbach—gives one a foretaste of the curious atmosphere that prevailed in Gandhi's later ashrams. Whereas in politics Gandhi always tended towards compromise, in the matter of *brahm-*

acharya he became more fanatical as the years went by. He used his proverbial fascination for women to persuade them to take the vow, whether their husbands agreed or not, wrecking several marriages in the process, and causing lasting unhappiness in others (among them is the sad case of a personal friend). One might say that the young women who came under his spell were seduced by Gandhi into chastity.

The consequences were described by one of Gandhi's intimate collaborators, Professor Nirmal Kumar Bose—one of the few who dared to talk to him in plain words on this subject.

"When women love men in normal life," he said to the Mahatma, "a part of their psychological hunger is satisfied by the pleasure which they derive in the physical field. But when women pay their homage of love to you, there can be no such satisfaction, with the result that when they come close to you personally, their mind becomes slightly warped. Of course, all of us are neurotics to a more or less extent. But the effect of your contact has an undoubtedly dangerous influence upon some of your associates, whether male or female."

Sexual abstinence may procure spiritual benefits to communities of monks or nuns segregated from the opposite sex and carefully sheltered from temptation. But Gandhi had designed for himself a very special and arduous road to *brahmacharya*: he felt compelled to expose himself to temptation in order to test his progress in self-control. He regarded these tests—which continued to the very end when he was nearly 80—as a pioneering venture, another 'experiment with Truth' (as he called his autobiography). The experiments started with his own wife after he had taken the vow, and were then continued with other, younger women. In a letter to Bose, justifying these practices, Gandhi wrote: "I am amazed at your assumption that my experiment implied any assumption of woman's inferiority. She would be, if I looked upon her with lust with or without her consent. I have believed in women's perfect equality with man. My wife was 'inferior' when she was the instrument of my lust. She ceased to be that when she lay with me naked as my sister. If she and I were not lustfully agitated in our minds and bodies, the contact raised both of us."



Gandhi had designed for himself a very arduous road to *brahmacharya*: he felt compelled to expose himself to temptation in order to test his self-control.

"Should there be a difference if it is not my wife, as she once was, but some other sister? I do hope you will acquit me of having any lustful designs upon women or girls who have been naked with me. A or B's hysteria had nothing to do with my experiment, I hope. They were before the experiment what they are today, if they have not less of it.

"The distinction between Manu and others is meaningless for our discussion..."

THE MANU MENTIONED IN THIS letter was the granddaughter of a cousin, the last of the guinea pigs in the quest for *brahmacharya*. She had lost her mother in childhood, and Kasturbai had looked after her. On Kasturbai's death Gandhi took over. "I have been a father to many, but only to you I am a mother," he wrote to her; strange as this may sound, he meant her to take that literally—so much so that Manu actually wrote a book with the title *Bapu—My Mother*. As a 'budding girl of 18', in Gandhi's words, she claimed to be free from sexual feelings. However, as Pyarelal explains in his biography: "Gandhiji had come to have an uneasy feeling that either she did not know her own mind or she was deceiving herself and others. As a 'mother' he must know. . . girls often conceal their real feelings from their fathers but not from their mothers. Gandhiji had claimed that he was mother to her and she had endorsed the claim. If the truth of it could be tested, it would provide a clue to the problem that baffled him. Incidentally, it would enable him also to know how far he had advanced on the road to perfect *brahmacharya*—complete sexlessness . . . He did for her everything that a mother usually does for her daughter. He supervised her education, her food, dress, rest and sleep. For closer supervision and guidance he made her share the same bed with him. Now a girl, if her mind is perfectly innocent, never feels embarrassment in sleeping with her mother."

To paraphrase Sarojini Naidu once more: it took a great deal of derring-do to keep Bapu in chastity. Manu apparently did not feel any embarrassment. She returned his ministrations by nursing him through illnesses and fasts; in her diary she recorded, in between two political messages, the effects of the enema she had administered to him and the admonitions he

addressed to her from his bath-tub: "While bathing, Bapu said these words to me with great affection and also caressed my back." But in view of the traditional lack of privacy in India, and in particular among ashramites, such intimacies could be exchanged in perfect innocence.

FOR GANDHI IT WAS A CRUCIAL experiment. If it succeeded "it would show that his quest for truth had been successful. *His sincerity should then impress itself upon the Muslims, his opponents in the Muslim League and even Jinnah*, who doubted his sincerity, to their own and India's harm." The italics are by the faithful Pyarelal who knew more intimately than any other contemporary the ways and twists of his Master's thought. Gandhi sincerely believed that he was an instrument of God, who 'gives me guidance to react to the situations as they arise'. But the instrument must be pure, free from carnal desire, and to attain that freedom he had to go through his experiment in *brahmacharya*. It 'put him in touch with the infinite'; at the same time it was to solve the Hindu-Muslim problem, put an end to the mutual massacres, persuade the Muslim League of his *bona fides*, and make them renounce their claim for an independent Pakistan.

From the Mahatma's point of view all this was perfectly logical. In his own mind, his public, political activities and his intimate experiments with Truth were inseparable; *satyagraha* and *brahmacharya* were mutually interdependent. For *satyagraha* means not only non-violent action, but action powered by an irresistible soul-force or truth-force (*sat* = truth, *agraha* = firmness). At the stage he had reached in the last two years of his life everything depended for him on the crucial experiment with Manu; and this may explain why he so stubbornly insisted that she share his bed in defiance of everybody's advice.

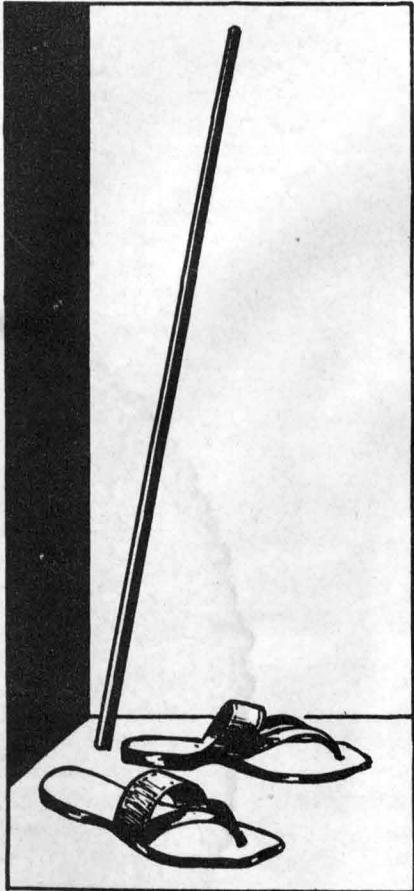
IT ALSO EXPLAINS WHY, WHILE the fate of India was being decided in the dramatic months June-July 1947, Gandhi chose to treat the Indian public to a series of six articles—on *brahmacharya*. He had been touring the Muslim villages of east Bengal, attempting to quell the riots by his personal influence. Most of the time, his only companions on the pilgrimage were Manu, Bose and a stenographer.

Several of his collaborators, including intimate friends, protested against the Manu experiment (though they must have known of previous ones), expressed their disapproval to Gandhi, and some of them actually left him. A public scandal was avoided, but Gandhi felt deprived of their unconditional admiration, utterly lonely and dejected. Even Bose left, after long discussions in which he had in vain tried to convince Gandhi of the psychological ill-effects of the experiment on both parties concerned—without ever doubting the sincerity of their motives; but he returned to serve Gandhi a few months later. The ill-timed *Harjan* articles, which made the public gasp, were Gandhi's reply to the dissidents.

He also wrote to Acharya Kripalani, the President of Congress: "This is a very personal letter, but not private. Manu Gandhi, my granddaughter. . . . shares the bed with me. . . . This has cost me dearest associates . . . I have given the deepest thought to the matter. The whole world may forsake me, but I dare not leave what I hold is the truth for me . . . I have risked perdition before now. Let this be the reality if it has to be." And he requested that the Acharya discuss the matter with other Congress politicians—in the midst of negotiations about independence.

I have dwelt at some length on Gandhi's struggles to attain chastity for two reasons: because it provides an essential—by his own testimony, the most essential—key to his personality; and because it became a part of the Gandhian heritage which had a lasting influence on the social and cultural climate of the country.

AFTER GANDHI'S DEATH, HOW-ever the Indian Establishment attempted to suppress the facts of his last Experiment with Truth. An example of this conspiracy of silence is the story of the book by Nirmal Kumar Bose, *My Days With Gandhi*, which I have repeatedly quoted. Professor Bose, a distinguished anthropologist and expounder of Gandhi's philosophy, had written two earlier books, *Studies In Gandhism* and *Selections From Gandhi*. He had been the Mahatma's companion during the pilgrimage in east Bengal, and in *My Days With Gandhi* devoted a chapter to the repercussions of the Manu experiments, without going into details about the experiment itself. It is a discreet, affectionate and respectful work; yet



The lasting merit of Gandhi was not that he liberated India but to have made the whole world realise that the conventional methods of power-politics are not the only conceivable ones.

not only was it rejected by all publishers whom Bose approached, but strenuous attempts were made 'from very high quarters in the country' to prevent its publication. Five years after Gandhi's death, Bose decided to publish the book on his own. It is unobtainable in India and the most recent biographer of Gandhi, Geoffrey Ashe, remarks: "It has become common knowledge that one important memoir was partly suppressed. I had some difficulty in locating what may be the only copy in England." Not even the British Museum has a copy of it. A book of my own, in which I quoted Bose, was also banned in India on the grounds that it contained 'disrespectful remarks about Gandhiji'.

IRONICALLY, THREE YEARS after Bose, the first volume of Pyarelal's monumental, authorised biography of Gandhi was published, confirming all the facts that Bose had mentioned (but without mentioning Bose). The following passage from *My Days With Gandhi* is relevant in this context: "There are many who were close to Gandhiji and who knew about these happenings, but who, out of a fear of misrepresenting him, have thought it wiser to leave out this portion of his life from any critical consideration at all. But the present writer has always felt that such an attitude is not justified. Perhaps away at the back of our minds there is a lurking belief that what Gandhiji did was not right, and, in an apparent effort to avoid injustice to his greatness, we may perhaps decide to draw a veil over certain events of which we have personal knowledge. But this can only be achieved by sacrificing what I believe to be one of the most important keys to an understanding of this unique personality of our age.

"... We can only bear testimony to what we have witnessed; and, in a spirit of utter truthfulness, describe it with the utmost fidelity possible. . . . So that when our age has passed away and many of the values for which we stand have been relegated to the lumber heap of history, men may have the means of knowing all that is possible about a man who once stood towering like a mountain above those who lived beside him."

In the Western world Gandhi's obsession with *brahmacharya* could have been shrugged off as a harmless personal quirk. In India it struck deep,

archetypal chords. There is a hidden message running through Gandhi's preaching of chastity—hidden that is from the Western reader, but obvious to every Hindu. It relates to the physiological benefits of sexual restraint. According to the doctrines of traditional Hindu (ayurvedic) medicine, man's 'vital force' is concentrated in his seminal fluid. All his powers, both mental and physical, derive from this precious secretion—a kind of elixir of life—variously called *bindu*, *soma-rasa* or 'vital fluid'. Every expenditure of 'vital fluid' causes physical weakening and spiritual impoverishment. Conversely, the storing up of *bindu* through continence provides for increased spiritual powers, health and longevity (Gandhi hoped to live to the age of 125). It also produces that smooth skin with a radiant glow which all true saints were said to possess—including the Mahatma. Various semi-secret Hatha Yoga practices are designed to preserve the vital fluid even during intercourse.

GANDHI WAS A FIRM BELIEVER in ayurvedic medicine, and himself practised it on his family and intimates. Numerous passages in his writings show that he also believed in the crucial importance of preserving the 'vital fluid'. Thus in his pamphlet *Key To Health* he wrote: "It is said that an impotent man is not free from sexual desire . . . But the cultivated impotence of the man whose sexual desire has been burnt up and whose sexual secretions are being converted into vital force is wholly different. It is to be desired by everybody."

Or: "Ability to retain and assimilate the vital liquid is a matter of long training. Once achieved, it strengthens body and mind. The vital liquid capable of producing such a wonderful being as man cannot but, when properly conserved, be transmuted into matchless energy and strength."

Hinduism has a notoriously ambivalent attitude towards sex. On the one hand, the cult of the lingam, the erotic temple carvings, the Kama Sutra and the 'Sex Pharmacies' with their flowering trade in aphrodisiacs; on the other, prudery, hypocrisy, lip-service to the ideal of chastity combined with anxiety about the loss of the vital fluid and its debilitating effects. 'Spermal anxiety' appears to be common among Hindus; and with it goes unconscious resentment against Woman who is its

cause. The Hindu Pantheon has no Eros and no Cupids—only Kama, the prime force of lust.

Typical of this attitude is a correspondent's letter to Gandhi complaining that he was unable to live up to the ideal of chastity, 'although I often say to myself why enter the muck-hole at all?' Equally typical is Gandhi's reply: "I can only detect ignorance in likening woman to a muck-pot. The very thought is insulting to both man and woman. May not her son sit side by side with his mother, or the man share the same bench in a train with his sister?" His defence of woman is confined to her role as mother and sister, but not as a wife; by implication Gandhi shared his correspondent's view. "If women only knew how to resist their husbands all would be well," he remarked bitterly to Margaret Sanger. "I have been able to teach women who have come in contact with me how to resist their husbands. The real problem is that many do not want to resist them . . ."

GANDHI'S LIFE-LONG STRUGGLE to overcome his own 'carnal lust' and 'animal passion'; his public *mea culpa* when he confessed to a 'lust dream' followed by a penance of six weeks' silence; his endorsement of the power of the 'vital fluid'—all this made him the living symbol of the guilt-ridden Hindu attitude to sex and encouraged the worshipful masses to persist in it. As a result, the trade in aphrodisiacs is thriving as before, surrounded by the odour of sanctimonious hypocrisy.

A minor but significant feature of the Gandhian heritage is the widespread hypochondria about diet and digestion. In a country riddled with amoebic dysentery, hook-worm and other scourges, this is not surprising. But Gandhi's lifelong preoccupation with experimental diets was again primarily linked with the quest for chastity. When he took the vow, he wrote: "Control of the palate is the first essential in the observance of the vow . . . The *brahmachary*'s food should be limited, simple spiceless and if possible uncooked . . . Six years of experiment have shown me that the *brahmachary*'s ideal food is fresh fruit and nuts." Even milk he thought was an aphrodisiac to be avoided—which seems difficult to reconcile with the pamphlet he wrote on *How To Serve The Cow*.

ONE OF GANDHI'S BIOGRAPHERS,

Louis Fischer, called him 'a unique person, a great person, perhaps the greatest figure of the last nineteen hundred years'. Others compared him to Christ, Buddha and St Francis. The claims to immortality were based on his use of non-violence. The partial success of his early passive resistance, civil disobedience and non-cooperation campaigns; the unarmed marches against armed police and troops; the first sit-downs, the cheerful courting of imprisonment, the public fasts—all this was something completely new in politics, something unheard of; it was a message of hope, almost a revelation; and the amazing thing was that it seemed to work. The lasting merit of Gandhi was not that he 'liberated India'—as many Indians and others have pointed out, independence would have come much earlier without him—but to have made the world realise that the conventional methods of power-politics are not the only conceivable ones; and that under certain circumstances non-violence—*ahimsa*—might be substituted for them. But the emphasis is on the limiting clause; and the tragedy of Gandhi was the narrow range of applicability of his method. It was a noble game which could only be played against an adversary abiding by certain rules of common decency instilled by long tradition; otherwise it would amount to mass suicide.

LIKE MOST INVENTORS OF A NEW philosophical system, Gandhi at first believed in its universal validity. The earliest shock of disappointment came in 1919, when the first nation-wide civil disobedience campaign degenerated into violent rioting all over the country. Gandhi suspended the action, went on a penitential fast, and confessed to having committed a 'Himalayan blunder' by starting the campaign before his followers had been sufficiently trained in the spirit and methods of *satyagraha*.

The next year he launched a new non-cooperation movement, jointly with the Muslims. Again it led to nation-wide riots, culminating in the massacre of Chauri Chaura; again he suspended the campaign and went on a fast.

His most successful movement was the civil disobedience campaign 1930-31 against the salt laws, highlighted by the spectacular 'march to the sea'. This time, too, there was widespread rioting,

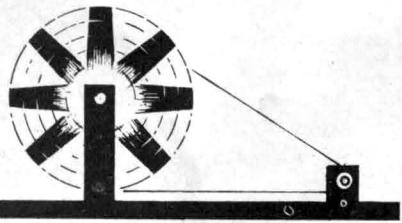
but the campaign was allowed to continue until a compromise settlement was reached with the Viceroy.

The later *satyagraha* movements (1932-34, 1940-41 and 1942-43) ended inconclusively. In terms of tangible results this was not an impressive record. But the general impact on politicians, intellectuals and the world at large was momentous: it turned Gandhi into a living legend. It was further dramatised by his 18 public fasts and altogether six and a half years of detention—the first in a black hole in Johannesburg, the last in the Aga Khan's palace.

BUT GANDHI'S METHODS OF using non-violence had their Himalayan inconsistencies, and the advice he proffered to other nations was often quite irresponsible by any humane standard. Although he repeated over and over again that only people far advanced on the spiritual trail were able to practise non-violent resistance, he did not hesitate to recommend it as a universal panacea, even in such tragically inappropriate situations as that of the German Jews under the Nazis. In December 1938, after the first nationwide pogrom, he wrote: "I make bold to say that, if the Jews can summon to their aid soul-power that comes from non-violence, Herr Hitler will bow before the courage which he will own is infinitely superior to that shown by his best stormtroopers." And in 1946, when the incredible news of six million gassed victims became known: "The Jews should have offered themselves to the butcher's knife. They should have thrown themselves into the sea from cliffs . . . It would have roused the world and the people of Germany."

There was only one mitigating circumstance to utterances like this: Gandhi's notorious ignorance of international affairs. At the outbreak of the Second World War, he declared his moral support for the Allied cause. After the fall of France, he praised Petain for his courage to surrender, and on July 6, 1940, published an *Appeal To Every Briton* to follow the French example (on his insistence, the text of this appeal was transmitted by the Viceroy to the British War Cabinet):

" . . . I do not want Britain to be defeated nor do I want her to be victorious in a trial of brute strength . . . I want you to fight Nazism without arms or with non-violent arms. I would



The principles by which he hoped to shape India, laid down 40 years earlier in Hind Swaraj, had turned out to be self-defeating.

like you to lay down the arms you have, being useless for your humanity. You will invite Herr Hitler and Signor Mussolini to take what they want of the countries you call your possessions. Let them take possession of your beautiful island, with your many beautiful buildings. You will give all these but neither your soul, nor your minds. If these gentlemen choose to occupy your homes, you will vacate them. If they do not give you free passage out, you will allow yourself, man, woman and child, to be slaughtered, but you will refuse to owe allegiance to them."

It would have taken a great deal of corpses to keep Bapu in non-violence.

HE HAD SIMILAR ADVICE TO offer to Czechs, Poles, Finns and Chinese. On the last day of his life, a few hours before he was assassinated, a correspondent of *Life* magazine asked him: "How would you meet the atom bomb . . . with non-violence?" He replied: "I will not go into shelter. I will come out in the open and let the pilot see I have not a trace of ill-will against him. The pilot will not see our faces, from his great height, I know. But the longing in our hearts—that he will not come to harm—would reach up to him and his eyes would be opened."

This statement, and many earlier ones on similar lines, give the impression that Gandhi's faith in non-violence was absolute ("I know of no single case in which it has failed," he wrote in his *Appeal To Every Briton*). In fact, however, on a number of critical occasions he betrayed his own principles in a quite blatant way. There was the episode, not to be taken too seriously, when, in 1918, he acted as a recruiting sergeant for the British Army. In a speech in the Kheda district he said: "To bring about [dominion status in the Empire] we should have the ability to defend ourselves, that is, the ability to bear arms and to use them . . . If we want to learn the use of arms with the greatest possible despatch, it is our duty to enlist ourselves in the army." Three years later, he asserted: "Under Independence I too would not hesitate to advise those who would bear arms to do so and fight for the country."

Later on he explained these lapses by saying that they did not imply any lack of faith in non-violence, but merely that 'I had not yet found my

feet . . . I was not sufficiently sure of my ground'. But this excuse can hardly be applied to the climactic events in the last two years of his life—the Hindu-Muslim massacres which led to Partition, and the fighting in Kashmir which signalled the ultimate shipwreck of non-violence. During his pilgrimage through the terror-stricken villages of east Bengal when he saw 'only darkness all around', he confessed that 'for the time being he had given up searching for a non-violent remedy applicable to the masses'. A few days later, he wrote: "Violence is horrible and retarding, but may be used in self-defence." But another few days later, in a letter: "Non-violent defence is the supreme self-defence, being infallible." He was at the end of his tether.

IN ONE OF THE DEVASTATED villages he received the visit of a Muslim divine who had saved the lives of several Hindu families by putting them through a mock ceremony of conversion to Islam. Bose relates: "Gandhi told him that it would have been much better if, as a religious preceptor, he had taught the Hindus to lay down their lives for their faith rather than give it up through fear. The divine continued to argue that such false conversion for saving one's life had the sanction of religion, when Gandhiji grew impatient and in an almost angry tone said if ever he met God he would ask him why a man with such views had ever been made a religious preceptor. The divine became silent and after an exchange of courtesies left."

Gandhi had strenuously opposed Partition; he called it 'the vivisection of India which would mean the vivisection of myself'. At the historical meeting of Congress, June 14-15, 1947, which was to decide for or against Partition, the President, Acharya Kripalani, Gandhi's life-long friend, made a memorable speech which signified the future Indian Government's farewell to the ideals of non-violence. Unlike Mark Antony, he started by praising Gandhi, and then proceeded to bury him. He expressed his appreciation of Gandhi's pilgrimages in Bengal and Bihar trying to bring about Hindu-Muslim reconciliation as an alternative to Partition, but denied the efficacy of the method: "Unfortunately for us today, though he can enunciate policies, they have to be in the main carried out by others, and these others are not converted to his way of

thinking. It is under these painful circumstances that I have supported the division of India."

TO EVERYBODY'S SURPRISE, Gandhi in his speech suddenly urged acceptance of Partition on the grounds that 'sometimes certain decisions, however unpalatable they may be, have to be taken'. Three months later, independent India and independent Pakistan were confronting each other in Kashmir. Gandhi commented in one of his after-prayer speeches that he had been 'an opponent of all warfare'. But if there was no other way of securing justice from Pakistan, if Pakistan persistently refused to see its proved error and continued to minimise it, the Indian Union would have to go to war against it. War was no joke. No one wanted war. That way lay destruction. But he could never advise 'anyone to put up with injustice'.

"My affection for Gandhi," Kingsley Martin wrote after his last visit to India, "and my knowledge that he was a great man were not impaired by the discovery that he was still a Hindu nationalist and an imperfect disciple of the Mahatma." I am not at all sure whether he would have supported an Indian version of the movement for unilateral nuclear disarmament. He had been lavish with advice to Britons, Frenchmen, Czechs, Poles, Jews, to lay down their arms and surrender to injustices infinitely more terrible than those committed by Pakistan. As on earlier critical occasions, when the lofty ideal clashed with hard reality, realism carried the day and the Yogi succumbed to the Commissar. He had believed in and practised nature medicine, but when critically ill had always called in the Practitioners of Western science which he held in such contempt. *Ahimsa* and *satyagraha* had worked like magic on the British, but did not work on Muslims. Was it really the panacea for mankind as he had thought? A fortnight before his death, commenting on Deputy Premier Sardar Patel's decision to send troops into Kashmir, Gandhi confessed to Bose: "When power descended on him [Patel], he saw that he could no longer successfully apply the method of non-violence which he used to wield with signal success. I have made the discovery that what I and the people with me termed non-violence was not the genuine article, but a weak copy known as passive resistance. Naturally,

passive resistance can avail nothing to a ruler."

To another interviewer—Professor Stuart Nelson—he repeated that what he had mistaken for *satyagraha* was no more than passive resistance, which was a weapon of the weak. . . . Gandhiji proceeded to say that it was indeed true that he had all along laboured under an illusion. But he was never sorry for it. He realised that if his vision had not been clouded by that illusion India would never have reached that point which it had done today.

Yet that, too, may have been no more than an illusion. India had reached the point of independence not because of *ahimsa*, but because the Empire had gone into voluntary self-liquidation. The spinning-wheel was preserved on its national flag, but the Gandhian mystique played no part in the shaping of the new state, though it continued to pay lip-service to it. The armed conflicts with Pakistan and China produced outbreaks of chauvinism and mass hysteria which suggested that the Mahatma's pacifist apostolate had left hardly any tangible effects; and the repeated, bloody riots between Hindu Indians and Muslim Indians added a bitterly ironic touch to the picture. When Gandhi's adopted spiritual heir, Vinoba Bhave, 'the marching saint', was asked whether he approved of armed resistance against the Chinese frontier intrusion, he replied in the affirmative, using Gandhi's erstwhile excuse that the masses were not yet ripe for non-violent resistance. To paraphrase St Augustine: "Lord, give us non-violence, but not yet."

GANDHI HIMSELF FORESAW THIS development in moments when his vision was not 'clouded by illusion'. On the day Independence was proclaimed, August 15, 1947, when the whole world awaited his message on this historic occasion, he refused to send one. Emissaries of the newly formed government pointed out to him that his silence would create a bad impression. He replied: "If it is bad, let it be so . . ." Bose noted in his diary: "He said, there was a time when India listened to him. Today he was a back number. He was told that he had no place in the new order where they wanted machines, navy, air force, and what-not. He could never be party to that." Towards the end, attendance at his prayer meetings dwindled appreci-

ably, and the after-prayer speeches "failed to evoke the same enthusiasm as formerly. His voice seemed to have lost its magic quality."

Pyarelal was another witness of the final agony. "One sentence that was constantly on his lips was, 'Don't you see, I am mounted on my funeral pyre' . . . Sometimes he asked himself whether he had not become a dead weight on his colleagues and on the country, an anachronism and a misfit in the new era that was shaping around him, and which he had done more than anyone else to shape. . . I watched day after day the wan, sad look on that pinched face, bespeaking an inner anguish that was frightening to behold."

The principles by which he hoped to shape India, laid down 40 years earlier in *Hind Swaraj*, had turned out to be self-defeating. In the midst of the celebrations, their—and his—defeat was complete. It was sealed by an assassin, who was not one from the enemy camp, but a devout Hindu.

JF HORRABIN HAS DESCRIBED A meeting with Gandhi at St James's Palace, where the Round Table Conference of 1931 was held: "We chatted for some minutes in a small anteroom. Then, catching sight of a clock, he remembered another appointment, apologised and hurried away. I watched him disappear down one of the long corridors of the Palace; his robes tucked in, his slippers twinkling as he ran. Dare I say it?—I am sure, at least, that no friend will misunderstand me if I do—I was irresistibly reminded of one of those Chaplin films which end with the little figure hurrying away to the horizon, gradually lost to sight in the distance."

That remark, far from being disrespectful, leads straight to the secret of Gandhi's immense power over his countrymen and the love they bore him. Chaplin was the symbol of the little man in a bowler hat in the industrialised society of the West. Gandhi was the symbol of the little man in a loin-cloth in poverty-stricken India. He himself was fully aware of this. When a friend once asked him what it was in him that created such a tremendous following in our country, he replied, "It's the man of our country who realises when he sees me that I am living as he does, and I am a part of his own self."

Nehru, the westernised progressive,

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often regarded Gandhi as a political liability, but he was nevertheless under his spell, precisely because Gandhi to him was, in his own words, 'the soul of India'. The soul and the loin-cloth went together; they were inseparable. When Gandhi had tea with George V and Queen Mary at Buckingham Palace, wearing sandals, loin-cloth and a shawl on his shoulders, it was more than just showmanship. It was an event which instantly turned into legend, spreading to the remotest villages of India. One version of it was given years later by the Vice-Chancellor of Poona University, who accompanied Gandhi to the gates of Buckingham Palace: "He went to see the King dressed in a poor man's costume, with half of his legs visible. The King said, 'Mr Gandhi, how is India doing?' He said, 'Look at me and you will know what India is like.' " Every villager with naked legs who felt that Gandhi was 'a part of his own self', thought himself for a moment equal to the King of England. Perhaps Gandhi's greatest gift to his people was to arouse in them, after centuries of lethargy, stirrings of self-respect.

But he also gave his blessings to

their attitudes, derived from a petrified tradition, to sex, food, paternal authority, medicine, industry and education; and he confirmed them in that 'illusion-haunted, magic-ridden mentality' which Tagore had castigated as 'the original sin from which all our ills are flowing'.

GANDHI EXERTED SUCH A POWERFUL influence over the minds of the Indian masses that many believed him to be an *Avatar*, a reincarnation of Krishna. One cannot help feeling that had he crusaded for family planning instead of the impossible demand for married continence, India might be a different country now. He was most eloquent about the poverty-stricken life of the Indian villager and his inability to feed the exorbitant numbers of his offspring; but the only remedy he had to propose was *brahmacharya* and the spinning wheel.

He was unwilling to listen to the reasoned arguments of critics. In the words of TA Raman, a distinguished Indian journalist: "Almost the most marked trait of Gandhi's character is that evidenced by the virtual impossibility of reasoning with him. By defini-

tion he is a man of faith and men of faith have little use for the slow processes of reasoning . . . This, and the unshakeable conviction of his own rightness, make arguments with Gandhi pleasant (for he is a good listener) but futile."

It is equally pleasant but futile to argue with intellectuals who adhere to the Gandhi-cult and pay lip service to a philosophy easy to eulogise and impossible to realise. It is this attitude which lends the contemporary Indian scene its twilight air of unreality, muddleheadedness and sanctimonious evasion of vital issues. Bapu still casts his saintly-sickly spell over it, but its power is waning as more people realise that, whether we like it or not, spinning wheels cannot compete with factories, and that the most vital fluid is the water from large modern irrigation dams for the country's parched fields. When all is said, the Mahatma, in his humble and heroic ways, was the greatest living anachronism of the twentieth century; and one cannot help feeling, blasphemous though it may sound, that India would be better off today and healthier in mind, without the Gandhian heritage. ♦

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International Intelligence

A Monthly Look at the Events and Personalities Behind the News

DAVID BOWIE *Rock And Role Reversal*

SEXUAL indiscretions are not supposed to make public careers, but the David Bowie the world now knows was launched 11 years ago with a confession. Admitting his bisexuality to an interviewer who was thereafter never quite sure whether he had dug out a genuine scoop or had been carefully manipulated, Bowie became an object of such fascination that an inauspicious career was spectacularly transformed.

He began plainly enough as David Jones, his real name, following fashions, not setting them. His return to the public stage after a five-year absence filming, recording, rebuilding his once precarious health and reorganizing his business affairs has impressively reasserted his popularity. He is said to be receiving one million dollars for a single appearance at a rock festival in San Bernardino, California. His promoters claim that 500,000 people applied for tickets to his British performances, which included three open-air shows at the 50,000-capacity Milton Keynes Bowl. A new recording contract with EMI is worth at last 12 million dollars, 1.7 million dollars of which he received for his first album under the deal. To EMI's relief, that record went to the top of the charts



Master at ease.

immediately after its release.

To fulfill his new obligations, Bowie has shown an unexpected willingness to be interviewed and, even more unusually, to confront his highly speculative personal history. To borrow a phrase of his former hero, Bob Dylan, this year he is bringing it all back home.

Although he will continue to put on the costumes of the various identities he has created and made famous, such as the androgynous Ziggy Stardust and the troubadour of *Space Oddity*, Bowie says that at 36 such impostures are firmly behind him. He has turned his back on the trend of electronic pop which he started and which is now in full spate among the latest generation of British pop musicians. *Let's Dance*, his latest album, has caused consternation among the avant-garde by reemploying guitars and drawing suspen-

nance from the simple, exuberant rhythm-and-blues he copied in adolescence.

For almost a decade he had been struggling to establish himself: his well-timed pronouncement focussed publicity on an unconventional personality and gave impetus to the launch of the album on which his career pivoted: *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars*, a feverish, uneven projection of rock stardom in a world awaiting apocalypse. What the world actually awaited was a pop phenomenon for the '70s, to replace the Beatles and Rolling Stones. Looking abnormally glamorous in skin-tight cat-suit and space-age platform boots, his hair a bright-red stool, Bowie initiated the new rock cult based on glitter and glamour, once neatly defined by John Lennon as 'rock-'n'-roll with lipstick on' and quickly debased by Bowie's many imitators.

Ziggy Stardust delivered Bowie his own stardom, then trapped him in its doomed persona, from which he escaped into seclusion by the first of several strategic 'retirements'. It taught him that he could manufacture compelling images, and the musical styles to complement them, at will; the discovery has been the source both of his unwavering appeal, and of the common, sometimes warranted criticism that he is an opportunist whose emotions are not always fully engaged.

As a musician and fashionable figure, his influ-

ence is felt throughout contemporary pop. Just as the 'plastic soul' of *Young Americans* anticipated the disco music of the Bee Gees and *Saturday Night Fever*, so his electronic albums, *Low* and *Heroes* have foreshadowed the mass popularity of synthesizers. Because of him the punks, the New Romantics and other youth cults have dyed their hair, sung in native, not American, accents, and attempted their own rock and role-playing.

The private Bowie is today quite unlike his cast of characters and especially unlike his old self, to which cling tabloid-headline memories of drug abuse and a freewheeling marriage to Angie Bowie, a would-be actress who never forgave him for having the greater talent. Now he demonstrates the poise and cultured charm, the airs and graces, acquired by English stage-actors rather than rock stars.

His own life-story, as filmed by Ken Russell, could be called *Schizophrenia*. His friend Pete Townshend of the Who, a perceptive analyst of the pop world, has said that Bowie invents 'characters' because personally he is 'in flux, constantly changing': a view which Bowie now endorses in his new mood of frankness. He recognizes he has overcome basic shyness through compulsive exhibitionism, sometimes with unpleasant results. On a concert tour in 1976 he wore stark black-and-whites, like the decadent compere of *Cabaret*: a striking effect which he spoiled



'Rock-'n'-Roll with lipstick on'.

by appearing to wave a Nazi salute, then spouting Aryan philosophy in interviews.

His insecurity can be traced to his family background. An older, beloved stepbrother vanished into mental institutions. He was not close to his mother. His father, who bought him a saxophone and supported his musical ambitions, died at the moment of his first hit, with *Space Oddity* in 1969; he had at various times run a theatre troupe and owned a Soho wrestling club.

Bowie's own gift for publicity surfaced as a schoolboy in Bromley, south London, when he appeared on the BBC *Tonight* programme protesting the cause of long hair. Next he wrote to the washing-machine magnate John Bloom, asking for money to outfit his rhythm-and-blues group. Bloom supplied a showbusiness contact through whom Bowie recorded his first single in 1964: *Liza Jane* credited to Davie Jones and the King Bees.

The '60s were his undistinguished apprenticeship in pop music. He moved uncertainly between imitating Anthony Newley, (recording in 1967 a children's novelty song, *The Laughing Gnome*) and dabbling as a hippie in mime, Buddhism and the arts-lab scene. The mime artist Lindsay Kemp opened up to him a new world, awakening theatrical instincts which were chan-

nelled, unsuccessfully, into show business by a manager-cum-mentor, Ken Pitt, who earned Bowie's admiration by virtue of his friendship with the late film star James Dean. A peculiar consequence was that he sang the first English language-version of *Comme d'habitude*, which Paul Anka re-wrote as *My Way*. More productive was a Bob Dylan phase, from which came *Space Oddity*, his best-known song, which he has re-recorded and released several times.

In 1970 it was his good fortune, at least originally, to acquire as his manager an aggressive English lawyer, Tony DeFries, a consultant to models, photographers and music business executives. They were complementary. DeFries, the deal-maker, gave Bowie the confidence to exploit his ideas.

DeFries signed Bowie to RCA Records, predicting with massive enthusiasm that he would be as big as Elvis Presley, the label's most important artist. But around him he began building his own empire, for which Bowie produced the records of Mott the Hoople (*All the Young Dudes*), Lou Reed (*Walk on the Wild Side*) and others prompting accusations that he was using these more established performers to publicize himself.

It has been a small step from the impersonations of his records to acting itself, and each new role has re-

flected some aspect of his various personae. In *The Man Who Fell To Earth*, his 1976 debut as a film star, Nicolas Roeg (who had seen his *Omnibus* TV documentary, *Cracked Actor*) cast him unerringly as a displaced alien. *Just A Gigolo*, a David Hemmings flop set amidst Weimar degeneracy, traded his fragile maleness against the camp legend of Marlene Dietrich. And in *Baal*, a BBC production in 1982, he was Brecht's coldly amoral anti-hero. Playing *The Elephant Man*, a lauded Broadway appearance in 1980, inverted his handsome image, a trick he accomplished by mime; and in *The Hunger* he became a senescent vampire.

He has generally got what he wanted. In January 1975 he wrested control of his career from DeFries, though the settlement was punitive. As his own, conspi-

cuously successful business manager, he keeps few employees and relies upon a formidably protective assistant, 'Coco' Schwab, the only survivor of the DeFries regime. His private travels, which satisfy an interest in ethnic musics, include no superstar entourage.

He lives unostentatiously in a New York apartment and a house near Lausanne with his 12-year-old son, Duncan, known in more publicity-conscious days as 'Zowie'. This custodianship has allegedly conferred new responsibilities and happiness. "I'm a single parent with a son," he said recently, "and more than anything else over the last five years that fact has honed my outlook generally, and will continue to change my approach to music and whatever else I do. I now have a very direct link with the future." ♦

UK ASIANS

The Punjab Tangle

IN MAY, AS Britain was gearing itself for a General Election, two hundred *sardarjis* marched through London. An example of Asian interest in the poll?

Not at all. The *sardars* cared nothing for Mrs Thatcher or Mr Foot. In fact, they didn't give a damn about the election.

What they were marching for was the Punjab. According to them, their Sikh brethren were being mistreated by Mrs Gandhi's police and it was time that the world stopped India from discriminating against the Sikhs.

Such demonstrations are not unusual. In Southall, Khalistan flags fly proudly. Other *sardarjis* call themselves Khalistani 'Commandos' and train for eternal war. A score of private

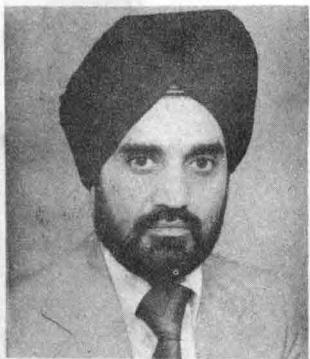
houses masquerade as missions of the imaginary republic of Khalistan. Fresh from their battle over wearing turbans not helmets on motorbikes, UK Sikhs have found a new issue.

Much of the pro-Punjab activity is ill-conceived, badly executed and downright ridiculous. The British regard the issue as being of no consequence and only the Pakistanis, eager to take revenge for the whole Bangladesh affair over a decade ago, take the Khalistani commandos at all seriously.

Now however, there is a chance that the moderate case may get a fair hearing. One of Britain's richest Asians has begun taking an interest in the affair and as much of what he says is

eminently reasonable, he should garner much media coverage.

Ironically, the man in question is not a Punjabi at all. Kartar Lalvani is a Sindhi Sikh from the Binatone family. Now with his brother Gulu (who is not a Sikh) looking after Binatone, the UK's largest consumer electronics company, Kartar has shifted into pharmaceuticals and health products. And he has started taking an interest in the affairs of the Sikhs.



Kartar Lalvani.

The Indian Merchant Association, a UK Asian organization more-or-less run by Lalvani has been the principle vehicle for the propagation of his ideas. A booklet produced by the Association says, "We, the overseas Indian citizens, Sindhis, Sikhs and other Hindus alike are most disturbed and concerned at the present Hindu-Sikh tension in Punjab. Accordingly, I, on behalf of the Indian Merchant Association and Mr SR Iyengar, formerly a journalist and now an industrialist in Lagos, left for a preliminary study to report back our findings to various UK Associations...."

The thesis of the Association's booklet is that the problem has its roots in the attitudes of Punjabi Hindus who are Arya Samaj types. It quotes an unnamed Sikh leader as asking, "Why was the linguistic Punjab the last state to be formed? Was it not due to discrimination against the Sikhs? Or was it because our *Suba* agitation

was too peaceful?"

This may seem a little self-righteous but Lalvani's booklet goes on to make point after point. He quotes the instance of the Hindu agitation against renaming a secondary road 'Guru Gobind Singh Marg'. Would anyone in Maharashtra have complained about naming a street after Shivaji? he asks. He claims that the proportion of Sikhs in the army has been reduced to under two per cent. He asks why Chandigarh has still not been handed over to the Punjab. There is more in the same vein—a lot of it quite convincing.

The booklet argues that the Sikhs have a genuine grievance and are putting forward legitimate demands, but objects to the government's insistence on caricaturing their views. According to Lalvani's information, the official publicity given to the Khalistan movement is part of a gigantic disinformation exercise. That way, says the booklet, legitimate demands are lost in the Khalistan hysteria.

It is too early to say what impact Lalvani's propagation of the Sikh cause will have. There can be no denying his wealth or his influence. He has already offered to step in and finance the World Cup cricket competition now that original sponsors Prudential have given up. His only condition would be that the tournament is held in India.

Lalvani is also quite close to the Indian government. His Indian Merchant Association was among Mrs Gandhi's earliest supporters. During the Emergency, he placed advertisements in British papers supporting the Indira Gandhi regime. In return, Mrs Gandhi wrote him a personal letter of thanks ("The action we have taken has saved India from anarchy"). Lalvani was in the news again this year

when he issued a statement criticizing Swraj Paul's attempts to take over DCM and Escorts.

Among other Asians in the UK, he is known as a maverick who is brilliant (he is a distinguished pharmacologist) but unconventional. His last obsession was the Taj Mahal. Though he does not like being compared to PN Oak, he too spent years trying to prove that the Taj

was originally a Hindu monument. Whatever one may think of that enterprise, at least it suggests that he is not anti-Hindu!

While the Indian High Commission in London has, so far, had an easy time dismissing the Punjab case as the creation of a few lunatic *sardarjis* who love calling themselves 'commandos', they can hardly treat Lalvani the same way. ♦

LETTER FROM AUSTRALIA

High Stakes And Desperate Men

THE VERY UNFORTUNATE loss of money and reputation by Rupert (Dirty Digger) Murdoch in his recent business dealings is greeted with dismay here.

Fresh in the local mind is the distressing tale of his bid for next year's live television coverage into Australia of the Los Angeles Olympics. The two big name contenders were the famous bunker-bilia collector and Kerry Packer, the cricket lover. Packer's advisors had calculated that the Games were worth three and a half million dollars and, if necessary, could be made to work at four million dollars, but on no account was he to pay more.

On the flight to Los Angeles, Packer met Wilf Barker—the fat man who runs one of the Digger's appalling TV stations. Barker was going to bid for the Games on behalf of the Murdoch TV Network (acquired under the deeply grateful and rule-bending Fraser Government).

As they conversed, Barker was impressed by Packer's honesty and common sense. He agreed with Packer that

it would be silly to get into an auction in the office of an American TV executive, throwing ever higher bids around and spending more Australian money than could be justified. Barker was moved by the fraternal candour with which Packer promised that if the bidding got to ten million dollars he would drop out.

In the event, only one bid was made and Barker brought the Games for Rupe for ten and a half million dollars. Close observers of technological matters have remarked that it will be necessary for the Digger's Network to hire satellite



Kerry Packer.

space to beam the Games into Australia. The satellite has been completely booked for the relevant period and arrangements will need to be made with the people who booked it.

It was booked two years ago by Packer. Barker is rumoured not to keep a diary.

The episode has behind it the time-honoured mercantile precept of childish revenge. Some time ago here, in a semifinal of Packer's one day beach cricket, play was washed out and the match was won on a count-back assessment of run-rates, overs completed and maiden names of maternal grandmothers.

In beating the West Indies by this computerised dating method, Australia eliminat-

ed Pakistan from the competition and Packer was left in the enviable position of having his two biggest draw-cards playing off in the finals. It was suggested by idle mongrels with nothing better to do, that all the foregoing was, while not exactly rigged, not entirely unrigged.

Murdoch's own quality Sydney journal, the *Mirror*, ran a cartoon which characterised Packer as Shylock and showed him dancing on the grave of cricket. Packer took no legal action against this vile pictorial offence, but he placed it high on his list of things that needed attending to.

It was that cartoon which cost the Digger an extra six and a half million dollars for the Olympics. ♦



Thatcher

ria. Hungry for votes at the last election, she called for the return of hanging and was faced with a vote when parliament reconvened in July.

Both Mrs Thatcher and her new Jewish Home Secretary, Leon Brittan realized their error. They had no desire to turn Britain into the only nation in Western Europe that still retained the death penalty. So, they chose a cop-out. They would not comment on a total return of the rope but thought that it was a good idea to hang terrorists. As even a member of Mrs Thatcher's cabinet can see, this makes no sense at all. There is nothing the IRA wants more than to have its bombers executed by the Brits. They can then be regarded as martyrs and various kinds of retribution can be exacted from innocent civilians.

Westminster gossip has it that both Mrs Thatcher and Brittan did, eventually accept this. However, to have publicly opposed the death penalty would have gone against their stated beliefs. So they chose a more deviant route. Mrs Thatcher summoned MP's and told them to defeat the measure on the quiet. As a result, the vote went against hanging by a majority of 145 votes.

Finally, intellect had triumphed over Tory barbarism.

The Tory victory had led to demands for the re-establishment of sporting links

with South Africa. Despite its public statements, the Tory party has never favoured deserting the whites in South Africa for a load of pushy brown and black fellows.

Accordingly, John Carlisle, a Tory MP demanded that the MCC send a team to tour South Africa in contravention of the Gleneagles agreement. The international fall-out from such a move would be immense. India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and West Indies would refuse to play England.

A year ago, Carlisle wouldn't have stood a chance. The cricket establishment was secure in its views and brooked no challenge to its authority. But now, with the new Conservative mood in London, Carlisle was able to force a vote on the issue. Lord Tuke, the Head of MCC opposed the motion but such establishment figures as former Prime Minister Lord Home were unwilling to condemn Carlisle.

Finally, Mrs Thatcher herself weighed in with an appeal to MCC members to vote against Carlisle. The motion was defeated with 4,344 votes in favour of a South African tour and 6,604 votes against.

What do these defeats for the Right mean? For one, they suggest that now that the election is over, Mrs Thatcher is no longer interested in playing the martinet. It is all very well to make populist statements about hanging and apartheid, she seems to be saying, but the real business of government is too serious to be left to a bunch of Tory hawks.

Such an attitude suggests that on the race relations front, her government may also be less anti-black than it has been in the past. Predictably, her traditional Tory supporters are outraged. But the rest of Britain can now heave a sigh of relief. ♦

BRITAIN VOTES *Hanging And Apartheid*

HOW FAR HAS Britain lurched to the Right under Mrs Thatcher's new Conservative government? Traditionally, the lunatic fringe of the Tory Right emerges just after an election victory and attempts to get its own way on various matters that while not strictly political—can be seen in Left-Right terms.

The results of two battles—over bringing back the death penalty and letting the Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) tour South Africa—suggests that Mrs Thatcher's crowd is not as Right-wing as its rhetoric.

The hanging issue is the one that gets Tory extremists really excited. The arguments against hanging have been explained time and time again. Sir Robert Mark, the former London Commissioner of Police has said

that the death penalty does not deter murderers, psychologists have tried to explain how a criminal mind works and even Britain's last hangman has said that reviving hanging is a fairly barbaric thing to do.

But the Tory Right is undeterred. It used to be said that a desire for revenge motivated supporters of the death penalty. Most Tory MP's however have no sense of sympathy for murder victims, so the revenge argument does not apply. Rather, they see the rope as reviving memories of an era when Britain was great and believed in old fashioned, strong punishment.

As barbaric as the lunatic fringe of the Tory Party may seem, this is the crowd that elected Mrs Thatcher and she has no option but to go along with their hyste-

RANDOM NOTES

Odds And Trends

SACRIFICIAL LAMB

IT'S CURTAINS FOR Frank Giles, the former Editor of the (London) *Sunday Times*. Giles used to be Harry Evans' deputy at the paper before Rupert Murdoch made him editor. After the Hitler Diaries fiasco, Murdoch decided that a sacrificial lamb was called for. Accordingly, Giles was kicked upstairs to become

Editor Emeritus and 32-year-old Andrew Neil lured away from *The Economist* to become editor. Addressing the staff before his enforced departure, Giles announced, "The new editor will be Andrew Neil who I've never heard of." Asked what his new title meant, Giles snorted, "It means I get to keep the company car." ♦

SEEKING SOCIAL STATUS

• It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than it is for a rich man to enter the British establishment.

A case in point is the saga of the Forte family. Charles Forte was an Italian ice-cream salesman who emigrated to Britain and made a fortune in catering. Later his group (Trust Houses Forte) took over some of the world's best hotels including London's Grosvenor House and Paris' George V. Generous contributions to Conservative Party funds also earned him a peerage so that he's now Lord Forte.

One would assume that his son—the Honourable Rocco, a second generation immigrant would have no

trouble finding social occupation. On the contrary! Despite hectic lobbying White's, the top London club, blackballed the Honourable Rocco and told him he was 'not suited' to the club.

Finally, Rocco had the last laugh. White's has a marquee in the paddock at Ascot where its members can avoid the riff-raff. The champagne, watercress sandwiches and the like are provided by caterers Ring and Brymer. Unknown to White's, the Forte family owns Ring and Brymer.

It is said that at least twenty members of White's were very ill the day after Ascot.

ASSAD'S OFFENCE

• A *New York Times* correspondent tells this (probably apocryphal) story about Syria's President Assad:

Assad had delivered a long speech on how everybody was equal before the law when his wife suggested that they go for a drive. It was late evening and both

the President and the First Lady were feeling romantic so Assad pulled over to the side of the road.

The couple had hardly held hands when a policeman appeared. "This is an offence against public decency," he snarled. "Oh, sorry Mr President," he said, suddenly realizing who he



President Assad.

had chanced upon.

"No, no," said Assad.

"We are all equal before the law. Go ahead and fine me."

"Well, OK" said the embarrassed policeman and fined Assad's wife double of what he'd fined the President.

"Don't let me off so easily," said Assad. "I'm just a 'citizen.'" "No," said the policeman. "I'm not fining you less than your wife because you are the President. It's because you are a first time offender." ♦

KEEPING THEIR IMAGE

• As the Carter aides come clean with their accounts of their White House days, this marvellous story has emerged. While planning the Iranian rescue operation, the Pentagon came up with one scheme. This required commandos to ring the area around the Embassy with machine gun fire to provide a security blanket for those soldiers rescuing the hostages.

"But won't innocent

people die in this hail of bullets?" asked a Carter aide. Well, there are costs in any operation, said a Pentagon General. Innocent people always get hurt.

"But can't we do something else?" the aide persisted. "Can't we use nerve gas instead?"

"Gas!" The Generals looked horrified. "Good God, no! That would be bad for our image." ♦

HORMONES AND HAIRLINES



Ronald Reagan.

• How old are the Reagans?

"I'm 60," Plastic Nancy assured an interviewer last month. In fact, she is at least 62, unless she lied about her age on her birth certificate.

Ronald at least is honest about how old he is. Nevertheless, scientists and doctors find themselves unable to explain his youthful



Nancy Reagan.

appearance. Even if one accepts that he dyes his hair, there is still the matter of his hairline. Clearly he does not wear a wig. How then has he managed such a thick crop of hair? "His hairline is that of a eunuch or an adolescent," scoffs a noted US trichologist.

Hormones are supposed to be the secret of the President's youth! ♦

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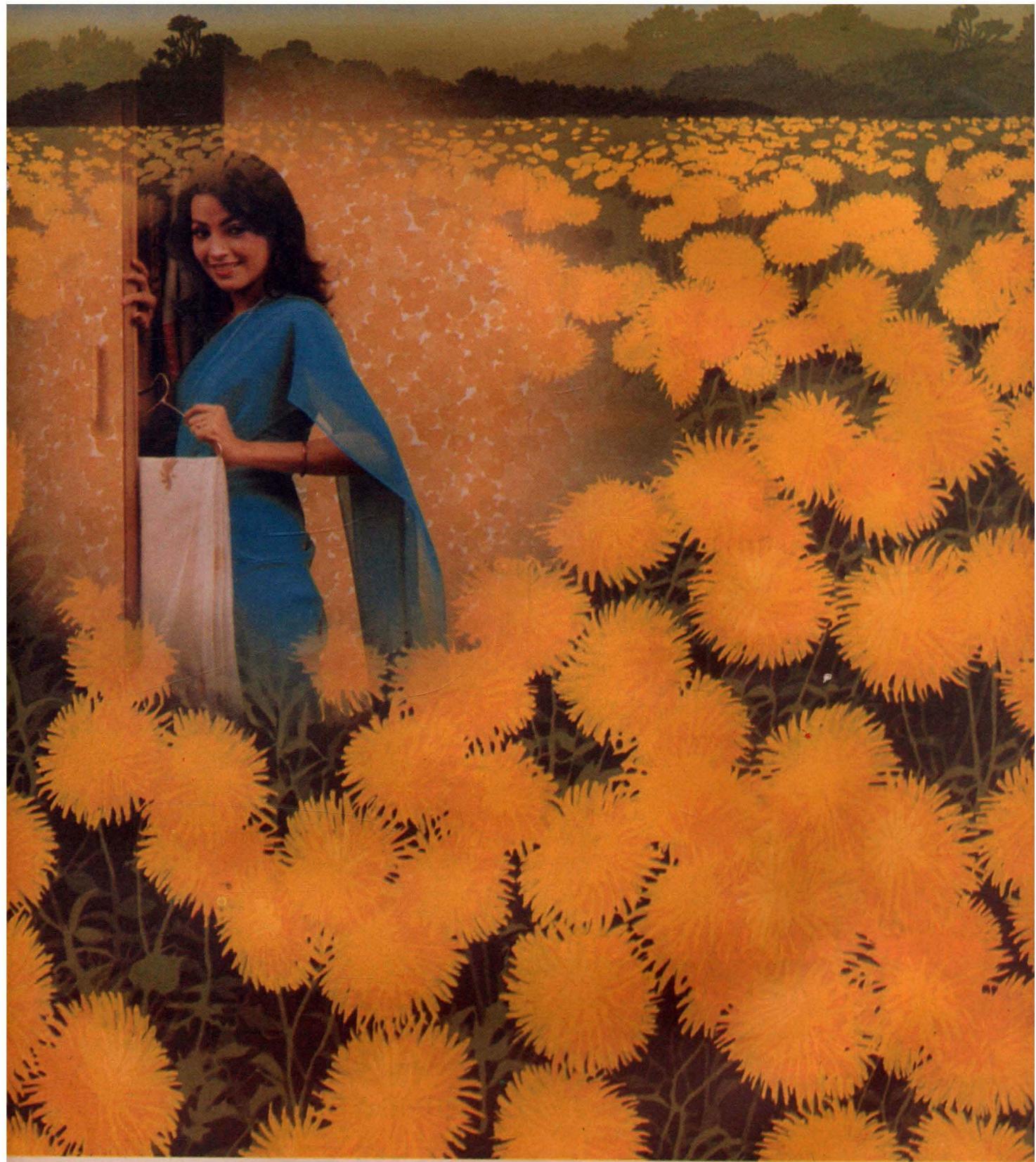
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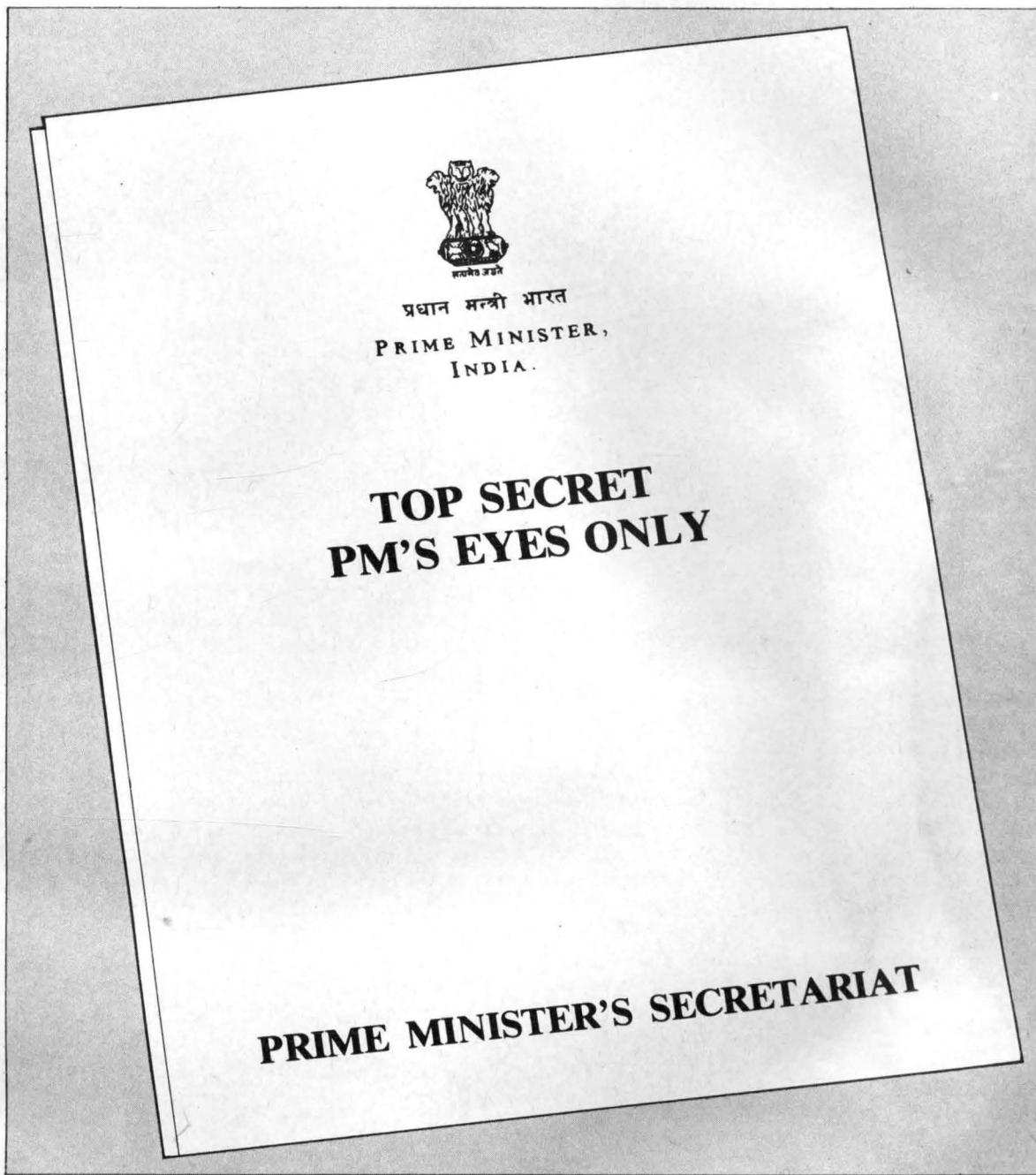
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THE MORARJI PAPERS



THE GREAT BETRAYAL

*Sanjeeva Reddy and the Fall of the
Janata Government.*

THE MORARJI-SANJEEVA FEUD



In the light of hitherto unrevealed correspondence Reddy's role in the destruction of the Janata Government becomes clearer.

BY ARUN GANDHI

EVER SINCE, SANJEEVA Reddy manœuvred events to first have Charan Singh appointed Prime Minister and then to make it possible for Mrs Indira Gandhi to return to power, the former President has claimed that he acted out of a conception of national interest.

In fact, as a perusal of the correspondence between Reddy and the then Prime Minister Morarji Desai shows, the former President's behaviour had been suspect almost from the day he was elected. He had paid an unnecessary visit to Mrs Gandhi, had seemed to take Charan Singh's side in matters of state and had continually harangued the Prime Minister, making his difficult job even harder. Reddy blew up trivial issues, rejected speeches the Cabinet wrote for him, made statements that he knew would embarrass the government and constantly interfered in the day-to-day governance of India.

Says Morarji: "Sanjeeva was an ambitious man and had visions of becoming the Prime Minister." According to Morarji, Reddy would often joke, saying: "Many of your cabinet colleagues are waiting for you to die so that they can move into your office, but I have told them that you are so strong that you would probably see us all in the grave before you go."

On the face of it this could be dismissed as a harmless, good-humoured repartee between old friends, but

Morarji feels it was not all that innocent. "They were really praying hard for this dream to come true." Be that as it may. Such remarks, innocent or otherwise, lend themselves to many interpretations while in the context of this analysis, it highlights two important facts: first, that Sanjeeva Reddy was more ambitious than the President of India ought to be, and second, that relations between the President and the Prime Minister were far from cordial.

It also raises other issues like: what is the role of the President in India? Can a government function in harmony if the Head of State and the Head of Government are constantly at loggerheads? And, more importantly, if, as President Reddy claims, he was constantly motivated by nationalist and patriotic considerations when dealing with Morarji Desai, why did he not show the same zeal when dealing with Mrs Indira Gandhi when she became the Prime Minister? Did he believe the country was safer in the hands of Indira Gandhi than Morarji Desai or did his patriotic zeal desert him when faced with one who had shown no compunctions in dealing with opponents?

Reddy could not have forgotten the humiliation of 1969 and yet what is now surprising is that when it came to the crunch in 1979, he had no qualms in ditching the man who stood by him through his own periods of crisis. Reddy's politics and ambition had no room for sentimentality and worse still, no room for ideology. When Morarji stood by Reddy in 1969, it was not so

much for sentiments as for ideology. In 1979, when it was Reddy's turn to reciprocate, he showed neither.

IN SPITE OF ALL THE TRAUMATIC events that occurred during this momentous decade which had a direct bearing on Sanjeeva Reddy's political career, he was inexplicably moved to pay a courtesy call on Indira Gandhi soon after his election as a Lok Sabha Speaker in 1977 when there was no apparent reason for such a visit. The circumstances in 1977 were not normal, and any visit by a Janata leader to Mrs Gandhi, especially when the occasion did not demand such courtesy, could be misconstrued. To this day no one knows what prompted Sanjeeva Reddy nor what transpired between the two but when Morarji learnt of it he was smitten enough to write to Reddy on July 1, 1977.

He wrote: "I did not know until now that you and Mr Jayaprakash Narayan had made separate courtesy calls on Mrs Gandhi in the last week of March."

In the same letter Desai reminded Sanjeeva of what Mrs Gandhi had done to him in 1969, but Reddy did not consider it necessary to explain the reason for his mysterious visit. Why had Reddy found it necessary to commiserate with a leader who had lost an election which, by any yardstick, was not an ordinary poll? In the absence of any explanation, this visit gives rise to all sorts of speculation. Was it intend-

Arun Gandhi is a former Editor of Imprint. This article is adapted from a forthcoming book.



Sanjeeva Reddy with Mrs Gandhi : secret dealings?

ed to keep alive the lines of communication with the Congress (I), or did Reddy know in March 1977, that he would now be able to fulfill his dream of becoming the President of India and therefore sought Congress (I) support for his candidature? Whatever Reddy's reasons for the visit, it appears clear that they were not innocent. He was obviously scheming at something.

Later, when the question of the Presidency arose and Morarji suggested that Sanjeeva be considered in view of the humiliation he suffered in 1969, almost all the constituents of the Janata party played it cool. After all it was not their fault that Sanjeeva was denied the coveted office, so why should they atone for it? Morarji sensed the mood of his party members and, on another occasion, suggested the name of the noted dancer, Rukminidevi Arundale.

"I thought it was a good idea to elect her as the President," says Morarji. "After all we have never had a woman as the Head of State and besides she has contributed so much to the art and culture of the country that this would have been a good way to reward her services."

Strangely enough, the suggestion met with even greater derision from the Janata members than had greeted Sanjeeva's prospective candidature. Reddy himself resorted to the typical schoolboyish remark that Morarji wanted 'his lady love' in the Rashtrapati Bhavan.

Suddenly everyone began to root for Sanjeeva and so it was that he became the first President of the Indian

Union to be unanimously elected. Was this a coincidence, was Mrs Gandhi overwhelmed by pangs of conscience for what she did to Sanjeeva Reddy in 1969 or was there something more? Let us not forget that she still controlled a majority in the Rajya Sabha, 150 members in the Lok Sabha and a substantial number of State legislatures to make it uncomfortably close for Sanjeeva Reddy. But, she didn't.

Why did Mrs Gandhi pass up a chance to embarrass the Janata government if not cause a major upset by getting a more reputed man elected as an Opposition candidate? She could probably have achieved this through cross-voting. Was she satisfied that Reddy would play the game if and when the time came as it finally did in 1979? Was this the kind of assurance that Reddy conveyed to her when he met



Had Mrs Gandhi made a deal with Reddy during that surprise meeting?

her in March 1979?

Morarji says: "I had expected Reddy to behave like a matured politician, but he didn't. He was bent on creating obstacles in the functioning of the government right from the start."

T

HIS BECOMES APPARENT very quickly. Perturbed by the continuing unrest in the Jawaharlal Nehru University and the Delhi University, Morarji decided to look into the matter and bring about some settlement. However, *The Statesman* on February 3, 1978, questioned the constitutional validity of the procedure adopted by the Prime Minister even though he was the de facto Chancellor of the two universities. The newspaper felt that the President of India, as Visitor of the University, should order an enquiry and only then can the Chancellor look into the grievances.

Being a stickler for procedure, Morarji wrote to President Reddy on February 20, 1978, giving him the background of the unrest in the universities and adding, "In order to restore normalcy in the universities and to satisfy the affected parties, I agreed personally to go into any complaints addressed to me against the working of the universities, including emergency excesses.

"Fifty five complaints so far received against the Jawaharlal Nehru University are under examination and two sealed boxes containing complaints against the Delhi University have just been received.

"I am not clear whether going into the grievances of the teachers, students and the *karmacharis* or the general public, in the manner proposed, would really tantamount to an enquiry. Nonetheless, I suggest that, to put matters beyond doubt, you may, as Visitor of the two universities, authorise me to go into the complaints and suggest measures for the redress of the grievances voiced and also to go into any aspects arising out of the scrutiny of these complaints."

This was not a matter of earthshaking national importance that demanded greater vigilance from the President. It was an innocuous, routine matter which any Prime Minister could have handled with diligence and sincerity. But it is a substantial measure of Mr Reddy's cussedness that he took

THE BANKER'S DELIGHT

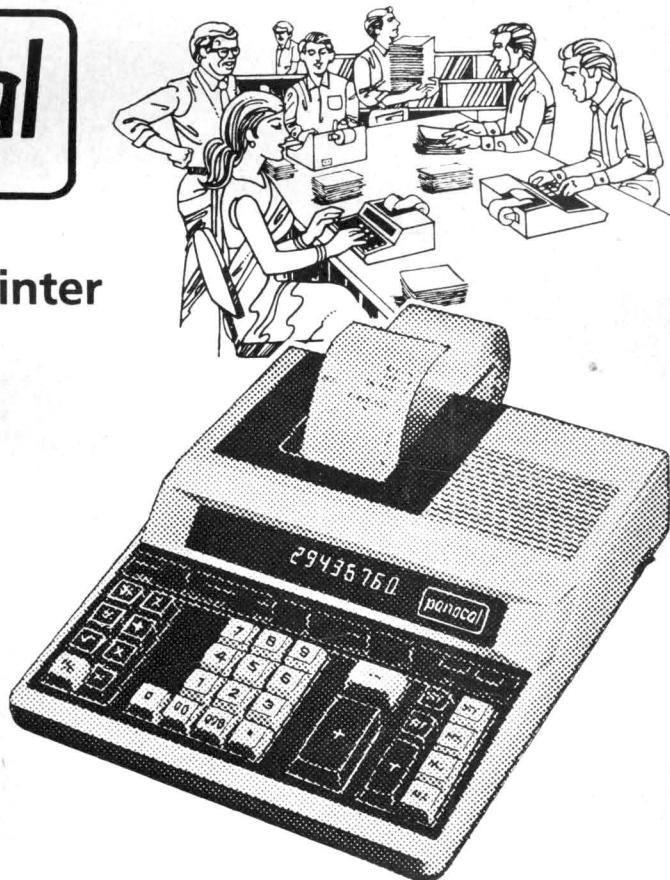
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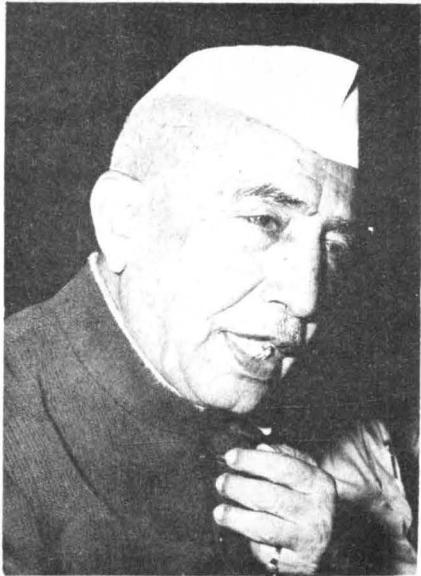
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Charan Singh.

three days to deliberate over it and then wrote to the Prime Minister telling him to consult the Education Ministry before taking any decisions and avoided granting the necessary permission to look into the complaints.

On February 28, Morarji replied: "The Education Ministry knows that I am looking into these complaints. My enquiry will, however, be of a preliminary nature and the findings will be sent to you as the Visitor of the universities for your consideration. *I trust you will be good enough to issue a formal authorisation to me to look into the complaints.*" (emphasis mine).

Would Mr Reddy have had the courage to ask Mrs Gandhi for similar assurance before giving her permission to look into the affairs of the Jawaharlal Nehru University if she wanted to? Did he think that Morarji was incompetent or unaware of administration procedures? Reddy was clearly trying to be difficult. He despised Morarji and wanted him to know that as President he was the boss and that he would assert his rights. Reddy would also send back formal speeches prepared by the Cabinet, something that is quite unheard of in the annals of Indian history. One could understand and perhaps even admire, a President for doing so, on ideological grounds and for being consistent in such matters. However, Reddy dared not send back speeches written for him by Indira Gandhi's government.

It was in February 1978, that a speech on the food situation prepared by the Cabinet was sent back to the Prime Minister because the President

did not agree with a figure quoted—it should be 121 million, not 118 million, said Reddy.

On February 25 the Prime Minister, in a letter, explained: "When the draft of the President's address was discussed in the Cabinet, the Agriculture Minister pointed out that while the production will definitely be above 118 million tonnes, it is too early to say it will be 121 million tonnes as in 1975. This was accepted by the Cabinet. At this stage we are indicating only the likely production, as the *rabi* crop is yet to come in. We cannot be very specific. Even if the Economic Survey puts it at 121 million tonnes, there is really no discrepancy as the words used in the address are 'above 118 million tonnes'."

exploiting the rift within the government for nefarious reasons and what becomes very pertinent here, is the role of a President in such a crisis.

Arshad Hidayatullah, an eminent solicitor and son of the Vice President of India, while interpreting the Constitution for me said: "The Council of Ministers is headed by the Prime Minister to aid and advise the President in the exercise of his functions. The Prime Minister is appointed by the President who also appoints Ministers *on the advice of the Prime Minister*. The Council holds office during the pleasure of the President and acts on the principles of joint responsibility."

Mr Reddy's role as President becomes quite clear. His responsibility is to protect his Prime Minister from public castigation and not join in the mêlée. As though this was not bad enough, he even misrepresented facts.

On July 27, 1978, President Reddy wrote to Morarji Desai saying: "I have been concerned for some time past with the trend of discussions in Parliament and reports appearing in the press regarding the exchange of correspondence between Shri Charan Singh, former Minister of Home Affairs and yourself as the Prime Minister, *leading to the resignation of Shri Charan Singh from the Council of Ministers* (emphasis mine). I would appreciate it if you would kindly let me see the relevant papers."

It was quite clear at that stage of the controversy that Charan Singh did not resign of his own accord but was asked to do so by the Prime Minister after he had cast aspersions on the Government. How can it ever be possible that the President is unaware of the events in his own Council of Ministers especially when the Prime Minister had sent him a copy of his letter demanding Charan Singh's resignation as well as the letter of resignation when received?

Replying to this letter of the President, Morarji Desai wrote: "I had explained to you broadly the circumstances under which Shri Charan Singh exchanged a few letters with me in regard to his suggestions for investigation into certain corruption charges he had made in March 1978. It cannot be said that this correspondence led to his resignation on June 29, 1978. The circumstances which necessitated the demand for his resignation are independent of our earlier correspondence."

Nevertheless, with this letter Desai

IN JANUARY 1978 WHEN THE then Home Minister, Chaudhary Charan Singh, precipitated a crisis by describing the Cabinet as a 'pack of impotents' because of their inability to arrest Mrs Gandhi, the relationship between the President and the Prime Minister became even more strained. Mr Reddy appears to have shown greater sympathy towards a recalcitrant Home Minister (who went about making public denunciations of a government of which he was a senior member) than to the Prime Minister who had to deal with belligerent and incompetent Cabinet colleagues. The President ought to have rapport, one would think, with his Prime Minister and not with an irresponsible Cabinet colleague. Clearly, President Reddy was



The correspondence suggests that Reddy was taking Charan Singh's side.

sent a complete set of the correspondence exchanged between Charan Singh and himself.

If anything, through this letter the President displays crass ignorance of the circumstances that led to Mr Desai asking for Charan Singh's resignation. Or, was it just ignorance? In politics every word, every nuance, has a meaning. Nothing is ever put down on paper in haste or without careful thought. Could it be that President Reddy was trying to inform the Prime Minister that he may have dismissed Charan Singh from his government but as far as Reddy was concerned, he would consider it as resignation of a senior Minister because of his differences with a Prime Minister?

Dismissal after all attaches some ignominy to anyone's character and Reddy was ensuring that no such shadow was cast over Charan Singh. It is now quite clear that it is not Charan Singh alone who has to bear the cross of betraying the nation, for he was ably assisted by no less a person than the President himself.

MOST OF REDDY'S SEEMingly innocuous demands usually had a complex motivation. Take for instance, the controversy in February, 1978, over the Presidential Address (mentioned earlier) and the figures of food production contained in it. Presidential Addresses are always discussed and carefully scrutinised by the Cabinet and senior bureaucrats in the Ministries concerned, because these are major policy pronouncements of international importance and no Government can afford to slip up even on a minor figure and least of all a man like Morarji Desai who, despite his idiosyncrasies, was regarded by the bureaucracy as the most meticulous and exacting administrator. To that extent he was, as some top government officials put it, the best Prime Minister India has had so far.

Reddy was evidently not concerned about possible blunders in the prepared text of his speech but was, in fact, painstakingly building up a case to bypass the Cabinet and prepare his own public speeches, a right that no President has so far been granted. Later in the year the matter reached such impossible depths that out of sheer exasperation Morarji Desai conceded him

this right. However, before this, Reddy deliberately embarrassed Morarji and the Janata Government by making an extempore speech in Madras on the occasion of the birth centenary of C Rajagopalachari. Morarji learnt of the speech through newspaper reports and decided to protest because it cast aspersions on himself and his Cabinet colleagues.

On December 18, 1978, Morarji wrote to the President saying: ". . . I read your speech with the attention it deserved and I did feel that some of your remarks might create adverse public reactions.

"I, however, preferred to wait and see how the press dealt with the function and your speech before taking up the matter with you. I have now seen the press cuttings and find that my apprehensions were not beside the mark. For instance, in the *Hindustan Times* of December 11, you are reported to have said that though younger in age to many of your friends in public life you could still preach to them to learn something from Rajaji but I wonder whether it was at all necessary in the present politically surcharged atmosphere of the country to refer to your friends older in age in public life. The public could construe the remarks as referring to some of us.

"The paper has referred to your speech as being full of digs at those in office. Obviously the writer has taken it to mean that it was against me and my colleagues. Later you are reported to have pointedly referred to some Union Ministers threatening to resign in the wake of the current political situation and pointed out that Rajaji in such circumstances would have



Morarji complained to Reddy that he had deliberately insulted the government.



Reddy : disparaging speeches.

resigned rather than merely threaten to resign. Your remarks seem to imply that some of my colleagues who were reported in the newspapers to have been thinking of resigning lacked the courage to do so."

In that disparaging speech Reddy had also referred to the penchant of Indian politicians to keep their sons and daughters active behind the scenes to vitiate the political atmosphere. He had rightly praised Rajaji for having kept his progeny in oblivion. In the atmosphere that prevails, even today, the criticism may be justified, but one is tempted to ask to what extent Mr Reddy himself practiced what he preached? His son was and still is, very active in Andhra Pradesh politics and Reddy too was at an age when he ought to have retired from politics. There is also the very pertinent question: If he had the courage to publicly criticise his own Janata Government, why did he not make such criticism of the Congress (I) government? Later he criticised Morarji Desai for permitting his son to live with him in the Prime Minister's official residence and act as his private secretary. Did Mr Reddy say this to Mrs Gandhi? Did he criticise her for keeping both her sons in the official residence and who needs evidence that they were and Rajiv still is, an extra-constitutional authority? Why were Reddy's pedagogy and patriotic fervour confined to his relations with Morarji Desai alone?

MORARJI TOLD THE President he was not so much concerned about the personal criticism because



Morarji Desai : India's most meticulous Prime Minister.

he was quite capable of taking care of himself, his family and his colleagues, but the reason why he wrote to the President was to draw his attention to the fact that he was holding the highest office in the land and it did not behove a President to make public statements against his own government. This cut Reddy to the quick.

He mulled over Morarji's letter for almost a full month probably sizzling in white heat in the precincts of Rashtrapati Bhavan. Then on January 14, 1979, he wrote a long letter purging himself of all the accumulated bile.

Whilst the letter in toto appears in a box for those interested, it is sufficient here to give some of the relevant extracts to emphasise the highly inflated concept that Reddy had of his role as President, an illusion that lasted only till the Janata Government was in power.

He emphasised in the letter, "chosen unanimously as I was, by all parties representing various shades of political opinion, I have been pondering very carefully for the past few months over the growing disenchantment and disillusionment of our people."

He has repeatedly gloated over his 'unanimous' choice in his conversations and his correspondence.

Then he says: "The need of the hour is for collective endeavour to restore the missing faith of the people, a capacity to shed false pride and rise above the narrow self-interest."

Still later he writes: "It is sufficient for me to reaffirm my determination to discharge the duties and responsibilities as President without fear or favour to the best of my ability in accordance with the oath of my office.

"After I assumed office as President, I have done my best, with considerable patience and perseverance, to advise, caution and encourage you in the discharge of your heavy responsibilities as Prime Minister"

Very laudable indeed, though, rather presumptuous, of Mr Reddy to think that the Government of India is run not by the Prime Minister but from the Rashtrapati Bhavan. If anything, the letter indicates the extent to which



Reddy's bile-filled letter attacked Kanti, V Shankar and Morarji himself.

he sought to interfere in the day-to-day working of the government.

He resented, for instance, the type of people that had gathered around the Prime Minister, including Morarji's decision to appoint Mr V Shanker, as his Principal Private Secretary. The appointment of V Shanker, a controversial figure, was undoubtedly regrettable, but the question here is: does the President have the right to determine who should be appointed by the Prime Minister? For instance, did he object to RK Dhawan's appointment as Special Assistant to Mrs Indira Gandhi, since he too is as controversial and notorious as Shanker was?

He objected to the Indian Government's attempts to improve relations with the Shah of Iran and his sister. He asked: "Was it only the goodwill which was brought all the way from Iran by a special aircraft?" Since when is the President of India empowered to determine the country's foreign policy?

What is worse is that he demanded to see the correspondence exchanged between the Prime Minister and the then Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh regarding some land dispute with the Raja of Challapalli. Because this happens to be the President's home state, and the Raja was a political opponent, it was especially unethical for the President to interfere in the administrative matters between State and Central Government. At the most, he could have requested the Prime Minister to keep him informed since he was personally interested and the Prime Minister could, as a matter of courtesy, oblige if he or she feels inclined to do so but to *demand* to see the file was clearly overreaching himself. It is therefore, not surprising that Morarji angrily retorted: "Why should I?"

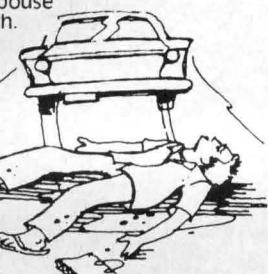
Then there was a malicious rumour spread by 'a very senior colleague of ours who had been a Cabinet Minister for years at the Centre', to the effect that on one of the Prime Minister's foreign trips his son Kanti had visited a casino and lost heavily. The President asked the Prime Minister for an explanation and since he got none, in this letter he complains, "It is nearly a year since I mentioned it to you and I have yet to hear from you about what exactly took place." It would be interesting to know what answer President Zail Singh would elicit if he had the temerity to ask Mrs Gandhi to explain where members of her family had gone during their foreign tours. After criti-

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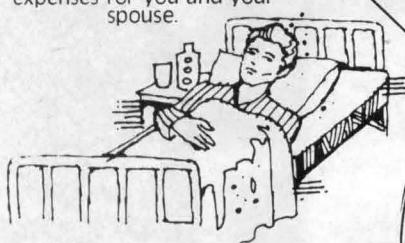
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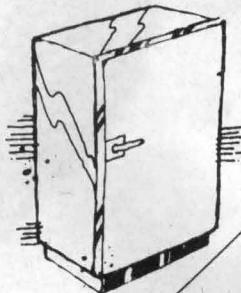
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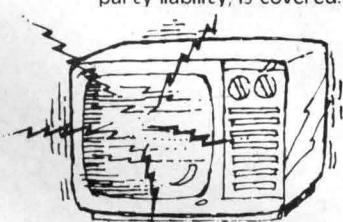
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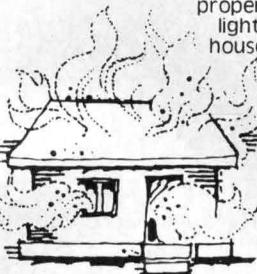
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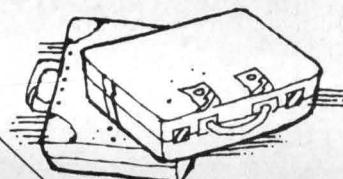
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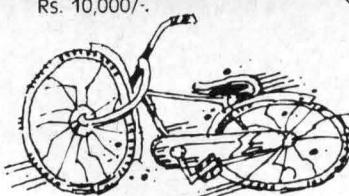
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RAJPRATI BHAVAN NEW DELHI INDIA

No. F. 2-CA(I)/79-II

IMMEDIATE

23rd July, 1979.

My dear Sri Morarji Bhai,

Please refer to your letter dated the 15th July, 1979. As you are no doubt aware, I had asked Shri Y. B. Chavan, Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha on the 16th July, 1979 to explore the possibility of forming a cohesive and stable alternative Government to replace the present caretaker Government at the earliest opportunity. Shri Chavan has informed me yesterday that he has not been successful in his efforts.

You had indicated in your above mentioned letter that the Janata Party is still by far the largest single party in the Lok Sabha and that as Leader of this party you are entitled to explore the possibility of forming an alternative Government. You had also indicated that if intimated accordingly, you would report to me the result of your endeavours as soon as you can.

I now call upon you to let me have the names of Members of the Lok Sabha who are willing to lend their support to you as their Leader in order to satisfy myself whether you have the necessary majority in the Lok Sabha. I shall appreciate it if such a list could be sent to me in two days time.

I am separately asking Shri Charan Singh, Leader of the Janata (S) Party in the Lok Sabha, who has also written to me, to substantiate his claim in a similar manner.

Yours sincerely,

S. Sanjiva Reddy
(S/ SANJIVA REDDY)

Shri Morarji Desai,
Prime Minister of India,
NEW DELHI.



SECRET/MOST IMMEDIATE
BY SPECIAL MESSANGER

राष्ट्रपति भवन एवं रिपोर्टरी भवन
RAJPRATI BHAVAN NEW DELHI INDIA

No. F. 2-CA(I)/79-II

25th July, 1979.

My dear Sri Morarji Bhai,

Please refer to your letter dated the 25th July, 1979 which was received today through your Special Private Secretary Shri V. Y. Tonpe at 4.25 P. M. When you telephoned me on your own initiative at about 10.30 A. M. today requesting some more time to submit your list, I pointed out that your list should reach me by 4.00 P. M. this evening, in pursuance to my letter of even reference dated the 23rd July, 1979, addressed to you and to Shri Charan Singh simultaneously. As a measure of abundant caution this was confirmed by a telephone call from my Secretary to Shri V. Shankar, your Principal Secretary at 11.30 A. M. this morning.

In these circumstances, I am unable to accept at this late stage the request made in your letter under reference to wait for a supplementary list till tomorrow, which is beyond the agreed time i.e. 4.00 P. M. today. As you know, your letter of today's date with a list attached was received at 4.25 P. M. after I had already received Shri Charan Singh's letter with a complete list.

The scrutiny of these lists submitted by you and Shri Charan Singh has already been taken up. You will therefore appreciate that a supplementary list submitted at this stage cannot be entertained.

With regards,

Yours sincerely,

S. Sanjiva Reddy
(S/ SANJIVA REDDY)

Shri Morarji Desai,
Prime Minister of India,
NEW DELHI.

Sanjeeva's letters haranguing Morarji Desai.

cising Morarji for taking Kanti on his foreign tours, Reddy says: "I have exercised my constitutional responsibility of cautioning you in time, often enough, about it." Did Mr Reddy exercise this constitutional responsibility after the Congress (I) came to power?

Mr Reddy also wanted a say in the policy pronouncements of the Government. The speech that Morarji made to the special disarmament session in 1978 was not sent to him for clearance, but a copy was sent for his information, and even though the President sent a telex message to London asking Morarji to amend the part in which he abjures forever India's right to conduct further nuclear tests "You did not bother to discuss the matter with me on your return."

THE QUESTIONS ARE MANY: What was Sanjeeva Reddy trying to achieve by this confrontationist policy? If he really had the interest of the nation at heart was he serving any purpose by joining the cabal in denigrating a duly elected Government? After all which President in India ever got the

type of powers that Reddy was demanding from the Prime Minister?

As a consequence of this feud Reddy took the unprecedented step of preparing his own speech to be delivered on Republic Day in 1979 and when he had the final script ready he sent a copy to the Prime Minister, with a 'For Your Information' slip. This being an important 'State of Nation' broadcast it had been customary for the speech to be approved by the Cabinet. Reddy bypassed all conventions. On January 21, 1979, Morarji wrote to the President pointing this out, adding, "I do not wish to make an issue of it."

However, interestingly enough, that speech of the President lauded only the achievements of the *kisans* in increasing food production and ignored everything else. Was it a mere coincidence that Charan Singh is also reputed to be a leader of the *kisans*? Normally a Republic Day broadcast by the Head of State not only reviews the past year but projects a bit of the future to generate hope and goodwill. Reddy ignored these needs.

What happened in the succeeding months of 1979 have become a part of history and finally when YB Chavan's innocuous 'No Confidence' motion, a

mere routine at the start of each session of Parliament, caused a split in the Janata Party, President Reddy saw in it an opportunity to teach Morarji a lesson. Consequently Reddy's subsequent actions were not motivated by patriotic fervour but by personal prejudices. He was determined to keep Morarji out of the reckoning. So much for his pretentious philosophy of national interests being paramount. It did not matter who came to power as long as it was not Morarji.

After the fall of the Janata Government, although the Janata Party still remained the largest single unit in the Lok Sabha, it was not called upon to form a new government because Morarji was still the Party leader. Had he relinquished this position to someone else, the President had no objection to their attempting to form a government, a clear indication of his personal prejudices.

Then he gave Chavan eight days to try and form a 'stable and cohesive' government and was in no particular hurry but when Chavan expressed his inability at the end of the period, Reddy became impatient and wanted a Government to be formed immediately.



राष्ट्रपति भवन नई दिल्ली भारत
RASHTRAPATI BHAVAN NEW DELHI INDIA

No. F. 2-CA(I)/79.

26th July, 1979.

My dear Sri Morarji Desai,

In continuation of my letter No. F. 2-CA(I)/79, dated the 15th July, 1979, this is to inform you that after consideration of all relevant aspects of the matter, I have called upon Shri Charan Singh to form a Government. Shri Charan Singh is meeting me at 5.30 p.m. today.

I would like to thank you and your colleagues in the Council of Ministers for the services rendered to the Nation.

With regards,

Yours sincerely,

S. Sanjiva Reddy
(N. SANJIVA REDDY)

Shri Morarji R. Desai,
Prime Minister of India,
NEW DELHI.

Reddy's last letter to Morarji as Prime Minister.

ON JULY 23 REDDY informed Morarji that as the leader of the largest single Party in Parliament he could explore the possibility of forming a Government but only *after* he (Reddy) had already invited Charan Singh to also explore such a possibility. For a President who had shown such concern for the falling standards in political morality, he encouraged unseemly horse trading by calling upon two persons to convince him of their majority and that too, within two days. When Morarji got this letter he called on the President to explain his difficulties. The people whose support he sought were out of Delhi and it would be difficult to contact them and get their signatures.

"After all you gave Chavan eight days," Morarji chided the President, "so, why not give me at least four?"

There was some good-natured laughter and Reddy said, "All right, you can have a day longer." This meant Morarji could submit his list by the evening of July 26 and not the 25th as originally stated but no one suspected then that the President was playing a

foul game.

So, on the morning of July 25, when Morarji got an official letter from the President saying he would have to submit his list by 4 pm that day, it came as somewhat of a surprise.

Charan Singh's supporters, led by



Reddy's sudden shifts suggest that he deliberately wrecked the Janata government.

Raj Narain were camping in Rashtrapati Bhavan and from 3.30 pm onwards there was a regular countdown as though the President and his men were about to launch a rocket into space which needed split-second timing. At one minute past four when Morarji's list had not arrived there was an unseemly chant that he had forfeited his right and that he should be disqualified. Those who were present at the Rashtrapati Bhavan now claim that the scene was reminiscent of a football ground where the other team had failed to show up and the fans were demanding a walk-over. It didn't look as though those assembled there were about to decide the future of the largest democracy in the world and the formation of a stable government.

Mr Reddy, in another letter, pointed out to Morarji that "your list arrived at 4.25 pm and not at 4 pm as you were specifically called upon to do." That there were some foul-ups in Morarji's list is another matter. What one is not able to understand, is Reddy's attitude. If he was all that interested in a 'stable and cohesive government' as he told YB Chavan then why did he simultaneously call upon Charan Singh and Morarji and what was so important about 4 pm on July 25? After all this was no piddling matter of a 100 metre sprint. Why did Reddy renege on his verbal promise to extend the deadline? Why did he not uphold the high values that he so often gave vent to? Why did he stoop to manipulations of the most degrading kind?

Just a few months before this ugly episode Reddy had expounded a very laudable theory: "I need not stress that, in the ultimate analysis, it is not the fate of a few individuals, however, highly placed they might be, that matters in the life of a nation as the larger welfare of the people. If the younger generations are getting more and more critical of the calibre of the present leadership and the quality of public life, it is because they are greatly troubled by the credibility gap that exists between the precept and practice."

Very succinctly put, Mr Reddy, but what did you do when you had the opportunity? There are a million questions, Mr Reddy, and the people have a right to know the truth for India and its future belongs to the people and not a handful of petty politicians. ♦

“An Extraordinary Relationship”

Excerpts from Sanjeeva's letter to Morarji Desai dated January 14, 1979.

“. . . AFTER I ASSUMED office as President, I have done my best, with considerable patience and perseverance, to advise, caution and encourage you in the discharge of your heavy responsibilities as Prime Minister in the face of several difficulties now confronting the nation. I did this out of regard and affection for you and spoken frankly on various matters with the utmost goodwill and consideration. I had also drawn your attention repeatedly to the conduct of some of those close to you and the damage being done to your stature and image as the Prime Minister by their actions. I need not refer in this letter to the increasing criticism in Parliament, the press and elsewhere about your stewardship of the country's affairs, since you are well aware of it. It is a matter of deep regret for me to point out as President the dangerous drift that has set in and the resultant loss of direction in the governance of the country, not to speak of the implementation of the more basic programmes for the betterment of the people. I am distressed to note that you seem to resent even well-meaning advice, as though it was an unjustified imposition.”

President Reddy added, the Prime Minister of a big and complex country like India has to contend with various kinds of influences, pressures and detraction. First of all, there are people who would like to see Morarji step down for their own reasons. Then there are the sycophants who pose as Morarji's conscience keepers, while feathering their own nests. In addition to these two categories, “there is a much smaller and I am afraid, fast diminishing group of genuine well-wishers who, out of personal regard for you, are prepared to speak out candidly without any motive or malice about the peculiar environment in which you have been functioning and conducting the affairs of government. You may or may not agree with this analysis, but as far as I am concerned I have deemed it my constitutional



Morarji : refusing counsel.

duty to advice and caution you in the course of our private conversations. What has astonished me is that you have never thought it appropriate to seek my counsel, either as President or as an old colleague, on any issue of importance on which there could be more than one opinion. The conversations between us have generally taken place at my initiative and you have not informed me even once, of any action taken on matters brought to your notice by me. It is, indeed, an extraordinary relationship between the President and the Prime Minister of a great nation.

“I would like to recall some of the specific issues on which I had spoken to you from time to time. I had cautioned you against the appointment of V Shankar as your principal Secretary, pointing out the impropriety of bringing back a retired officer, who has been associated with various business interests for the past ten years after his retirement, to this key position in government. Was it necessary or expedient to re-employ a retired officer with business associations, when other competent officers were available for this post? I had also drawn your attention on more than one occasion to his visits to Iran and the controversies generated by them. A lot of unfortunate and avoidable speculation had been created about his Iranian visits to dabble in matters concerning other Ministries of the Government.

“During the last State visit of the Shah, and the Shahbanu to Delhi, various efforts were made to persuade me to give prominence to the Hinduja brothers who had come to India on that occasion. I did not think it necessary or proper for the President of India to give any undue importance to businessmen of this kind in the Rashtrapati Bhavan. You might have been told by those in your entourage who were sponsoring the names of the Hinduja brothers of my firm refusal to have them invited to the State banquet at Rashtrapati Bhavan.

“Whatever might have been achieved by the Shah's visit, I had told you about the undesirability of a visit by the Shah's sister so soon after his visit. I understand that the Ministry of External Affairs was not very much in the picture. Was it only the goodwill which was brought all the way from Iran by a special aircraft? Be that as it may, I had reluctantly consented to the stay of the Shah's sister and her party at the Rashtrapati Bhavan. From what I had heard later, their activities during their stay here were not consistent with their position.

“I had repeatedly drawn your attention to the adverse inferences that were being drawn about your son, Shri Kanti Desai, getting off at Teheran during an unscheduled stop of the plane on your way back from a visit to the Soviet Union. If he was disembarking at Teheran to proceed to Europe, as was stated at the time, he could have proceeded from Moscow itself, instead of taking a devious route. The natural inference was that he had preferred to go there for some particular purpose. A few years ago you made a disclosure in public that your son had no business interests abroad. When I asked you about his stopover in Teheran, you told me that he had got off to go to London to wind up his business interests there. I am at a loss to comprehend what is the exact position, whether the Reserve Bank and other concerned agencies have been kept informed of these transactions. I am not raising this

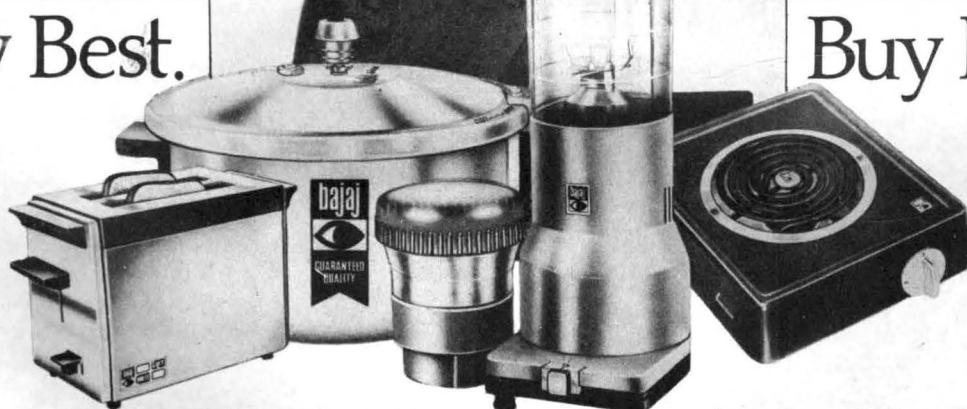
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point out of any personal curiosity about Shri Kanti Desai's affairs, but only because these matters have been coming for adverse comments in Parliament, the press and elsewhere.

"My unhappiness over these Iranian connections was conveyed to you when I heard that you were thinking of paying a second visit to Teheran on your way to the United States. If the Shah wanted to discuss the Afghan situation, as you told me, it would have been more appropriate for him to come to Delhi than ask you to see him in Teheran. The Prime Minister of India is an important international personality and the world community is bound to read too much meaning into two visits within a span of one year to Teheran. It was out of concern for the dignity and prestige of your office that I had questioned the wisdom of this second visit to Teheran at the behest of the Shah of Iran. It only added to the prevailing controversies surrounding the visits of your Principal Secretary and your son to Teheran, and their activities there.

"A few months ago, I had mentioned to you that the former Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, Shri Vengala Rao, had been spoken to by Shri Kanti Desai and some other businessmen at your residence regarding the grant of a mining and export monopoly for barytes from the State in lieu of sizable financial consideration. At that time, you tended to dismiss the whole thing by saying that Vengala Rao's word could not be believed. You were good enough to telephonically confirm the same night that such a conversation between Shri Vengala Rao and Shri Kanti Desai did take place.

"Next I come to the case of exemption from land ceiling and enhanced compensation that was being claimed by the Raja of Challapalli, who was Health Minister in my cabinet when I was the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh. When I drew your attention in July last to a letter written by you to Shri Vengala Rao in support of the Raja's case and his reluctance to accede to your request and to another letter by you thereafter to his successor, Dr Chenna Reddy, you were visibly annoyed that I wanted to see these letters and the replies to them. You said: 'Why should I send them to you?', and I let the matter go since I did not want to make an issue of it out of deference to your age,



Kanti : business interests.

though constitutionally I would have been well within my right to demand the production of these letters and other related correspondence. Subsequently, when these letters were placed by Dr Chenna Reddy before the State Legislature, I wrote to you and you were good enough to send me copies of them. I still fail to understand why you were reluctant to let me see these letters when I first asked for them.

"I was informed by a very senior colleague of ours who had been a cabinet minister for years at the Centre, that on one of your foreign trips Shri Kanti Desai had gone to a casino and lost a very substantial sum of money in foreign exchange. I mentioned this to you because I felt that your taking him on your trips abroad and within India where he had vast contacts with the business world was undesirable and would be to your detriment. You told me that you had heard about the casino affair and would look into it. It is nearly a year since I mentioned it to you and I have yet to hear from you about what exactly took place.

"I had also pointed out to you on more than one occasion the increasing public criticism about Shri Kanti Desai's role in your personal affairs, his residing with you and meeting people from the business world at your official residence. Your explanations about his actual role as a son and a private secretary have not unfortunately ended the controversy surrounding him. On the contrary it has only sharpened the criticism and transformed the whole thing into a major political issue. The implications and consequences of his associations with businessmen, who seem to maintain close contact with him both at your official residence and when he accompanies you on your official

tours in India and abroad, are matters for your conscience. As far as I am concerned, I have exercised my constitutional responsibility of cautioning you in time and often enough, about it.

"There have also been occasions when I pointed out the undesirability of making commitments extending to future generations which could be a source of embarrassment to subsequent governments. One such issue related to your unilateral announcement made at the special Disarmament Session last year, abjuring forever India's right to conduct further nuclear tests. I got a copy of your speech only the previous night before you left and, after reading it carefully, I had a message sent to you to London wondering whether it was desirable at all, to make such a commitment binding the future governments. But you did not bother to discuss the matter with me on your return, nor to this day have you given me any weightier reasons for making such a unilateral declaration.

"Similarly, I had written to you about some disparaging remarks that one of the functionaries of the American Embassy made about India's proposal to purchase Jaguar planes at a meeting in Vijaywada. But I have not heard what action you have taken in the matter to ensure that foreign diplomats do not take such liberties again. It is strange that when the President addresses such a communication to the Prime Minister on a matter of public importance, he does not even reply to keep him informed of the action taken. This is indeed an extraordinary way of functioning that transcends both Constitutional proprieties and personal courtesies in conducting the affairs of the Government. I have regretfully noted your tendency to ignore even well-meaning advice, given in complete confidence, with your welfare and interests always at heart.

"I am fully aware of my constitutional responsibility as President. If I have spoken in public on some distressing aspects of present day public life, it is only because of my anguish over the fast deteriorating standards and rapid erosion of our inherited Gandhian values and traditions. I see no harm at all in giving expression to my feelings of disappointment and distress over the dilution of our old values and creeping paralysis in public life."

THE TALE OF A RIVER

Serenading the charms of the Suswa.

WHEN I LOOK down from the heights of Landour to the broad valley of the Doon far below, I can see the little Suswa river, silver in the setting sun, meandering through the fields and forests on its way to its confluence with the mighty Ganga.

The Suswa is a river I knew well as a boy, but it has been many years since I swam in its quiet pools or slept in the shade of the tall spreading trees growing on its banks. Now I see it from my window, far away, dream-like and I keep promising myself that I will visit it again, to touch its waters, cool and clear and feel its rounded pebbles beneath my feet.

It's a little river, flowing down from the ancient Siwaliks (which are much older than the Himalayas, according to geologists), running the length of the valley until, with its sister river the Song, it slips into the Ganga just above the holy city of Hardwar. I could wade across it (except during the monsoon rains), and the water seldom rose above the waist except in sheltered pools.

There is a little-known legend about the Suswa and its origins, which I have always treasured. It tells us that the Hindu sage, Kasyapa, once gave a great feast to which all the gods were invited. Now Indra, the god of rain, while on his way to the entertainment, happened to meet 60,000 *balkhils* (pygmies) of the Brahmin caste, who were trying in vain to cross a cow's footprint filled with water—to them a vast lake.

The god could not restrain his laughter and scoffed at them. The indignant priests, determined to have their revenge, at once set to work creating a second Indra, who should supplant the reigning God. This could only



be done by means of penance and mortifications, in which they persevered, until the sweat flowing from their tiny bodies made the river known as the 'Suswa', or 'flowing waters'.

Indra, alarmed at the effect of these religious exercises, sought the intercession of Brahma, the Creator, through whose good offices he was able to keep his position as the rain god.

I saw no pygmies or fairies near the Suswa, but once, lying full length on its grassy verge, I looked up to see, on the opposite bank, a magnificent tiger drinking at the water's edge. It was only some 60 feet away and I lay still and watched it until it too raised its head, sniffed the wind (which fortunately blew towards me) and then walked regally downstream and out of sight.

I do not remember feeling afraid. As children we do not have a fear of wild animals unless it is inculcated in us. And animals are quick to sense fear in a human. But I am unable to test my reactions as an adult—for, alas, there are no longer any tigers in the forests near the Suswa.

Still, I must go down to that river again, to its gently flowing waters—but only after the monsoon, when Indra the rain god has reasserted himself.

THAT THE DOON is well forested today is due mainly to the early efforts of the Forest Department. Up to 1864 a free system of felling was prevalent and we find Mr O'Callaghan, Deputy Conservator of Forests, writing in 1879: "There can be no doubt that *sal*, *tun* and *shisham* were the trees chiefly felled, for even now there is no demand for any other kind of timber; and when I entered the department in 1854 the ground was everywhere studded with stumps of those trees."

Today it is greed, rather than superstition, that results in the devastation of our forests. The Mussoorie range, never noted for its greenery, grows more barren each year. So I was pleasantly surprised, when visiting Simla last month, to find that hill-station still crowned with deodars. I took the hill road from Dehra Dun. It crosses the Jumna into Himachal Pradesh and then winds along the Siwaliks, via Nahan, joining up with the Himalayan foothills below Solan. For most of the way there was good forest—*sal* and *shisham* near Nahan and extensive pine forests higher up. Of course these were not heavily populated areas, so the pressure on the environment was minimal. There were no large towns, hardly any traffic, until one joined the main highway to Simla. To me, the surroundings looked so sylvan and unspoilt that I found myself paraphrasing a Chinese couplet and exclaiming:

*In Heaven there is Paradise,
On Earth there is Himachal. . . .*

— Ruskin Bond

Ruskin Bond is a former managing Editor of Imprint.

THE BODY PRIMER—PART I

Why dieting is a mug's game.

WE ALL KNOW thin people who eat like pigs and never put on any weight. And we all know fat people who do not seem to eat any more than the rest of us and still, put on extra pounds by the minute.

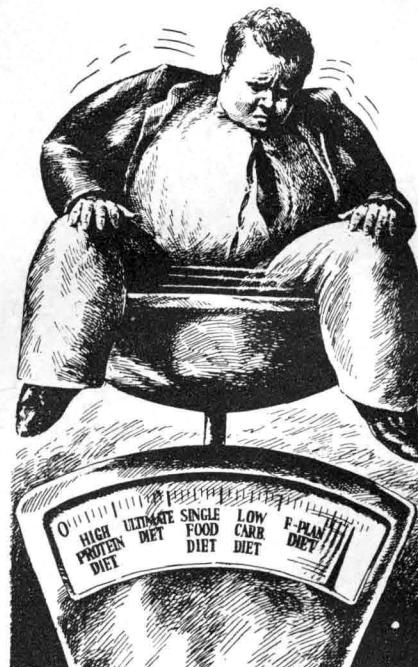
Most diets work on the principle that neither of these people exist. The basic principle behind dieting is this: all food contains calories. The body burns up calories to produce energy. Excess calories are stored as fat. So, if you reduce your calorific intake, there will be two effects. There will be no excess calories to be stored as fat. And, because you aren't consuming enough calories for the body's needs, it will have to reconvert its fat into calories.

It was this rationale that led to the calorie-counting fad of the '60s. By the '70s, new theories had evolved. This time the focus was on exercise. It wasn't enough to reduce the calorific intake we were told. The body had to be made to burn up excess calories. And the best way to do this was to take plenty of exercise. So, millions of people put on their track suits and began running around ('jogging' it was called) like zombies.

In fact, exercise alone is clearly not the answer. On average we use 80 per cent of the energy we expend just to stay alive. A man going about his normal life may use 3,000 calories a day. He would use 2,750 calories even if he decided to stay in bed all day. An hour's jog would increase his expenditure by around 200 calories—that's all. And a helping of *mithai* would probably replace those calories.

But is dieting really the answer either? Most fat people don't really eat that much more than thin people. Is their weight merely a function of the amount of food consumed?

In the '70s, Robert Atkins came out with his *Diet Revolution*. He said that counting calories or quantities of



food was not the answer. His explanation was that the key to weight loss was something called the Fat Mobilizing Hormone. According to him, only when this hormone was released, did the body convert its fat into energy. And how did one release the hormone? Simple, said Atkins; one simply gave up on carbohydrates. It was carbohydrates that inhibited production of the Fat Mobilizing Hormone. So, if we gave up on bread, rice and the like, we'd lose weight.

Atkins's approach had a certain intuitive appeal for the layman. It appeared to explain the great mystery of how fat people stayed fat without eating too much—something the standard calorie-counting diets could not explain. Moreover, it asked us to cut out what we already 'knew' were 'bad' for us—cakes, pudding, rice, sugar and the like.

Later dieticians like Herman Tarnower of the Scarsdale Diet, adapted Atkins's approach and a new breed of low-carbohydrate diets emerged. There were now two approaches—the carbohydrate-counting way and the calorie-counting one.

The medical establishment had always been leery of these diet fads. Atkins was ripped to shreds by the American Medical Association and his book now carries a publisher's note disclaiming all responsibility. For doctors, the key word was 'metabolism'. Some people we were told, burn up calories faster. Some don't. And that is that. This explains why some thin people can eat all they want and remain slim. One set of doctors believed that prescribing amphetamines which speeded up metabolism was the answer, while others believed that it was wrong to tinker around with body chemistry.

But all doctors were and are agreed on one thing: all diets work upto a point. Whatever diet you are on (Scarsdale, F-Plan etc), you will probably knock off ten pounds in the first fortnight or so. And if you keep at it for two months you will probably achieve your target weight loss.

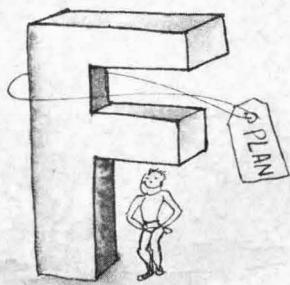
But there is a catch.

Having lost this weight, the chances are that you will put it back on a few weeks after the diet is over. Most of us know fat people who periodically go on diets. Though they may seem to work at the time, a few months or a year later the same people are back on another diet.

The reason for this is that the body cannot actually bring itself to believe that any individual will want to starve himself out of choice. Once the supply of food reduces, it assumes that it is in a famine situation and reacts accordingly. First of all it slows down your metabolic rate, thereby doing the opposite of what you desire.

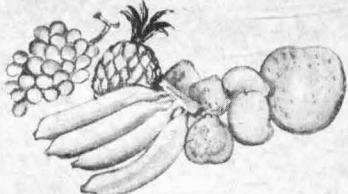
Then, it gets rid of its water. Fifty to sixty per cent of the human body is water and it is remarkably easy to reduce your water content. By sweating it out at a Turkish bath, you can lose enough water in one night to weigh seven pounds less. Nearly all the weight loss in the first fortnight of a diet is water.

Diet books don't talk about glycogen though every doctor knows what



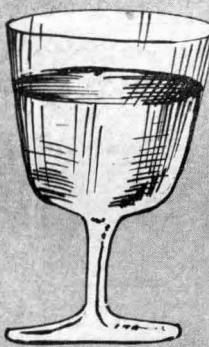
F-PLAN

Audrey Eaton claims that if you eat a lot of fibrous foods (beans, roughage etc), then you'll retain less fat and carbohydrate. The biggest UK bestseller of 1982.



BEVERLY HILLS

Based on the principle that if you eat a lot of fruit, not only will you not put on weight but you will actually lose it. Alleged to be a favourite of Hollywood stars.



THE ALCOHOLIC DIET

Alcohol, the argument runs, contains all the carbohydrate you need. And it cuts down your eating and dehydrates you, leading to water loss. Roger Moore lost 20 pounds on this diet in 1972.



JAPANESE FOOD

British research scientists now believe that for a diet to work, you must change your eating patterns for all time. The ideal diet would be what a Japanese peasant eats—dried fish and noodles.



STEAK AND SALAD

Works on the principle that all the body needs is some protein and certain essential vitamins and minerals. The steak has lots of protein, and the salad has the minerals and vitamins.



FASTING

A tried and trusted way of losing weight, for many. Just starve yourself and you'll cut out all the calories. There are no fat people in famine areas, goes the claim.

it is. Glycogen is a form of glucose stored in the liver as a sort of emergency energy store. The average body contains eight to ten pounds of glycogen and usually, a body in search of energy sources will burn glycogen not fat.

After it is through with water and glycogen (by now the dieter has lost 15-20 pounds), the body has a choice of burning either fat or tissue. Most dieters feel weak, they become less active and sedentary. The body therefore plumbs for burning muscle tissue, which the average dieter is not using. So, the dieter does lose weight but apart from water and glycogen, he has also lost important lean tissue.

But even if this does not happen, diets do not reckon on the effects they have on body metabolism. The rate of body metabolism is decided by factors that science does not fully understand. Why should some people burn up calories faster than others? Recent theories suggest that this might be genetic. In any case, it is agreed that during a 'famine situation' (ie: a diet), the body will reduce its metabolic rate and make do with fewer calories. So, a fat man who feels that by cutting his calorific intake from 3,000 to 1,000, he will ensure that his body burns up fat to replace the missing calories is in for a surprise.

Once the diet is over and the body realizes that it is not coping with a famine situation, it returns to normal. It builds up its glycogen store, returns the water level to normal, and as the erstwhile dieter starts becoming active, begins to rebuild the run-down tissues.

And so, all the weight that has been lost comes back again. There is no way around this, the body must maintain its glycogen and water levels. The following year, the dieter is distressed to see his weight go up and resumes dieting and the whole cycle begins again.

So, for a lasting weight loss, a two-month diet is not the answer. People who believe that it is, usually do not understand how the human body works.

There are ways of losing weight. But if you expect to lose excess pounds with a simple crash diet then you are in for a surprise.

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GROWING OLD UNGRACEFULLY

D R Manekkar decides to come clean.

RETIREMENT IS A climactic period in one's life. Nothing wounds your vanity more than to discover that you have overnight ceased to be an entity. You find yourself at a loose end, apart from the financial dimunition you suffer, that compels you to keep a low profile.

To your chagrin, you note that in no time you have been forgotten by the new generation in your profession. Yesterday's fawning flatterers, when you were in a position to dispense favours and patronage, now cut you dead, turning to new gods and in the process, cut you down to size. Nothing hurts your ego more.

People are solicitous about you now. You are greeted with enquiries about your health. "Touch wood, sir, you look as fit as ever," they exclaim (when they really mean, "I'm surprised you're still alive, old boy!"). You grit your teeth and swallow the left-handed compliment. After all, they meant well. They were being kind.

But the struggle begins—the unashamed, desperate struggle against Father Time, against growing old, against looking old! You dye your hair, but soon realise it is a futile contretemps. In no time the white roots of the blackened hair betray the deception and you become the butt of younger people's jokes. You spend more time in front of the mirror and invest in face cosmetics and artifacts.

You want to reassure yourself that your old professional skills are as sharp as ever before—an oblique admission that they are not! If you undertake a long-term project, you are in a hurry to be done with it, lest the Grim Reaper overtake you before you have completed the task. You now read the books of your choice in frenzied hurry—you have so many books on your list but so little time left.

Nothing shakes you more than the

DR Manekkar was a Resident Editor of the Times of India and Editor of the Indian Express. He is the author of several political books.



alarming spectacle of your contemporaries quitting the stage, one after another. You discover there are now very few of your old comrades left around and you desperately cling to them. You get oversentimental towards these few and develop extra affection and loyalty towards them. You yearn to get closer to the scattered members of your growing family. You are no more the tough he-man you once boasted you were. To your eternal shame, you now melt into tears at the drop of a hat—a trait you had for long denounced as unmanly.

"What's that old man doing here?" you shout gleefully, as at the golf course you espied in the distance a friend of long ago. Your daughter accompanying you—she always does these days—laughs and whispers into your ear: "Dad, that old man is doing there what this old man is doing here!" and she points her finger at you!

When you are eager to contact an old chum after an interval of time, you hesitate, concerned whether he is still 'there'. You enquire timorously of a common acquaintance about him, dreading to be told that your chum is no more. You dare not write a letter to an old crony lest the letter come back from the dead-letter office with the remark 'Addressee dead'.

You are now a regular reader of the obituary columns of your newspaper,

ticking off your contemporaries as they depart one by one. "When will my turn come?" you nervously ask yourself.

Alas, the inexorable march of time and age does leave behind tell-tale marks on you, however much you may insist that you are 'fit as a fiddle'. The drooping jaw, the loosening flesh around your scrawny neck, your shrivelling skin betray you. Your suits, which once passed for a Saville Row fit, are now ill-fitting, loose and dangling. Pains and aches are your only companions now.

That's the stage when you desperately grope around for a philosophy, a religious anchor and you become increasingly conscious of an emptiness of spirit and a sense of drift. Not because you believe in God, but because you need some lodestar.

Finally, grudgingly, ungracefully, you admit defeat. Physically ailing, mentally depressed, your mind oversensitised to the deteriorating social, economic and political environment surrounding you, you want to join Minoo Masani's Right to Die organisation.

As a long-time observer of the Indian political scene, your despondency intensifies as you watch helplessly the cynical goings-on in your hapless country, 36 years after Independence. And you contrast it with the fervour and optimism with which we all plunged into a long-awaited, much-prayed-for freedom, and the dreams we dreamt of, the new heaven and earth we promised to build for ourselves and our children in this long-suffering land of ours. You can do nothing to stop the rot.

You surrender yourself abjectly to Father Time. And as you await the last knock on your door, the only thought you take with you is: "Thank God, I won't be there to bear witness to the spectacle of our *netas* bartering away the country's integrity and security at the altar of the bitch-goddess called *Vote Mata*."

A Lifetime of Bondage

By Nirmala Ferrao and Suresh Chandrashekhar

In heavily unionised Bombay the brick kilns still use bonded Adivasi labour.

A FEW CENTURIES AGO, THEY WERE JUST items of merchandise, bartered by slave traders and sold to the wealthy and powerful owners of the brick kilns. The merest hint of rebellion meant starvation and torture. Stories recounted in the villages till today, tell of men, women and even children being thrown alive into the kilns as punishment for defiance—and as an example to other would-be rebels.

Today torture is no longer openly employed. Labour reform and a veneer of 'civilisation' do not permit it. Bondage, however, is still the name of the game, only now the moves are cleverer and subtler. While Bombay's organised labour fights for bountiful bonuses and holiday allowances, brown, gaunt Adivasis on the fringes of the city are still exploited by a feudal system that keeps them sweating away their existence—in order to repay a loan.

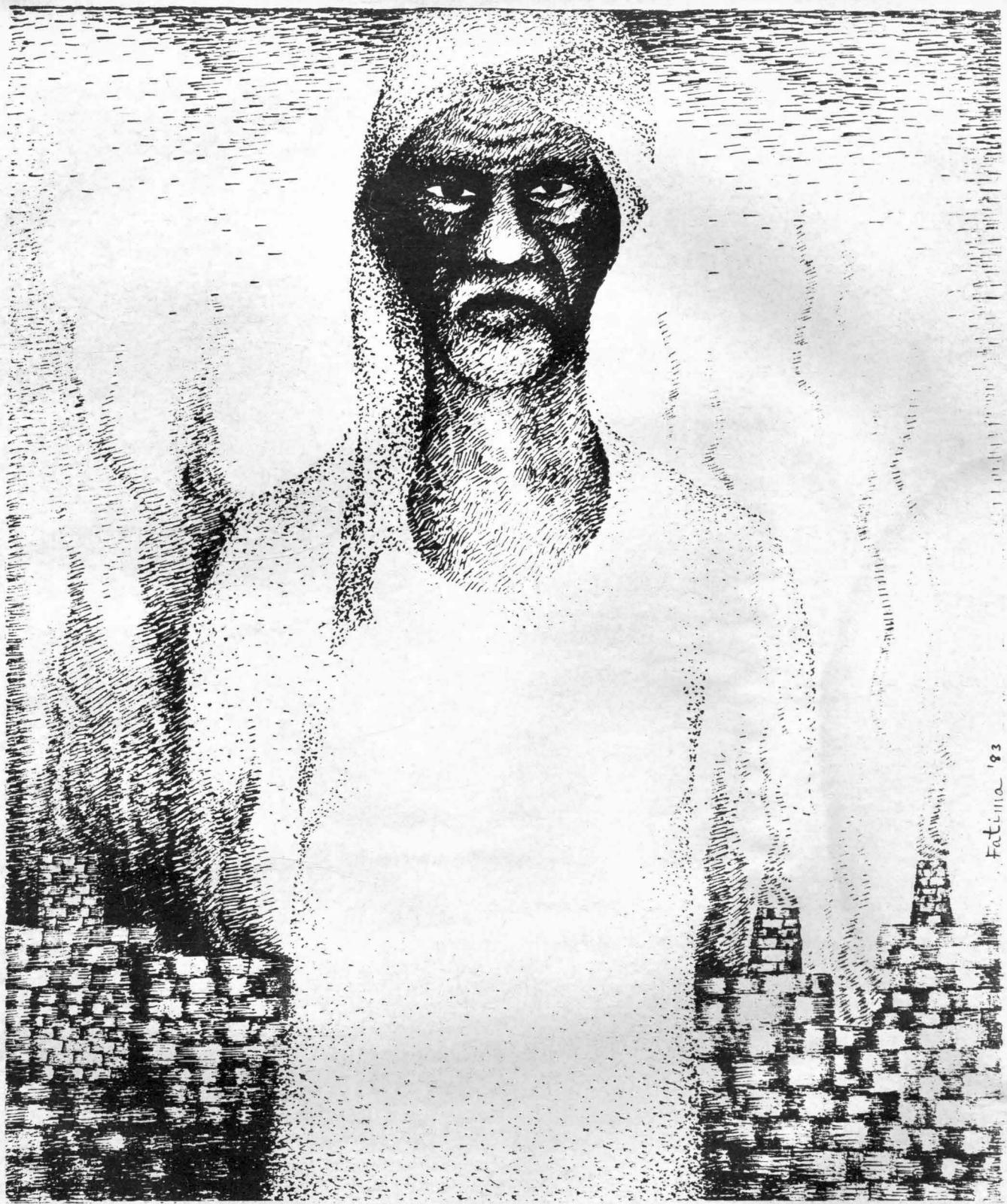
Of course, it is all done in the name of benevolence and tradition. Customarily, labour for the brick kilns has been recruited from the Adivasis of Gujarat and in particular from the districts of Surat and Baroda, because of the community's traditional skill in working the chimney furnaces.

Nirmala Ferrao is a Bombay-based freelance writer and Suresh Chandrashekhar is on the staff of the Press Trust of India.

The story of their enslavement runs along familiar lines, the starting point generally being a crop failure on a small farmer's field, the premature death of the chief earning member of the family—or even an outstanding debt in the village itself.

With the onset of the monsoon, comes a benefactor to the village: a Bombay kiln owner's *mukadam*. Without ceremony, he gets to work distributing largesse to the stricken in the form of loans, or 'advances' as his *saheb* prefers to call them. The *mukadam*, who himself comes from one of the villages in the district, has his own local contacts—in some places, says a social worker, they stretch up to the *panchayat* chief. The villagers are offered substantial amounts to help tide them over a current crisis, or even simply as bait for more food, better clothes. In return, they thumbprint a 'contract' that they will repay the 'advances' by working in the *saheb*'s kiln in Bombay.

The remaining monsoon months are spent in using up the loan, partly in a splurge of desperate drinking. Very soon, it is October and time for them to make good the money they have borrowed. Herded together by the *mukadam*, they board the bus or train that will bring them to Bombay, often accompanied by their wives and children and with their paltry possessions secured in a couple of rag bundles or old tin trunks.



“For poor people like us there is no greater happiness than having food to drive away our hunger.”

Depending on which *mukadam* has brought them, they then go to one of the seven brick kilns located in Bombay. There are two at Saki Naka, two along the Ghodbunder Road and one each at Kurla, Purna and Mulund.

From October until just before the monsoon (when the brick-making is suspended), they work at the kilns. Each week they receive a part of their earnings for the period, so that they can purchase meagre quantities of *bajra*, *jowar* and cheap condiments. At the end of the season, their 'advances' are subtracted from the 'wages' earned. Usually, they return to their villages with a mere handful of rupees; sometimes, the balance is stated to be nil; and sometimes, they even discover that they have ended up with a minus amount to their credit—which they will have to make up by working the next season. Following on their heels, as they return to the village, comes the *mukadam* again, with fresh loans to see them through the monsoon months and to lead them back into bondage for the rest.

"This has been the system for hundreds of years," says Elias D'Souza, 71, a kiln-owner who lives in a minor mansion in Kurla, a Bombay suburb. "They won't come down to work unless we pay them the advances. And now, the amounts have gone up. Formerly we used to give them 100 or 200 rupees. Today they ask for up to 800 or 900. Besides this, we have to cover their train or bus fares up to Bombay."

D'Souza, whose father was a landholder in the village of Old Kurla, is a first-generation successful entrepreneur. Learning the ropes of the business from Khimji Poonja, a friend who ran a kiln in Kurla, he set up his own kiln, also in Kurla, in 1938. At the peak of his success, he employed 700 workers and manufactured one lakh bricks a day. But because of difficulties in getting good quality clay in Kurla he shifted in 1963 to Purna (in the Thane-Bhiwandi district) where he now produces 30,000 bricks a day, claiming a profit of Rs 40 per 1000 bricks.



Labourers' children playing with bricks.

temple. The State Transport bus from Thane Station deposits you in a whirl of dust beside a signboard reading PURNA in English and Marathi. A country liquor bar is just across the road from here; and a little ahead, there are a large petrol station and a roadside café catering to the highway traffic. Piercing the skyline is the tall chimney of the brick kiln with the letters EDK imprinted in black on silver-blue.

A couple of villagers chatting under a tree suddenly turn reticent when we try to engage them in conversation about the kiln. One of them, however, thaws out enough to mutter, "Those people working there are all Adivasis from Gujarat and though the kiln has been functioning for decades, our people don't mix with them." And that, as far as he is concerned, is that.

The kiln is only a 100 yards away and the heat is relentless and quivering; but inside, there is brisk activity going on. The site covers a sprawling expanse of over 10,000 sq metres, unbounded by any restrictive walls or fencing. Dotting the area are stacks of bricks in various stages of production.

We watch as a truck near the entrance is being loaded with bricks to be transported directly to some unknown construction site. Dark Adivasi women run neatly into line, each with a head load of bricks and await their turn to deposit their load. As each one turns away after unloading, the *mukadam* standing by hands her a tiny, round, metal token. She tucks it mechanically into her sari at the waist, then runs back for another load.

A dark, stocky man comes up and enquires what business we have there. He turns out to be the *mehtaji* of the kiln and when we tell him we are from the city and are curious to know about brick making, he invites us in with rough courtesy. He offers to help with any information we may need, if we come to the site office after working hours.

Inside, we walk up to the line of women loaders and ask about the tokens from the man handing them out. Each token, he says, is worth two paise and on each trip a woman carries a load of ten bricks. When she has 25 such tokens, she will exchange them for a larger token. Thus carrying 1000 bricks over 100 trips, she will earn two rupees. No wonder she hurries back after each load. (In a later interview, however, Mr D'Souza, the owner of the kiln, claimed that each token was in fact worth four paise,

PURNA IS A VILLAGE ON THE BOMBAY-AGRA highway, about 40 km from the city. It boasts, if that is the word for it, around two score villagers, a school and a



Adivasi women stacking bricks.

a claim that refuted statements made not only by the *mukadam* but also by individual workers.)

Many of the children working there are extremely young. According to Mr D'Souza, however, "We do not employ any children, we do not sign any contracts with them. They come on their own to help their parents. They start as early as 10-12 years. Even before that, they run around the place, playing and spoiling the bricks."

An old man, tanned and grizzled, is reluctant to talk about his life. After some persuasion, however, he begins and then it is difficult to stop him. "It was such a long, long time ago that I first came to this kiln. I was quite young then, much below your age," pointing at us. "That year was a very bad one for our village, not that other years are much better. Our village, see, lies in a very dry district and even at the best of times we do not get much rainfall. That year the rains had failed totally, our freshly sown crops all withered and died. There was famine and starvation all around, the few heads of cattle that we had were slaughtered for food.

"At this time a man from the neighbouring village visited

ing to the city and by the time he had made good the debt, it was the end of the season and he was penniless and homeless. Having nowhere to go to, he chose to remain in his hut in the kiln compound. And he has been living and working here for the last five to six years.

What are his hopes for the future? "Hoping makes no difference, what is written in my *karma* cannot be changed by hoping. The past is dead and there is no such thing as the future, it is only the present that matters and there is nothing that I can do about it."

One family of labourers claimed to be Marathas and looked down upon their Adivasi colleagues as outcasts. Their association with the kiln began a couple of years ago when the husband, who is now around 60 years old, came there to work. They had run up debts in their village and borrowed money from a *mukadam* to clear the amount. In return, the husband had to work at the kiln while his family tended their two acres of land back in their village in Ahmednagar district. Two years later, their crops failed again because their district falls in the rainshadow region of the Sahyadri mountains. Their debts having increased again and their

"My only desire is that I will be able to earn until finally, my ancestors call for me."



us, bringing along a stranger. The stranger informed us that he worked for a rich man in the city who was looking for labourers for his brick kiln. We were promised food and shelter and good payment for our work. We readily agreed to work for him and collected advances against our future employment. The stranger went away and returned after a couple of days with a truck which we were asked to board to be taken to the kiln. By this time, we had already spent our advances and we were only too glad to go with him. The little land that we owned had already been sold or mortgaged and we had no means of livelihood left in the village. We could not even go to the forest to collect firewood because the forest officials used to harass us and beat us, though others were destroying the timber."

Another old man tells us that he first came to the kiln to repay the money that his son had received from a *mukadam*. His son died in an accident, leaving no money to make good the debt. The *mukadam* told him that he would have to work at the kiln to repay the amount or go to gaol. Intimidated by the threat, he agreed to come to Bombay and work. He sold his land and house in the village before com-

fields being dry, the old man's wife and son decided to join him at the kiln, while another son and some relatives stayed behind. In the monsoon months, the family is reunited and, with the little money they manage to save at the kiln, they buy gifts and distribute them to family and friends.

One young man who had taken an advance to meet the wedding expenses of his sister, worked for a whole season to clear the amount. After seven months, when it was time for him to return, he had no money left to take back home. Rather than be ridiculed for returning empty-handed, he took another advance against work to be performed at the kiln the next season. A few months at the village and the money was over. And it was back to the cycle of advances and seasons of work at the kiln.

Another Adivasi labourer, asked about the contract he had signed, said, "We have to sign some papers for the advances. We do not know whether it is a bond paper or what. We are told that they are *sarkari* papers and if we try to run away we will get into big trouble. Besides where can we run to?"

Did he know what was written in the papers that he sign-

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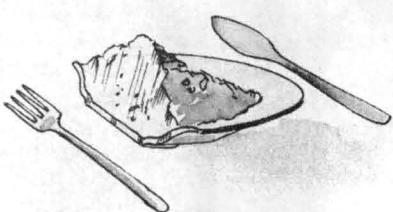
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CALORIE-COUNTING

The traditional approach. You reduce the number of calories you consume in a day and hope that the body will burn up its fat as energy. Most diets are based on this principle.



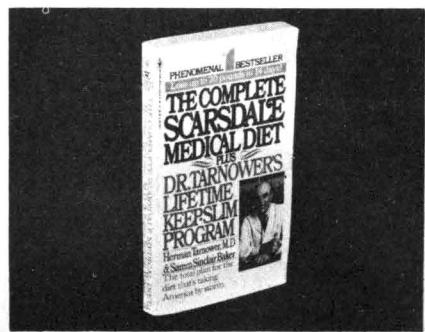
HALF-FOOD DIET

The simplest diet to follow—based on the calorie-counting principle. Eat what you'd normally eat at the same time, but reduce the quantities by half.



WATER LOSS

The simplest way to lose weight is to sweat it out. That's why you can lose seven kilos overnight in a sauna. Models take pills to reduce water retention to lose weight before a photo-session.



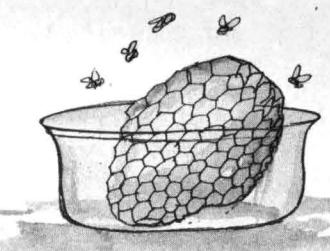
SCARSDALE MEDICAL DIET

Well-known because its creator was shot dead by his mistress a few years ago. A rigid, low-carbohydrate and low-calorie diet with gourmet, vegetarian and 'international' menu options.



SUGAR FREE

'Sugar is poison' is the slogan of the US health lobby. Sugar makes you fat because it keeps your body from burning up fats and makes you even hungrier. Or so the argument runs. So, cut it out and slim down.



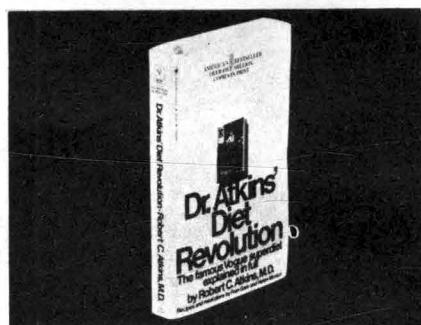
HEALTH-FOOD REGIMEN

Popularized by the likes of Gaylord Hauser and Barbara Cartland. Based on the view that if you eat lots of honey, dahi yeast and other 'natural' foods, you'll lose weight.



SINGLE FOOD DIET

A once-trendy system that restricted you to just one food—say chicken. As long as you ate nothing else, you'd lose weight despite eating lots of chicken.



DR ATKINS'S DIET

Claims that carbohydrates cause obesity. Just cut them out (rice, bread etc) and eat as much protein as you like (steak, chicken etc) and you'll become slender and sylph-like.



AMPHETAMINES

An amphetamine or a diet pill speeds up your metabolism and suppresses your appetite. So, not only do you burn up calories faster, but you also feel less hungry.



Making the brick paste.

ed? "Saheb, you must be surely joking. We cannot even read our own language, then how will we know what is written in *angrezi*. Anyway there is no need to read whatever is written because they say our owner is a big man in Bombay and he will not stoop to spoil his name by filling in amounts which are not paid to us. So, we have no choice but to trust him."

How did he find the work at the kiln? "The work is very hard, but we can't complain because we are paid according to the amount of effort we put in. If we don't wish to work hard we will get paid less than the others and as it is the money situation is bad. Sometimes we do not even have enough money to buy a little vegetable to eat with our *bajra roti* and we have to make do with chilli powder and salt."

* * *

THE MUKADAM, WHO REEKS MILDLY OF liquor, speaks expansively, "My job is to recruit the labourers and see that they don't run away—without repaying their debt. My job is quite tough, though I know the homes and relatives of the people I recruit and I have to be constantly on my toes to see that they are not cheating.

"Sometimes a worker runs away to another kiln but we have contacts everywhere and are able to get him back. If the other kiln owner wishes to keep him however, he may do so by paying us the amount owed by this man. You see, we have this understanding with the other kiln owners and that is the only way we can survive. The labourers also know this and it restrains them in many ways since the only work these people know is brick making.

"We don't pay the labourers poorly, we pay them enough to keep body and soul together, what more do they need?"

Our *saheb* also gives them old clothes when they return to the village for the monsoon months. If we give them just a little more, they will start demanding more and working less."

And finally, we kept our appointment with the *mehtaji* at the site office.

Why does the kiln employ Adivasis from such far off places when it is possible to get labour from nearby? "The locals will never be able to do a quarter of the work done by these Adivasis. Besides, if we employ these locals, the unions will come in and the problems will start."

What benefits do the labourers receive? "We give them free medical facilities. The village doctor is asked to treat anyone who is unwell and provide him with any medicines he may require and the bill is to be presented to us. Besides, we supply them cow-dung cakes at the price at which we purchase them. They use these as fuel for cooking. Our *saheb* also sometimes distributes money and clothes among them."

How are the workers' wages adjusted against the loans they have taken? "At the end of the day, the tally of work done is entered in a little diary that each worker carries with him. At the end of the week, the total is calculated and after deducting certain amounts against the advances they have taken, they are paid the balance."

Night is beginning to fall as we prepare to leave the kiln. At the entrance to one of the huts, an Adivasi sits on his haunches, idly pushing a makeshift hammock whose tiny occupant is already fast asleep. Outside a woman squats, also on her haunches, grinding a coriander chutney.

We ask an old man how he sees life at the kiln. "For poor people like us," he replies, "there is no greater happiness than having food to drive away our hunger. Here at the kiln, we don't go without food even if it is just dry *rotis* and *dal*. My only desire is that I will be able to earn until finally, my ancestors call for me." ♦



Moulding the bricks: lifetime's work.

Imtiaz Dharker

Interviewed By Shirin Mehta
Photographed By Ashok Gupta

"I TEND TO see human beings in terms of form and line. And as I evolve in my work, I find I need bigger canvases—my lines are growing bolder, longer. . . ."

Imtiaz Dharker, a diminutive 5' 1", sees everything from the point of view of art. Painter, poetess, Poetry Editor of *Debonair* (her husband Anil edits the magazine) a freelance producer of audio-visuals, she is a many-faceted woman with the duties of a mother thrown in to boot. Her life is packed with things to do. "Very often I draw at nights. That is the time when it is the most peaceful and I can concentrate."

The room, in an old apartment in Malabar Hill, Bombay, is done up in muted whites and beiges. In a corner the ceiling leaks. Dominating one wall, its black, bold lines denying the fine strokes that make it up is *Stone I*, a painting displayed in Imtiaz' exhibition on 'Purdah'. A Pakistani Muslim, brought up in London, for her *purdah* was the symbol of what restrictive thinking could be.

"In *Stone I* I have tried to show the lines of the rock from which the face emerges. The veins in the hand and rock intermingle, the complacency on the old matriarch's face is what gives a system like *purdah* the impetus to go on."

The painting leaps out of the wall with an accusing directness, a confidence that is evident in the painter herself. But it is the compelling stillness of the white room that gives *Stone I* its prominence. The whites and beiges are Imtiaz' choice—she loves white and wears it regularly. Everything in the room is chosen with an eye to practicality—brass objects instead of glassware. "When you have a six-year-old daughter at home you have to make sure things are unbreakable and washable," she laughs.

A corner of that room is her spot. This is her own special niche, where she sits writing poems, sketching, or just listening to music—electronic music

is her favourite. "Actually everyone loves this corner. The big *gaddis* were Anil's choice, and he often sits here and reads. Ayesha (my daughter) squats with me on the rug when I sketch."

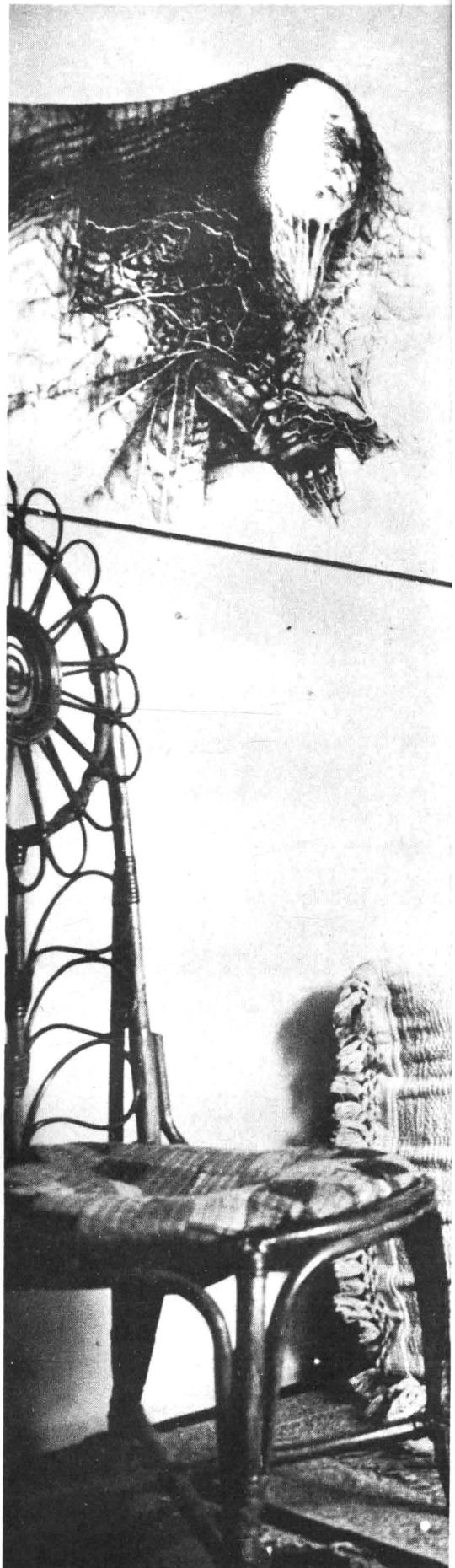
Every piece of furniture was specially chosen for the room even though there was no specific design in mind when they started. The rugs, the *gaddis* were chosen to complement the colour scheme of white. The elaborate cane chair was not designed by her. "It was made for me at a shop in Opera House but I picked up the pattern elsewhere."

Like any true artist she sees everything in terms of form and line, darkness and light—the pale blob of a guest's face in the darkened room, a piece of bramble in the wind which she found on an industrial site. "I looked at it and instantly realised the beauty of the horizontal lines that had been shaped naturally. The same horizontal lines that I had to toil over in *Stone I*." It stands in a corner of her room, stalks blown back against an invisible wind.

Strangely enough she never saw art as something she could take up seriously. "In the beginning I saw my drawings only as a way of doodling. Poetry was the medium I really used to express myself in. Slowly I started linking up my poems with my drawings."

Imtiaz' work, the making of audio-visuals, is as fascinating for her as her art and poetry. "In a way audio-visual is the combination of writing, music, technology and science. Since I am interested in all of these it works out fine. When I started out in Lintas we used to make audio-visuals on primitive equipment. Nowadays, we use the computer in many interesting ways. . . ."

No matter what her medium of expressing herself, Imtiaz's wish is to keep progressing in her work. Her art has evolved from the first 'doodles' to a stronger, more passionate protest. Even the styles, in which she paints, change. And one day she hopes to step into the unknown territory of water-colour painting. ♦





Why Coppola And Lucas Don't Talk To Each Other

By Dave Pollock

SOON AFTER GEORGE LUCAS ENTERED A MASTER'S PROGRAMME AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA FILM SCHOOL IN 1967, HE WON A COMPETITION SPONSORED BY WARNER BROS, WHOSE PRIZE

WAS THE

opportunity to observe the studio's operations for six months. He'd been a natural for the prize membership—his movie *THX 1138:4EB* had just won the National Student Film Award—and he was eager to spend it in Warners' animation studio, famous for the Bugs Bunny and Looney Tunes cartoons. But that department was closed; the only production shooting on the Burbank lot was the movie musical *Finian's Rainbow*, an ambitious project being directed by a bearded young man named Francis Coppola.

The idea of working with Coppola excited Lucas. The director was something of a hero to him and to others in the unusually impressive student film community of the mid-1960s, a group of would-be film-makers who were to become the cinematic equivalent of the Paris writers' group of the 1920s. Instead of F Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway and Gertrude Stein, Lucas's fellow students as an undergraduate at USC included John Milius and Randal Kleiser. At the time Lucas was going to school, Steven Spielberg was studying film at Long Beach State. Brian De Palma was making documentary films across the country at Columbia University, and Martin Scorsese was amazing his professors at New York University's film school with his angst-ridden student films.

But the most remarkable achievement of those years had happened just across town from Lucas at UCLA, where Francis Coppola had somehow managed to get his master's thesis, a movie called *You're a Big Boy Now*,

Dave Pollock covers films for the *Los Angeles Times*. Adapted from *Skywalking: The Life of George Lucas*.

distributed as a major feature. Lucas recalls, "Francis Coppola had directed his first picture as a UCLA student, and now, Jesus—he got another feature to direct! It sent shock waves through the student film world, because nobody else had ever done that." Lucas began to hang around the *Finian's* set and was impressed by Coppola's self-confidence. Lucas explained his situation and asked Coppola if he could work with him. Coppola readily agreed.

The day Lucas walked onto Warners' lot was the same day Jack Warner cleaned out his office and left. The old Hollywood was dying. The venerable studio had been sold to a television packaging firm and *Finian's Rainbow* was the final movie ordered under the family regime. Lucas became one of the first new employees of Warner Bros—Seven Arts, signing an agreement on July 31, 1967, to be Coppola's administrative assistant. He was paid just over \$3,000 for six months' work.

Lucas was 22 at the time, Coppola just five years older, but the similarities ended there. Coppola was burly, boisterous and outspoken, a sharp contrast to the taciturn, self-effacing Lucas. Ron Colby, Coppola's assistant, remembers Lucas, "standing there in his black chino pants, white T-shirt and white sneakers day in and day out. He had a little goatee and looked like a back-room engineer. He was just very quietly always there, watching, looking, and listening."

Coppola took an immediate liking to the diffident young man: "I was very grateful to have someone of my own generation around to discuss what I was trying to do as opposed to what I was able to do. I very quickly became aware of his superior intelligence." Lucas had his reasons for attaching

himself to Coppola. He hoped to make a good impression on people he thought might be able to help him. His original plan was to spend six months at Warner Bros, go back to USC to complete his master's degree and then move up to San Francisco to direct commercials and educational films, making his personal avant-garde movies in his spare time. In the back of his mind, however, Lucas left himself a Hollywood escape hatch. A producer he had met named Carl Foreman had responded favourably to Lucas's suggestion that *THX* could be turned into a feature film. Foreman advised George to write a story treatment, which he would try to place with Columbia Pictures.

After two weeks of watching Coppola struggle with *Finian's Rainbow*, Lucas felt he had seen enough. He thought that if he could scrounge up enough film he could make his own movie. Coppola was insulted by the idea of George walking away from his production. 'What do you mean, you're leaving? Aren't I entertaining enough? Have you learned everything you're going to learn watching me direct?' Coppola yelled. "There's nothing to do over here," Lucas responded, typically laconic. He explained his plans for *THX*, but Coppola was quick to warn him that the studios would only rip him off. He offered Lucas a permanent job on *Finian's* and on the next film he was planning, called *The Rain People* and promised to help Lucas on the *THX* screenplay. George stayed on.

The Rain People was a small personal drama about a housewife escaping suburban life by driving across the country. Coppola wrote the script in a couple of weeks while still directing

Finian's, and he began shooting the film without a deal with any studio to finance and release it. George was assistant cameraman, art director, production manager and did most of the sound recording. Francis also made sure George worked on his *THX* script, which Coppola planned to take to Warner Bros as part of a package of movie ideas. To prove his good intentions, Coppola had Warner Bros-Seven Arts advance Lucas \$3,000 as an option on *THX*. The payment also became George's salary for working on *Rain People*.

Lucas didn't mind working for nothing. Coppola was living the dream George had always nourished. Here was a man who had an idea for a film, wrote and directed it, made it the way he wanted to make it, with *no one* telling him what to do artistically.

In the following year, Lucas and Coppola worked well together, nurturing each other's dreams. Sometime after *Rain People* finished shooting, they began shopping for a property in the green solitude of Marin County to serve as headquarters for a studio that would serve as an alternative to the moral squalor of Hollywood. Their vision was that they would set up the company (which they called American Zoetrope) in a splendid old Victorian mansion; instead they had to settle for a dingy warehouse loft in downtown San Francisco. In any event, Zoetrope struggled into existence on November 14, 1969, with Coppola as president and Lucas as vice-president. Coppola, the man who once called *contract* a dirty word, now talked of signing the Zoetrope family of filmmakers to long-term agreements. Lucas says, "Francis hoped to get a lot of young talent for nothing, make movies and hope one of them would be a hit, and eventually build a studio that way."

The first filmmaker signed was George Lucas. Coppola talked Warner Bros into putting up \$3.5 million to develop five scripts, but best of all, he persuaded Warners to actually go ahead with *THX*. George had less than \$1 million to spend on the movie, but it was a start.

After months of rewriting, it looked as if *THX* would just never get off the ground. Lucas went to John Milius and suggested they resume work together on a Vietnam project they had discussed in college. But Coppola hadn't given up on *THX*. He prepared an impressive display of Lucas-design-



George Lucas (far left) with friends from *Return of the Jedi*

ed graphics and showed executives at Warner Bros some of the footage from the original student version. He also concocted an extremely low budget for the film, a mere \$777,777.77 (seven was Coppola's lucky number). To further impress Warner Bros, Coppola tossed Lucas's idea for a movie about Vietnam into the deal, a movie Coppola had no link to other than the fact that Lucas had told him about it.

When Warners said yes to both projects, Coppola hurried to tell Lucas the good news. "I was shocked," remembers George. "It was great about *THX*, but Francis hadn't even asked me or talked to me about the other movie—he just went off and made a deal. But it seemed that Zoetrope would be this great company and we young filmmakers were going to take over the

world, so I was pleased." Coppola was proud of his protégé, whose ability and talent had responded to Francis's prodding. He also knew that with an actual movie to make, Zoetrope was in business.

Lucas didn't get the greatest deal in Hollywood. He was paid only \$15,000 to write and direct *THX*, although Coppola promised him that his salary would rise to \$25,000 on his next project—the movie he and John Milius had written about the war in Vietnam.

In the meantime, Lucas plunged ahead with *THX*. Coppola occasionally dropped by the set, often accompanied by a Warners executive or some other visitor from Hollywood. *THX* was his model showcase, the proof that Zoetrope was working. Lucas became even more determined to bring the

film in on time and under budget, validating Francis's confidence in him.

Although it was his first feature, Lucas's problems with *THX* didn't begin until he finished the movie. On the evening before he was to take the film down to Burbank for Warner Bros' first inspection, Coppola saw a reel of the film for the first time. All he murmured was, "Strange, strange."

The statement was prophetic. When Warners president Ted Ashley and his management team saw *THX*, they were puzzled by the film's abstract imagery, eerie sound track and incomprehensible plot. Ashley was convinced that the film was a stiff and ordered Coppola and Lucas to turn the negative print over to the studio's in-house editor. "They had all the marbles, they owned the film," Coppola says of his capitulation to Ashley. He waited until he returned to San Francisco before telling Lucas the bad news.

Bad news it was indeed. Coppola had taken the next seven American Zoetrope projects down with him for the *THX* screening and Ashley was so upset after seeing *THX* that he cancelled the entire Zoetrope deal. The day became known as Black Thursday, a blow from which Zoetrope never recovered. Lucas was devastated; his film had been ridiculed and taken away from him and he felt responsible for the demise of Zoetrope. Coppola fled to Europe to lick his wounds and Lucas was unable to reach him so his anger at Warner Bros simmered within him. In the end, only four minutes were cut from *THX*, but the blow to his creative freedom wounded Lucas.

At his bleakest moment, Coppola was approached by Paramount Pictures to direct the film version of Mario Puzo's potboiler *The Godfather*. Coppola was reluctant to re-enter the Hollywood system, but Lucas urged him to take the job, if only to pay off Zoetrope's debts. Lucas had learned the drawbacks of being the protégé of a master who occasionally stumbled.

In the period following the unsuccessful release of *THX*, Lucas maintained his friendship with Coppola and helped him film montage scenes of the gang wars in *The Godfather*. But he looked elsewhere for work, too.

Determined to change his image as a cold technocrat, Lucas chose as his next vehicle a rock 'n' roll movie called *American Graffiti*, in which the music was as important as the story and the characters. Initially United

Artists expressed interest in the idea, along with another Lucas project, a space fantasy that would evoke the *Flash Gordon* and *Buck Rogers* serials he had watched on TV as a child. But the studio thought the music rights in *Graffiti* (Lucas wanted eighty songs in the movie) would cost a fortune and backed off, a reaction shared by the other Hollywood powers.

Lucas was convinced that if he could successfully recreate his adolescence on screen, he would strike a chord in the generation that was becoming the mainstay of the movie audience. One studio executive finally agreed. Ned Tanen at Universal was willing to give Lucas a chance, but only if the film was made for even less than was spent on *THX*. Lucas's fee for writing and directing *Graffiti* was only \$50,000. "I don't think it was a question of a good deal or a bad deal," says Jeff Berg, Lucas's agent at the time. "It was the deal."

Universal also insisted on a name producer for *Graffiti*. Lucas felt comfortable with only one of their suggestions: Francis Coppola. *The Godfather* had just opened to critical raves and outstanding grosses and Coppola was looked upon as the new saviour of the movie business.

Being reunited with Francis was awkward for George. After the failure of Coppola to back him in his struggle with Warner Bros over the cuts in *THX*, Lucas had severed his professional relationship with his mentor, although they remained close personal friends.

After five months, *American Graffiti* was shot, whittled down to just under two hours and ready to be submitted to Universal. The studios hadn't seen *Graffiti* at all; for that matter, Coppola had seen only bits and pieces of it.

The preview took place on Sunday, January 28, 1973, at 10 AM in the Northpoint Theater in San Francisco. The film was screened and as the final credits rolled by, an ashen-faced Tanen got out of his seat and rushed to the back of the theatre. The applause was rapturous and continued as Tanen and *Graffiti*'s producer, Gary Kurtz, stepped into the alley behind the Northpoint. "This is in no shape to show to an audience," Tanen sputtered. "It's unreleasable!" Tanen reentered the theatre as the house lights came on and the audience began to file up the aisles. The first person he encountered was Coppola, who asked innocently

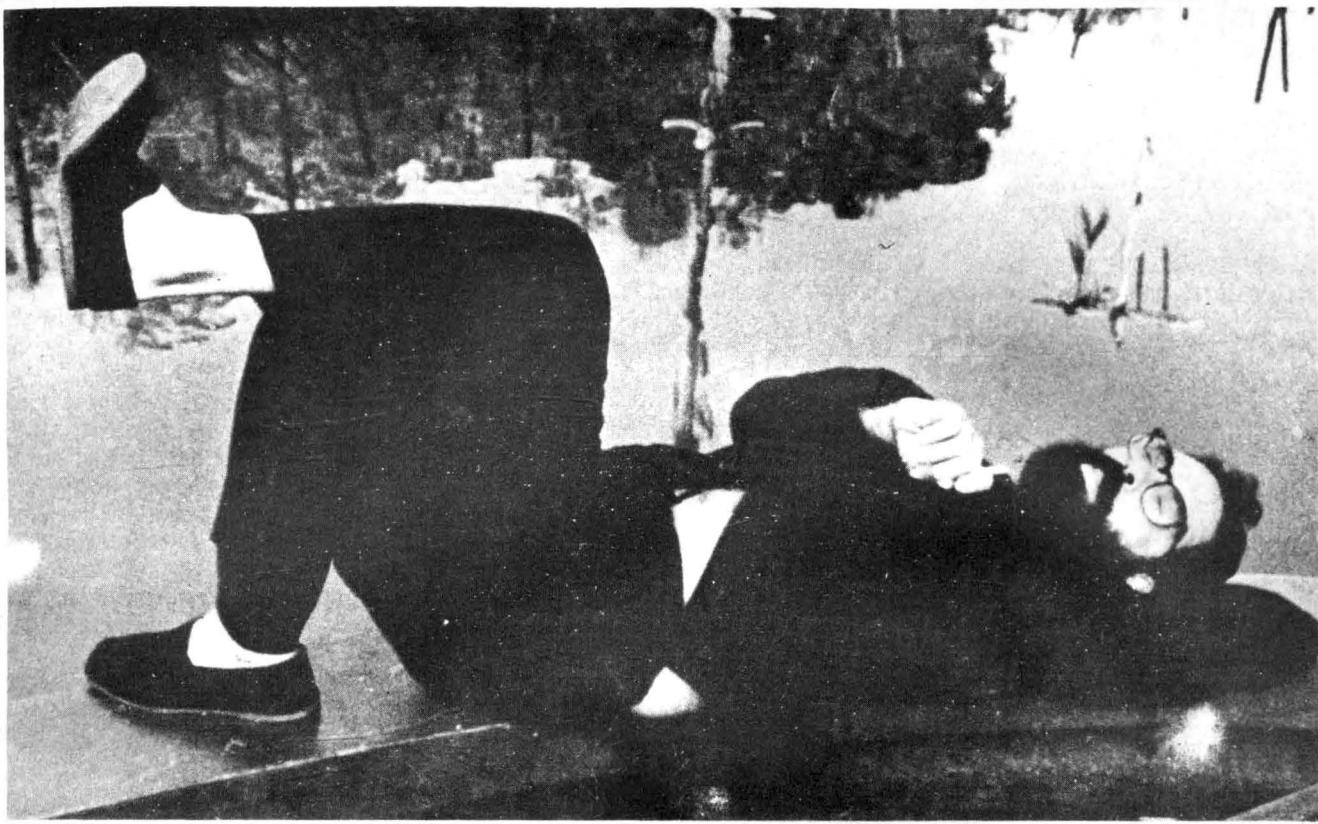
how Tanen had liked the film. Ned responded that he had a lot of problems with *Graffiti* and he didn't think it worked at all. "You boys let me down," he told Coppola. "I went to bat for you and you let me down." Tanen looked at Lucas as he said this and remembers that George had a dazed expression on his face. "I was in shock," Lucas says.

The nightmare Lucas had experienced on *THX* was recurring—he was about to lose control of a movie again. Coppola felt Lucas's pain and, acting accordingly, lashed out at Tanen. "You should get down on your knees and thank George for saving your job," Coppola bellowed. "This kid has killed himself to make this movie for you. And he brought it in on time and on schedule. The least you can do is to thank him for doing that!" Tanen tried to explain, but there was no stopping Coppola. If Tanen didn't want the film, Coppola sneered, then he would be happy to buy it. Coppola remembers offering to write a cheque for *Graffiti* on the spot. He was making up for his lack of courage in standing up to Warner Bros over the cutting of *THX*. "This movie's going to be a hit! This audience loved this movie!" Coppola yelled. The confrontation was etched indelibly in the memory of those present. "I wish I'd been there to see it myself, because it's the best story to come out of Hollywood since the late '40s," says Steven Spielberg.

Graffiti provided more than fodder for Hollywood's rumour mills—it proved to be the most profitable investment a Hollywood studio ever made for less than a million. For every dollar spent, Universal saw more than \$50 in profits. *American Graffiti* sold more than \$117 million worth of tickets throughout the world, returning film rentals of nearly \$55 million.

As the money poured in, the only unhappy person was Coppola. Lucas recalls, "Francis was kicking himself forever for the fact that if he had just financed the film, he would have made 30 million dollars on the deal. He never got over it."

No one was less prepared for success than George Lucas. His and his wife's combined income had never exceeded \$20,000 a year, but his eventual share of the *Graffiti* profits was more than \$7 million (\$4 million after taxes). With his new-found wealth, Lucas set out to make his own version of the Zoetrope dream come true. He



Francis Coppola : loves being in the spotlight.

purchased a run-down Marin landmark, a wood-frame residence built in 1869, for \$150,000 and moved in his nascent Lucasfilm Ltd company.

Lucas also shared his *Graffiti* booty with the people who contributed to the film's success. He gave new cars to some, cash gifts and 'points' (percentages of the movie's net profits after studio deductions for making and distributing the film) to others. Not everyone was satisfied, however. Lucas complained that some of the recipients of cars were upset about not getting cash instead.

Lucas may have been surprised by the ingratitude of some recipients of his generosity, but he became upset over Francis Coppola's reluctance to meet what Lucas thought were his obligations. They had agreed to split their share from *Graffiti* in half, each getting 20 percent of the profits. Out of his half, Coppola was to give producer Gary Kurtz five per cent. Out of Lucas's share came points for the writers, the actors and attorney Tom Pollock. When Haskell Wexler was hired to shoot *Graffiti*, Coppola suggested he be given three profit points—two from Coppola and one from Lucas. But when it came time to pay Kurtz and Wexler, Coppola balked. Lucas accused him of renegeing on his promise

and only after intense negotiations were Kurtz and Wexler paid by Coppola.

The argument was not over the division of spoils—there was enough money from *Graffiti* to make both men wealthy. But the dispute reveals the essence of each man: George's sense of moral obligation and Coppola's laissez-faire attitude. Even more important, perhaps, was the personal falling out. Coppola felt excluded from *Graffiti* by Lucas—there was no room for Francis in George's movie. Lucas had gone to Coppola to produce *Graffiti* only at Universal's insistence. Today Coppola says he thinks Lucas wanted to make the most money from the film. Lucas sees things differently, convinced that Francis had to dominate him—if not in the making of *Graffiti*, then in the division of its spoils. Lucas used to rationalize Coppola's behaviour by assuming he simply didn't know any better. But after the arguments that followed *Graffiti*, Lucas began to see Coppola as immoral. That sort of behaviour was *just not right*.

The split had been gradual and perhaps inevitable. "My life is a kind of reaction against Francis's life," Lucas says now—he is openly emotional about the subject. "I'm his antithesis. All directors have egos and are in-

secure. But of all the people I know, Francis has the biggest ego and the biggest insecurities."

From the outset of their relationship, George and Francis were an odd couple: their relationship thrived because they were opposites—Francis loved being in the spotlight and George didn't mind standing in his shadow. "There was a balance," Coppola said of the time he and Lucas worked closely together. "We can do more together than either of us can alone. One could fantasize what *Star Wars* would have been like had I produced it, or *Apocalypse Now* with him as producer."

Lucas agrees that he and Coppola "were like two halves of a whole. I was always putting on the brakes and he was always stepping on the gas. It was good for me, because it loosened me up and got me to take more chances. I realized that you can jump off the cliff and survive 99 per cent of the time. And the one per cent of the time Francis didn't make it, he made it look like he did."

Coppola never let Lucas forget who the senior partner was in their relationship, however. And, aware of that, Lucas carefully kept his independence. Today he talks bitterly about the impression Coppola gives that "people

disappear when they walk out of the room. He finds it incredible that people do things he doesn't wish them to do, since he's controlling it all and they're all here for him."

Coppola's defenders see his God-father qualities in a more positive light. Ron Colby insists that "if it hadn't been for Francis, *THX* never would have gotten made anywhere, at any time, as a major feature, especially with George directing. George would have ended up making documentary films for Northrup and Sperry-Rand for at least a decade before he got a shot at doing anything, if ever."

Comments such as these raise Lucas's hackles; "My feeling was and still is that if I was destined to make movies, I would have. I was going to make *THX* whether I did it with Francis or not. Francis helped me and gave me a chance, but at the same time he made a lot of money off me. Just because he gave me my first break, does that give him the right to exploit me

the rest of my life?"

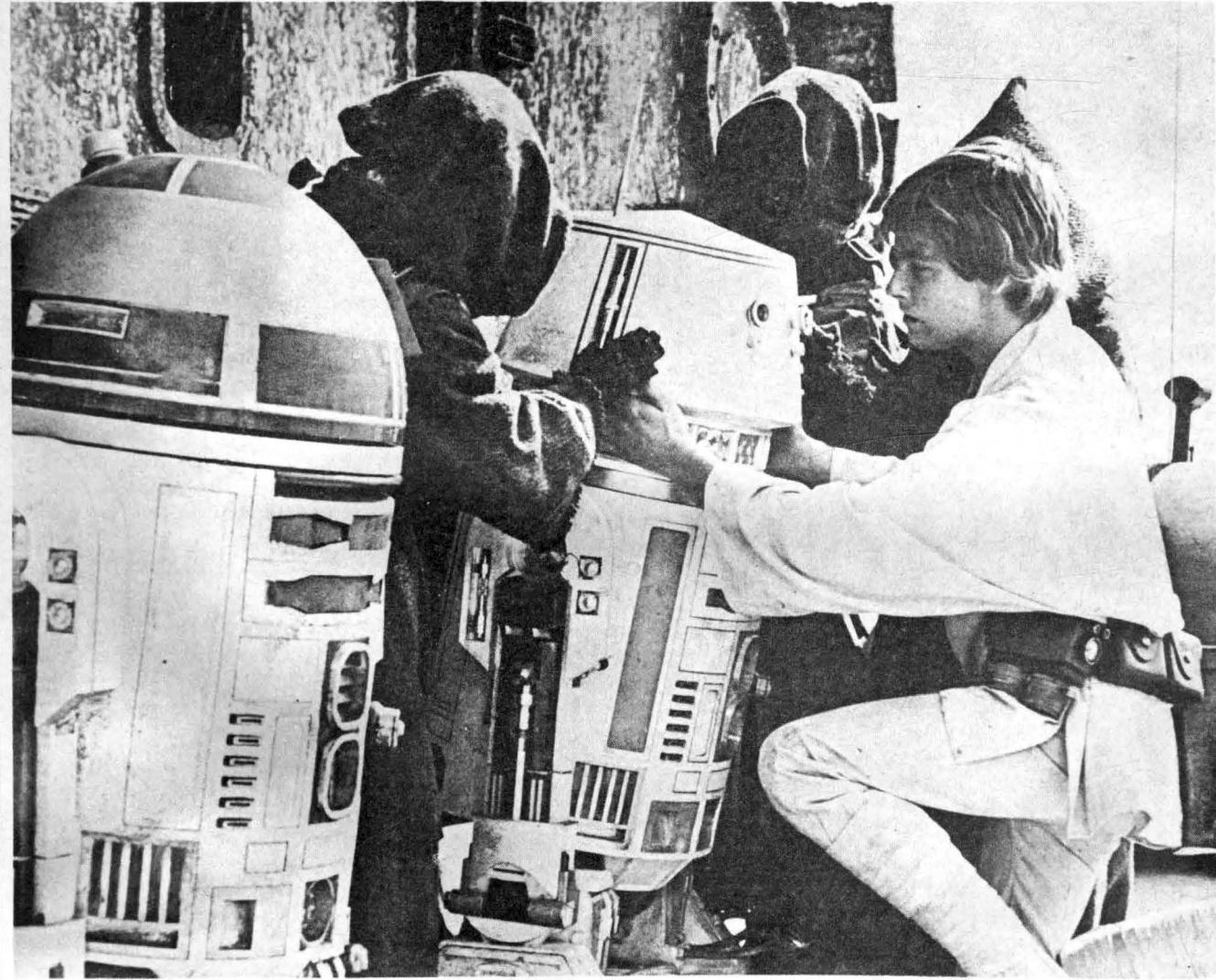
But their differences shouldn't ignore what they share. Bunny Alsup, Lucas's secretary during the making of *American Graffiti*, remembers a Christmas dinner at the Lucas' home that the Coppolas attended. Lucas brought out his old Lionel train set and he and Francis spent hours racing the engines over and over the track. "It was amazing to see George and Francis literally on the floor playing with toys," Alsup recalls. The toys now have simply become more expensive: electronic editing systems, computer graphics and film-to-video transfers. Lucas and Coppola were heading down the same track, even if they didn't know it.

The divorce, when it came, was painful. Since their days at USC, Lucas and Milius had wanted to make a movie about the bizarre media circus the Vietnam War had become. 'Surfing and bombs' became the theme of the movie that they discussed over the years and that Milius eventually wrote

as a screenplay.

Apocalypse Now was one of the first projects Lucas mentioned to Coppola during Zoetrope's formation, but it was discarded by Warner Bros with the rest of the Black Thursday screenplays. Lucas remained determined to get *Apocalypse* off the ground before the release of *American Graffiti*. He made a development deal at Columbia Pictures, but Coppola refused to give up his rights, which he had retained from the Zoetrope days.

Lucas was first incredulous and then furious when, in 1974, Coppola asked him to direct *Apocalypse* for \$25,000 and 10 per cent of the profits, the price agreed upon six years earlier for Lucas's second Zoetrope project. Lucas had directed the most successful low-budget film of all time (*Graffiti*), and Coppola was asking him to take half his salary and a smaller share of the profits to make an arduous and complicated war movie. Lucas asked Coppola to wait until *Star Wars* was



Star Wars : Hollywood's biggest ever blockbuster.



The Godfather : critical raves and outstanding grosses.

finished, but Coppola insisted that *Apocalypse* be released by the American Bicentennial. Lucas was tired of hassling. "If you want to make it, go make it," Lucas said resignedly. Coppola tried to get Milius to direct *Apocalypse* but John also spurned the low terms. Eventually, Coppola directed the film himself.

The making of *Apocalypse Now* took more than two years, cost \$36 million and nearly broke Coppola in mind and spirit. Francis gave George a couple of profit points in the movie at its release in 1979 and although the film surprised sceptics by earning most of its money back, it has yet to return any profits to Lucas. He remains deeply hurt by Coppola's refusal to wait for him to direct *Apocalypse*. "It was my picture and I didn't have any control over the situation," Lucas now says.

For Lucas, it was the last affront.

He made a complete professional split from Coppola. The two rarely speak now, but their influence on each other's lives is still strong. Coppola feels he paved the way for Lucas and Lucas feels his debt to Coppola has long since been paid. Yet, during a giddy period after the success of *Star Wars*, they schemed to take over the movie business by buying theatres and setting up their own distribution company. "All the things you wished you could do if you had the money," remembers Coppola, a bit wistfully.

Without Lucas's help (or anyone else's) Coppola essentially lost Zoetrope Studios—the version Coppola moved down to Hollywood in 1978—this year. Lucasfilm, which Lucas set up in that Marin County Victorian mansion in 1972, is thriving.

Lucas and Coppola maintain the semblance of a friendship. They co-sponsored a film by one of their

mutual heroes, director Akira Kurosawa; without their help, *Kagemusha* would not have been released outside of Japan. Coppola still daydreams about Lucas producing a film for him, returning the favour of *Graffiti*. "We cooked up a lot of good stuff together and on a certain kind of movie it would be great." The onetime teacher and his too-successful pupil still exchange Christmas presents and invite each other to their respective company parties, but the separation is deep and probably permanent.

If it was the clash of their personalities that drove them apart, perhaps Coppola has had the last word. Harrison Ford appeared briefly in one scene in *Apocalypse*, playing a prissy intelligence officer at a briefing. As the Ford character removes his glasses Coppola zooms in for a close-up of Ford's green Army shirt. The name tag clearly reads COL G LUCAS. ♦

Inkslinging: India's Dozen Top Columnists

By Dhiren Bhagat

I SUPPOSE I HAD BETTER MAKE MY POSITION CLEAR BEFORE I GO ANY FURTHER. I TOO AM A PROFESSIONAL COLUMNIST, BUT AT TWENTY FIVE A YOUNG ONE.

I AM A NEW ENTRANT IN THIS STALE FIELD AND I STUMBLED ONTO IT ALMOST BY ACCIDENT. But then going by the form of most of these worthies it would appear they all stumbled onto it, almost by accident.

Sixteen months ago I found myself in Delhi, back from University and without a job. Several kind people offered me employment without my asking for it but I did not think it fit to encumber myself with either office or paycheque. I had begun planning a novel and I spent my time working on it, 'perfecting alien techniques of observation'. It was in this period that I met the savvy editor of *India Today* and a couple of conversations later he very kindly offered me a column in his magazine. Meanwhile George Verghese, their Guest Columnist moved out to become Editor of the *Indian Express* and I stepped in his place. Step one.

The *Sunday Observer* in Bombay was the second step. Eight months ago I began a fortnightly column there alternating weekly with Abu Abraham's drolleries. Judging from the anger on the letters page I have been thoroughly unpopular with the *Observer* readers but fortunately there are other criteria than readers' response. At any rate, offers for work have not dried up. This month I begin a column on the press in *Debonair*.



Dhiren Bhagat is the columnist *Sunday Observer* readers love to hate. He is best known for his puppy-eat-dog pieces on Khushwant Singh and Kersy Katrak. The views expressed in this article are entirely his own.

This personal note is by way of explanation, somewhat like Members of Parliament declaring their financial interests before they join the House and commence careers of noble backbiting. No doubt I shall be suspected of professional jealousy. Apart from declaring that the scene is so dismal there is nothing to be jealous of, all I can say in my defence is that age divides me from the dozen: an entire generation separates me from even the youngest of the lot, Shobha Kilachand.

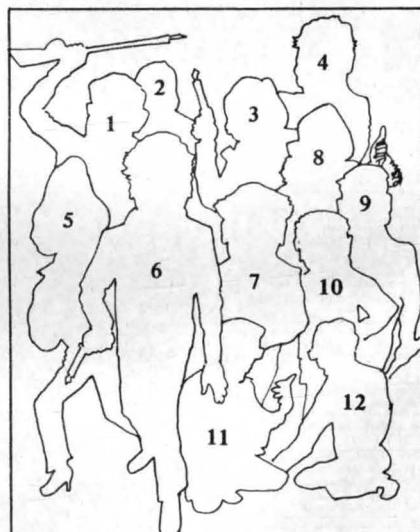
AT 58, KHUSHWANT IS THE oldest bandicoot in the business and easily the most popular columnist in the country. A lawyer, press attaché and writer, Khushwant came to the column business late in life, in 1969, when he had been roped in by Bennett Coleman to edit the ailing *Illustrated Weekly*. From his first issue, July 6, Khushwant started *Editor's Page*, a column in which the bombastic *Sardar* sounded off on whatever important subject entered his turbanned head that week: Rajneesh, Krishna Menon, kissing in Indian films, Oneupmanship, *chamchagiri*. Mario drew a bulb and Khushwant sat in it along with his Scotch and dirty pictures. The circulation of the *Weekly* soared.

Khushwant's column gave the new *Weekly* its lead. Like the magazine under Khushwant, the column was hopelessly down-market—complex issues were simplified to the point of banality, clichéd anti-poses were struck without much thought and anal humour became a norm. Khushwant didn't actually write these lines but they are a typical product of the Khushwant formula: "There are only two differences between Englishmen and Indians. The English are honest while we are not and the English use toilet paper while we still rely on the

left hand. Of course there's the question of colour but..." Whereupon an anecdote would follow, a raunchy story concerning one of his English friends, designed to show that colour was not a *real* difference etc. Brain rot was the price Khushwant paid for popularity.

For nine years he ran that entertaining nonsense. When he was sacked from the *Weekly* the management spiked his farewell column but Akbar at *Sunday* obligingly published it. These were his parting words: "So farewell! I switch off the bulb in which I have sat with my Scotch and my scribbling pad."

But that wasn't the last of him. True, for a while Khushwant was lost in the wilderness of the *National Herald* but he soon recovered and switched on the bulb once again at the *Hindustan Times*, which by now he



1: Sundar Rajan; 2: Rajinder Puri; 3: Abu Abraham; 4: Iqbal Masud; 5 Shobha Kilachand; 6: Kuldip Nayar; 7: Janardhan Thakur; 8: Khushwant Singh; 9: MV Kamath; 10: NJ Nanporia; 11: Dom Moraes; 12: Behram Contractor (*Busybee*).





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was editing. In April 1980 *With Malice Towards One and All* was syndicated by Khushwant Singh Associates, a company the dirty old man of Indian journalism had founded presumably to minimise his tax liability. *Malice* was no different from *Editor's Page* but so successful was Khushwant's pap formula that three other papers soon started carrying it: Calcutta's *Telegraph* and Bombay's *Sunday Observer* and *Sunday Mid-day*. (The *Telegraph* carries *Malice* on the Saturday it appears in the *Hindustan Times* while the Bombay papers carry it a full eight days later.) Earlier this year the *Hindustan Times* kicked Khushwant to the void upstairs but his *Malice* carries on as before. All he has done with his new found leisure is to write *Gossip Sweet and Sour*, another weekly down-market snippets column which is virtually indistinguishable from *Malice*, except that it is exclusive to *Sunday* and somewhat shorter. Brain rot is the only explanation for this failure to change or produce a different column: having played the formula for 12 years now Khushwant is incapable of commenting on the world except in vulgar pre-digested 400 word snippets.

If Khushwant is the most popular of the columnists, Kuldip Nayar is the most published. A refugee from Pakistan, Nayar found himself in Delhi soon after partition without a job. It was a difficult period and jobs were hard to come by. In desperation he took to journalism. It paid off. Nayar rose. In

the '60s he became Press Secretary to Lal Bahadur Shastri and then Resident Editor of the Delhi edition of *The Statesman*. Later as Editor of the Express News Service he began a column on the *Express* edit page called *Between The Lines*. (The title came from Chalapathi Rao who suggested it for Nayar's book of the same title published in 1969.) Like the book, the column purported to give a view of what was really going on in Delhi, 'between the lines'. It was a 'factual' column in that it did more than merely speculate or analyse, but unlike Arun Shourie's facts, Nayar's were not verifiable: he didn't investigate cheque numbers or file numbers, he merely gave one version of events in high places making capital gossip a journalistic form.

In a watered-down sense Nayar was the first Indian practitioner of Tom Wolfe's New Journalism. He frequently wrote in the third person past tense using flashes of dialogue to liven the account. For example: "The telephone bell rang unusually long on September 24, 1968 in the office of the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs... Pegor was visibly agitated when he and his lean, well groomed interpreter entered State Foreign Minister Bhagat's room. 'Mr Minister we are concerned to see the gist of the talks between the Soviet and Indian teams appearing in today's *Statesman*.' " But readable as Nayar's short story style was, he did not sustain it for long, soon lapsing into



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journalistic punditry. Further his command of the English language was far from adequate and the overall impression one got on reading *Between The Lines* was: "Interesting, but semi-literate."

When S Nihal Singh took over as Editor of the *Express*, Nayar resigned claiming he had been superseded. In 1981 he syndicated *Between The Lines* and today it is the most widely published column in the country. In addition Nayar writes *Exclusive*, a weekly column for *Sunday* and *State Of The Nation*, a monthly column for *Gentleman*. But what quality he had as a racy political gossip writer has gone and his desire to play pundit has resulted in making his writing quite unreadable.

BAITING INDIRA GANDHI HAS become a profitable activity these days. Done regularly and hoarsely, it makes for extremely popular copy and popular copy makes good money. Ashok Mitra, now Finance Minister of West Bengal at least did it intelligently in the *Telegraph* when he wrote his popular column *Cutting Corners*, but Rajinder Puri, MV Kamath, Janardhan Thakur and KR Sundar Rajan have made it a crude cottage industry. (Cottage industries can pay well: Ashok Mitra reportedly received Rs 2000 per piece: Rajinder Puri makes half that amount for each of his shrill pieces in the *Sunday Observer*, by far the highest paid contributor to the paper.)

MV Kamath began as a columnist in the '50s for the *Free Press Bulletin* writing *The Gaslight Gossip*. It lasted nine years and was extremely popular. Then he went on to better things, serving as a foreign correspondent for twenty years and editor of the *Illustrated Weekly* for three. When he finally threw in the towel he came back to columns.

He started his column with the *Express Magazine (Odd Man Out)* in October 1981. Then began the rash. *All Things Considered* is his weekly column in *Mid-day* and the *Telegraph*. Four months ago Kamath started a fortnightly column in *Surya*; in addition he does a weekly vernacular column which is translated into both Marathi (*Janmabhoomi*) and Gujarati (*Pravasi*).

What Kamath gains in quantity he makes up in quality. His writing has come to resemble a uniform screech at Mrs Gandhi (whom he supported throughout the Emergency). A couple of Fridays ago I picked up a copy of *Mid-day* and found Kamath pontificating on Kapil Dev's victorious eleven approximately thus: "Yes India can do it but not if Mrs Gandhi goes on with her policies . . ." There was no need to read further. It was the genuine article.

Rajinder Puri was a cartoonist of some talent before he discovered that columnists got a better deal on the whole. A close associate of Charan Singh's, he is fond of such populist



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stunts as the occupation of the Ashoka hotel by *kisaans*. He began his career as a columnist in the Janata period when RK Karanja hired him, reportedly to get closer to Charan Singh. When the Congress (I) returned, Karanja dropped him.

But by now Puri was an established columnist. These days he publishes regularly on the edit page of the *Sunday Observer* and has syndicated his 'funny' column which appears in the *Telegraph* as *Last Word* and in the *Hindustan Times* as *My Word!* His ironic writing is by far the better part of his output and occasionally, very occasionally, it can even be funny. Too often though, it is laboured and contrived. His 'serious' pieces in the *Sunday Observer* are well-known for their lunatic tone and even if he occasionally makes a good point his almost total lack of balance ensures that the point is obscured in a bucketful of mush.

KR Sundar Rajan began with the *Times of India* and rose to become Senior Assistant Editor whereupon he wasn't allowed to write anything. (Sham Lal made matters worse by refusing to allow Rajan to publish pieces in other national magazines.) He did however write regular pieces for the *New Statesman* but apart from that he wasn't much known. His career as a columnist really took off when he was arrested during the Emergency. A hero of the Emergency, Sundar Rajan left the *Times* and started his political column for *Debonair, View From Delhi*



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soon after. When the *Sunday Observer* began he was one of its original columnists, *Delhi Despatch* appearing weekly on page two.

Sundar Rajan is not as persistent a baiter of Mrs G as Kamath and Puri but his Opposition contacts and leanings made him a much better columnist during the Janata period when he had access in Delhi. Today his commentary has a tired quality about it, that of a pundit after the most lucrative *poojas* are over. Despite this he has a more balanced tone than most other Mrs G baiters.

Janardhan Thakur used to work for the *Ananda Bazar Patrika* where his copy was translated into Bengali. The Emergency was a godsend for him. He produced a quickie soon after the nightmare ended with the rather original title *All The Prime Minister's Men*. It was the Kuldip Nayar formula all over again, only racier, more gossipy and worse written. The level of analysis was distinctly coffee shop. ("Bansi Lal was certainly as inferior to Kairon as his protector, Indira Gandhi, was to Kairon's protector, Jawaharlal Nehru." Really!) Predictably, it was a best-seller.

This suave and snobbish coffee shop intellect proceeded to cash in on his success. *All the Janata Men* followed and *Ananda Bazar Patrika* appointed him Contributing Editor when Khushwant came to revive *New Delhi*. When Khushwant left, so did Thakur. In 1981 Thakur got into the garbage



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game and started Richa Features, which supplies reams of unreadable matter to the likes of *Mid-day*. Meanwhile he started a weekly syndicated political column *Ringside View* which appears on page one of the *Free Press Journal*, replete with a picture of the man MO Mathai described as looking like a 'giant sausage'. With Nayar and the rest of the Mrs G baiters given to armchair pontification on the state of the body politic, Thakur at least provides a more interesting if crudely drawn picture of the Delhi circus.

IN 1957, AT THE AGE OF 33, NJ Nanporia became the youngest editor of the *Times of India*. Though it would be unfair to say its been downhill ever since, (he was the editor of the *Statesman* for many years) he has certainly not fulfilled the promise implicit in that precocious appointment. Today he spends his time writing an absolutely trashy column for *Mid-day*, *Strictly Personal* and occasionally he takes up his dull books column on the *Sunday Review's* books page. No examples are needed to convey the sheer tedium of NJN's columns: anyone who spent six months walking in the Sahara will know what I'm talking about.

Busybee is different. He is often genuinely funny, though he suffers from having to produce copy every day. As a reporter with the *Times of India* he took over the *Round And About* column from Sheshagiri Rao on



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the *Evening News* 'the year Red Rufus won the Invitation Cup'. (Dates elude Behram Contractor as one might expect from a cursory reading of Busybee.)

Busybee soon became a Bombay institution and several of his droll pieces were recognised as classics. But Contractor's other forays into the world of columns were less successful. He began *Malice in Blunderland* in *Blitz* and did several pieces for *Beautiful* bylined Mercury.

In 1979 Contractor left the *Times* to become Chief Reporter on *Mid-day*. He took his column with him and it appears there daily. His restaurant column appears less frequently. The *Telegraph* also reproduces *Round And About* once a week.

Shobha Kilachand (née Rajadhayaksha) is another Bombay creation. She began as a columnist with *Onlooker* when Venkat Narayan edited the magazine. For six months she wrote a fortnightly gossip column. "They were brittle bitchy pieces," she says, "I was still going to parties and I had enough ammunition to enjoy myself with." It is less certain that her readers enjoyed the column.

When Venkat left for *India Today* Kilachand moved on to *Mid-day* where she wrote a TV column without seeing any TV. Then she developed a conscience and began watching the idiot box. Immediately she got bored. Her next column was *Close Encounters*, a 'people' column with *Mid-day*. The former model was back to what she

did best: gossip.

When *Sunday Review* was launched, Kilachand started a regular fortnightly column there in which she made her first mistake—she began to grow serious: drowsy meditations on monsoons followed by soul-searching pieces on herself. She also made it a vehicle for her irritations: estate agents and Indian Airlines were among the targets chosen by the now aging cover girl for her Sunday sermons. The marriage of Beauty and Intellect was complete.

ABU ABRAHAM, IQBAL MASUD and Dom Moraes all write up-market columns. Abu began as a cartoonist with the *Guardian* and when he came back to India drew cartoons for the *Indian Express*. Two years ago he left the *Express* to turn freelance. Apart from his cartoons Abu has two regular columns: a fortnightly in the *Sunday Observer* and a monthly in *Debonair*. Abu can write well and interestingly: the problem with him is he has ceased to do so. A peculiar dull humour is what one has come to expect from Abu nowadays and this is a shame as he was often very entertaining, especially when writing on the press, Indian or British. Perhaps there is a lesson in Abu's case for all of us in the business: no columnist can expect to write interestingly for more than, say, two years.

Iqbal Masud is probably the most intelligent of the columnists in the



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country. Early this year he began a fortnightly column in the *Express Magazine* and it has been a great success. I had not cared greatly for his film reviews—foreign films in the *Sunday Observer* for over a year in 1981-82, Indian films in the *Indian Express* to date—and had once dismissed his prose as mostly piffle. But in view of his *Express Magazine* column and the occasional book review in the *Sunday Observer* (his review of Khushwant's translation of *Umrao Jan Ada* was the best book review I have seen in an Indian paper) I am prepared to take back my words. Much of his analysis is intelligent and his prose is free of the clichés behind which second rate minds hide their laziness. Masud also writes a books column in *Gentleman* which is good, but about which I am less enthusiastic.

Dom Moraes is not primarily a columnist but ever since he descended on Delhi to write his biography of Mrs Gandhi he has run a column somewhere or the other. During the Janata days he wrote a fairly good political column for *Surya* (currying favour with Madam?) and after the Congress (I) victory in 1980 RK Karanja signed him up to write a fortnightly column for *Blitz, The Wolf Who Walks Alone*. As the title suggested, it was mostly nonsense.

When Moraes became Editor for Goenka's *Sunday Standard* he wrote an amusing famous-people-I-have-met column there and his inexhaustible



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store of anecdote kept him going quite a while. Last year he began *The Dom Moraes Column* in *Gentleman*, a three page version of the familiar incidents from Dom's life. One wishes Dom could think well but whatever the gaps in analysis they are more than made up for by Dom's endearing prose and oblique line in wit. His occasional bummers aside he is the most engaging columnist in the business.

TODAY THERE ARE MORE INDEPENDENT columnists in Indian journalism than ever before. The post-Emergency magazine boom is partly responsible for this. More generally this is part of a change in public focus, from editor to columnist, a change that occurred in Britain and America several decades ago. Independent television with its innumerable chat shows (chat shows are among the cheapest TV shows to produce) would no doubt help in this transformation but the Janata party split before the recommendations of the Verghese Report could be implemented and the Congress (I) can hardly be expected to rob Doordarshan of its monopoly.

But independent television or otherwise, if columnists are to be better received they must write well. Most of the dozen I have considered are well past it. It is for the editors to take note. One cannot sell newspapers forever on dull familiar bylines. Bright new columnists must be discovered. Soon. ♦



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